

priests alone could read and which they consulted on all important occasions. Priestly education for boys was at a special school called *calmecac*, and involved rigorous training not only in liturgics and study of the sacred mythology, but also masochistic ordeals that would prepare them to endure hardships, since the religious students had to accompany soldiers into battle to carry spears, war clubs, and other equipment. On certain ritual occasions, priests would purify the altar with their own blood by piercing their bodies and tongues with bone awls and agave spines. Postulants had to go out at night to catch scorpions and poisonous spiders, roast them, and then grind the results into a black powder which priests spread over their bodies; it contained a substance which deadened pain and produced a state of euphoria during ritual performances. Aztec priests, unlike Mayan priests, were celibate.

Aztec mythology claimed that the world has undergone five "creations," the first four being destroyed by jaguars (symbolic of earth), a hurricane (wind), volcanic eruptions (fire), and a flood (water), the four elements represented in the Aztec Stone. If one identifies these as analogous to the theosophical idea of the Root Races, the Aztec notion that we are in the fifth of those "creations" is essentially the same as one finds in *The Secret Doctrine*. It also suggests that the Aztecs, unlike the Mayans, thought of themselves as post-Atlantean. Flood myths, of course, are common to many cultures around the world and may be interpreted either allegorically as signifying being overwhelmed by psychic experiences during the Fourth Root Race, with the result that the intellect now prevails in the Fifth Root Race, or else as literally referring to an actual flood which occurred when the island of Poseidonis, the last remnant of the continent of Atlantis, sank about 12,000 years ago (*SD* II:765). The Aztecs believed the fifth "creation" will end with earthquakes. In order to forestall that catastrophe, they believed, human victims had to be sacrificed at certain important festivals and their hearts cut out and offered to the appropriate god.

The Aztecs cremated their dead (cf. Davies, p. 58, 151), as do the Hindus, unlike the Mayans who buried their dead (cf. Thompson, p. 68 ff). But since the Aztecs propitiated a god of the underworld, they (like the Mayans) obviously believed in a kind of life after death, which Blavatsky says is in the form of a "living spirit" (*yuli*) which issues from the body through the mouth or head at the moment of bodily death (*CW* II:171-2). Blavatsky cites a claim that