

they, like other pre-Spanish Mexicans, “believed in numerous spirit-abodes, into one of which the shades of innocent children were placed until final disposal; into another, situated in the sun, ascended the valiant souls of heroes, while the hideous spectres of incorrigible sinners were sentenced to wander and despair in subterranean caves, held in the bonds of the earth-atmosphere, unwilling and unable to liberate themselves. They passed their time in communicating with mortals, and frightening those who could see them” (*IU* 1:313).

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Central American religious practices for modern man to understand is that of human sacrifice, especially of young children. It is easy for us to see it as barbaric. And from a theosophical point of view it is — or is, at the very least, misguided. But one must put it in the context of the fact that Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Chinese immolated servants and slaves in the tombs of royalty, devout Catholics burned at the stake people they considered heretics, and contemporary devout Muslims “martyr” themselves in acts of terrorism against “infidels.” And, as Davies points out, “It is probably not incorrect to maintain that [sacrificial victims] were offered at times to Huitzilopochtli as the sun, but, in the main, the victims tended themselves to *become* the god to whom they would be sacrificed. ... In a sense, therefore, they died *as* the god, not *for* the god. ... The personification of the god by the victim helps explain the apparent lack of resistance to being sacrificed” (Davies, p. 171). In fact, the victim was often first honored as a “son of the sun” and then dressed in clothing associated with the deity, sometimes even made to perform actions identified with the deity, before being ceremonially killed. It was believed, then, that this action not only propitiated the deity, but also helped maintain the natural order (keep the sun rising, bring rain, forestall the eventual earthquake that is to destroy our present “creation,” etc.). It also guaranteed the victim a place in a delightful paradise, as depicted in Aztec frescoes. It must, however, also be noted that human sacrifices became more barbaric and numerous following the four-year famine of 1450-1454; wars with neighboring city-states were often waged merely for the purpose of capturing men to be sacrificed, sometimes 500 or even 1000 at a time (cf. Davies, pp. 96-8, 163, 167, 169, 218), and even willing sacrificial victims were drugged beforehand with *pulque* (cf. Davies, p. 101).