



The Mythologies of Ancient Mexico and Peru

Lewis Spence

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A classic amongst mythologists examining Central and South America's pre-colonial past.

“A model of sound knowledge, crystallized in an attractive form, and enlivened by original criticism. Mr. Spence succeeds in giving his readers, in an hour, a comprehensive view of the nature of the Mexican and Peruvian religions, corrected up to the latest guesses of modern research, with sufficient detail of those terrible and picturesque rites and mythologies to attract the attention and impress the memory. The first and last of his six short chapters he devotes to epitomizing the latest surmises as to the origin of American peoples and religions, and the question of foreign influence on the latter....The religion of the Peruvians was much more naturalistic than that of the Mexicans....Mr. Spence also notices that behind and above the theocracy of Peru, and the polytheism of both countries, celebrated as it was in Mexico by atrocious ritual massacres, was the idea of One Supreme Being, to Whom appeal was made, especially in the rites of confession and absolution. The many gods were but, as it were, the personification of His attributes. Mr. Spence is of those who, hold that ‘the knowledge of that power is inalienable from the mind of man.’ He notices also that the sacrifices of the Mexicans were probably, and in some cases certainly, offered, not to appease the gods, but to nourish them. A possible parallel occurs to us in those curious texts of the Mosaic law and prophecies.” -The Academy, Volume 74, 1908

“In this study of Mexican and Peruvian mythology, the reader is introduced into a sphere of the most fascinating interest – the attitude towards the eternal verities of the people of a new and isolated world.” -The Open Court, 1911

CONTENTS

I. The Origin of American Religions II. Mexican Mythology III. The Priesthood and Ritual of the Ancient Mexicans IV. The Religion of the Ancient Peruvians V. Peruvian Ritual and Worship VI. The Question of Foreign Influence upon the Religions of America A List of Select Books bearing on the Subject

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