

THE ESSENCE OF THE AMERICAN MYSTERIES: PART I: THE TIME OF CHRIST

American spirituality is an eminently social spirituality. It is concerned with the Mysteries of the future, the Mysteries of the will, and the confrontation between the Sun God and the Fire God, or Christ and Ahriman. In this, the first of three articles, we will look at its expression at the time of Christ. In the next two we will first move to onset of the time of the Consciousness Soul, then to the present, placed under the sign of Christ's reappearance in the etheric and the incarnation of Ahriman.

American mythology is permeated with the recurrent idea of ages beginning and ending. Images that refer to these cycles vary. The Hopi and Pueblo Indians refer to the Emergence from the underworld; in South America the myths speak of a Second Creation. In Mesoamerica a central element of cosmology is the so-called "Dawning."

Is it possible to ascertain what Mesoamerican cosmo-vision was two thousand years ago? What was the deeper spiritual essence of the Olmec and Mayan cultural revolutions? This would have been a nearly impossible task given the difficulty of penetrating Native American iconography and esotericism. Fortunately it has been made more approachable by the groundbreaking work of archaeologist and anthropologist Rafael Girard, who studied ancient Mayan tradition and its continuation into the present, both in a scientific and in an imaginative way.

Girard made some major discoveries. Mayan culture jealously preserved an esoteric knowledge whose roots dive deep into the past. The deeper revelations of Maya knowledge are faithfully preserved in the most precious document of the Americas, the *Popol Vuh*, or Book of Council, written down in the fifteenth century by the Maya-Quiché. Having decoded the book, Girard could see all the connections between its imaginative language and the stages of American pre-history and history. Through the knowledge attained by spiritual scientific research, it is then possible to go a step further. The images portrayed in the Mayan sacred book can be associated with the events indicated by Steiner in the year 1916 in his cycle *Inner Impulses of Evolution*.

The *Popol Vuh* depicts the development of American civilization through the successive Four Ages. Crucial to our concern is the transition from the Third to the Fourth Age. This corresponds to the momentous changes from pre-historical times to the first stages of recorded American history, the events recorded by the dates of the Mayan stelae. The Fourth Age is ushered in by the deeds of those whom the *Popol Vuh* calls "the Twins" (the lunar-terrestrial Ixbalamque and the solar Hunahpu), born of the virgin Ixquic. Their descent to the underworld, their confrontation with the Lords of Xibalba, and most significantly their resurrection, mark the transition to the Fourth Age. Historical times are inaugurated at this point which the sacred text calls the "Dawning." This is the point in time in which consciousness evolved to such a degree that even the perception of the physical/spiritual environment changed for those who took a new evolutionary step. And historical consciousness surfaced for the first time.

The Twins are none other than the one who Steiner calls the initiate Vitzliputzli, who lived at the time of Christ's ministry on Earth. The *Popol Vuh* calls the American initiate 'the Twins' attributing to them the earthly qualities of the initiate, and the solar attributes of the Christ as the inspiration working through the initiate. The Twins confront

the decadent priesthood of Xibalba (Lords of the Underworld) and their chiefs, the Camé. We know from Steiner that the initiate put an end to the most decadent practices of human sacrifices possibly experienced on Earth, and that he fought against the priesthoods of Quetzalcoatl (Lords of Xibalba) and Taotl (Camé). At the time the high priest of the decadent Mexican Mysteries practiced human sacrifice with removal of the stomach from a live victim. The result of these practices would have given the magician absolute mastery over the forces of death upon Earth. The human soul would have been called into a realm that Lucifer was to build away from Earth if no other impulse had prevailed. The confrontation between initiate and black magician culminated at the time of the ministry of Christ. At the death on Golgotha the magician was crucified by the initiate, as a way to put an end not only to his work, but to the esoteric knowledge that inspired it. Such a knowledge could be extinguished at least until the beginning of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch.

The so-called “Calendar Wheel” (or “Short Count”) and the Sacred Calendar were innovations introduced in the Third Age by the historical Olmecs. The calendar Wheel could only compute 52-year cycles. The end of a calendar cycle marked the fear of extinction of time, and heightened the anxiety around the immortality of the soul. The Sacred Calendar of 260 days introduced rituals of the cultivation of maize through which the Olmec priesthood taught the seed idea of immortality through the coming of Christ. Thus the Olmecs formed a civilization for a time of waiting, but their influence waned the closer history moved to the turning point of time.

The “Long Count” introduced by the Maya marked a revolution in the computation of time. With the Long Count the Maya entered the period of historical (recorded) time. For the first time, the concept of eternity had found its place in the calendar and in cultural perception. It is very significant that the first Mayan stelae date from around 30 BCE to 30 CE. The ceremonial center of Izapa, on the Mexican Pacific coast close to the Guatemalan border, stands in a singular place in the development of the new Mayan culture and the central images of its mythology. Izapa developed from around 100 BCE to 200 CE, and there the odyssey of the Twins is portrayed most faithfully and completely for the first time in the carved stelae of various ceremonial groups of the site. This and other indices mark the site from which the revolution of the Fourth Age rayed out. To scientific research it is known that Izapa’s art marked a central turning point in the history of Mesoamerica.

The Dawning is the point of intersection of changes that occurred in Mesoamerican consciousness. The resurrection of the Twins marks the end of the dread of death – individual and cultural – that accompanies the Third Age. Humanity of the Fourth Age beholds immortality within as it beholds eternity without (the Long Count). The fear of death of the Third Age was closely associated in its later stages with the grim cult of human sacrifice, instituted by the Lords of Xibalba and the Camé. The Popol Vuh indicates that the resurrection of the Twins marks the end of those practices. These would only reappear in a new way first in Chichen Itza and then among the Aztecs.

A first landmark of the American Mysteries is a key confrontation with the powers of Ahriman at the time of Christ, a confrontation with evil that is at the center of the Mysteries of the continent. And the initiate is not only the one who very likely introduced the calendar, writing, the new arts and other cultural innovations; he is most of all that individual who shone through the deeds he performed against the decadent

priesthood. Another similar step was taken at the onset of the Consciousness Soul epoch, countering new decadent human sacrifices.