

PATHWAYS TO THE DIVINE

*One Man's Journey Through the
Shamanic Realm of the Ancient Maya*

OTTO JOHN KRALOVEC III

ANNOTATED TABLE OF CONTENTS

www.pathwaystothedivine.org
Facebook: Otto John Kralovec III
Twitter: @PathwaysDivine

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PROLOGUE — IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE: Describes my direct experience of the Divine during a hanblechya (vision quest) on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and my subsequent struggle to make sense of the Divine Presence so different from what I had been led to believe through my early Christian upbringing. In this chapter I also recount a meeting I had with Fr. Thomas Keating at a Centering Prayer retreat in Snowmass, Colorado, that enabled me to more fully understand, accept, and appreciate my experience.

INTRODUCTION: Describes my earliest encounters with indigenous spirituality through my visits to the Field Museum in Chicago as a small boy and provides an overview of my spiritual journey as an adult. This chapter also presents background information on the spiritual worldview of the ancient Maya (and other indigenous/shamanic cultures) and discusses common perspectives held by early Christian Gnostic communities, whose beliefs and writings were branded as heresy and then forbidden and destroyed by the “orthodox” Church.

INITIATION

CHAPTER 1 — Initial Journey: Relates the story of my first direct experience of the unseen spiritual realms of the indigenous cultures during a ceremony held at night in the Great Kiva, Casa Rinconada, at the ancient Anasazi Indian site of Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. In this chapter I also describe my first vision quest in the wilderness on the Navajo Indian Reservation in Rough Rock, Arizona.

CHAPTER 2 — The World Tree: Describes my first contact with the ancient Maya and my visions at the sacred cave of Balankanche near the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Chichen Itza on the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. Here, I had a vision of an ancient initiation ceremony/ritual held inside the cave, and I encountered both the fabled World Tree of the ancient Maya and the sacred Earth Mother.

CHAPTER 3 — Morning Star Renewal: Recounts my vision/experience of an ancient Maya women's Renewal Ceremony held on the shore of the Caribbean at the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Tulum, a major pilgrimage destination for the ancient Maya. The ceremony involved introspection to complete/release unfinished business from the previous ceremonial cycle, a ritual cleansing/purification in the waters of the Caribbean and commitment to new

spiritual priorities for the upcoming cycle.

CHAPTER 4 — Good Road Ceremony: Recounts my vision/experience at the Las Pinturas pyramid-temple at the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Coba on the Yucatan Peninsula in Quintana Roo, Mexico. Here, I was introduced to the Maya concept of the three aspects of self: 1) our “Social Self” that operates in the physical world and embodies who we are in the world, 2) our “Karmic Self” that exists in the Dreamtime and represents our soul’s true purpose and 3) our highest “Spiritual Self.” Understanding, healing and integrating these aspects of the self are, for the Maya, the key to living a balanced and fully realized life.

CHAPTER 5 — Manifestation of the Goddess: The story of my first vision/experience of Ix-Chel, referred to by North American scholars as the “Moon Goddess,” but known as the Divine Feminine/female aspect of the Divine by the Maya, at the temple-pyramid of Ixmoja, also located within the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Coba. In the ancient ceremony I witnessed, Ix-Chel appeared to hundreds of pilgrims (primarily women) assembled around the lake at the base of the pyramid-temple to receive her blessings and healings related to fertility and childbirth.

CHAPTER 6 — Journey with the Celestial Bird: The story of two remarkable events that occurred at the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Palenque. The first describes a ceremony I was asked by spirits to perform to help release the souls of Maya ancestors who had not been able to complete their crossing at the original time of their deaths. The second recounts my vision/journey to the higher spiritual realms where I was shown the place of primal spiritual creation, described to me by Maya ancestor spirits a “the place of all knowingness, of calmness and serenity, of clarity, insight and wisdom; the place of the fulfillment of the spirit and freedom from that which you are not; the source and the destination; the place of Samadhi.”

CHAPTER 7 — River of Ruins: Describes my experiences during a ten-day archaeology guided tour to remote, difficult-to-reach ancient Maya ceremonial centers in Guatemala and Mexico. We traveled primarily by small native fishing boats on the Pasión and Usumacinta Rivers, visiting sites that had been explored by archaeologist but rarely visited by tourists. This chapter also includes the story of my surprising encounter with a powerful, protective, tutelary ancestor spirit at the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Yaxchilan.

REVELATION

CHAPTER 8 — Pakal’s Journey to the World Tree: The story of my vision/experience of the death of the most famous ruler of the ancient Maya city of Palenque, Lord Pakal, and his subsequent journey through Dreamtime (the Underworld). The chapter recounts what I witnessed of Pakal’s universal after-death experience of a life review, as well as the healing process he experienced. My vision ended when Pakal’s soul reached the Sacred Tree of Life, purified and renewed, prepared to ascend to the higher spiritual realms.

CHAPTER 9 — Lady Xook's Sacrifice: Recounts my vision/experience at the ancient ceremonial center of Yaxchilan of a bloodletting ceremony conducted by Lady Xook, a queen and highly revered shaman, visionary and seer whose ceremonies have been immortalized in limestone bas-relief sculptures considered among the finest in the world. In the ceremony, I witnessed Lady Xook journey to the Otherworld to connect with the soul of Yaxchilan's founding ruler, Yopaat Bahlam, and assist him in materializing at a coronation ceremony some three hundred years after his death.

CHAPTER 10 — Royal Conception: Describes my vision/experience of Ix-Chel at the ancient Maya ceremonial center of Tikal, presiding over a royal conception. In my vision I witnessed Ix-Chel opening the portals to the Otherworld and, serving as the Divine Midwife, guiding the soul of the soon-to-be-born future ruler of Tikal as it descended from the "heart of the sky," the "door to heaven," toward liminal space prior to conception.

CHAPTER 11 — Consecration of the Maize: The story of my vision of the ancient Maya ritual of preparing maize (corn) seeds for the annual planting at the Rosalila Temple in the heart of the ceremonial center of Copan in Honduras. In the ceremony, the maize kernels were "awakened" by imbuing them with sacred, spiritual life-force conjured from the higher Divine realms, the entire process aided by the spirit of the deceased founder of Copan, Yax'K'uk'Mo, summoned from the Otherworld to preside over the ritual.

CHAPTER 12 — Awakening: Describes my experience of being guided to an "Awakening" experience in the presence of Ix-Mucane, the Sacred Earth Mother of the Maya, inside the sacred cave near the ancient Maya ceremonial site at Oxkintok. Following my revelation at Oxkintok, I traveled to Palenque where I received a transmission from an ancient Maya ancestor that the future of our world is so imperiled now because "we have forgotten who we are, we have forgotten why we're here and we have forgotten how to live a life of balance and harmony." Our Awakening is the key to "remembering," and only by remembering are we able to heal and transform our lives and the world.