

black honey of the maguey, they formed a paste statue—the exact reproduction of the statue of their principal god. This paste statue with numerous small lumps of dough representing the bones of the god, was then blessed and consecrated, amid songs and dances, the very word “consecration” being used in the performance of the religious rite. From that moment both statue and bones were considered by all as the very flesh and bones of their god, Huitzilopochtli. The statue was subsequently divided by the priests into small pieces, which were distributed to all the people, each of whom received his or her portion with the greatest signs of respect and veneration, the most scrupulous care being taken that not a crumb should fall to the ground. Still more remarkable is the fact that the communicants were bound to observe the natural fast, that is from the previous midnight. Hence, water was, on that day, hidden from the little children who were also permitted to partake of the communion.

It is a well-known fact that auricular confession was practised by the Mexicans, as well as by several other nations of prehistoric America. Voluntary acknowledgment of sins and crimes—auricular confession—was frequently made in Peru, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Yucatan and Honduras. It was the custom among these people to confess their sins before every important undertaking, during time of sickness and at the hour of death. They firmly believed that their confessors enjoyed divinely delegated power to free them from their crimes and to render them agreeable to their gods. This happy change from sinfulness to sanctity was in many districts represented by putting on new clothes when confession was over. What is still more remarkable, this remission of sins by confession was admitted by the civil courts of ancient Mexico. Hence, many an old sinner went to the priest to confess his murders and adulteries, in order to keep his head, or to save his bones from being crushed between the swinging rocks.

Confessors were bound to inviolable secrecy, and this law was, with one or two exceptions, strictly observed. Sincerity and entirety in the avowal of one's sins were strictly insisted upon by the confessor before granting absolution. After absolution, which was in the Greek deprecatory form, the confessor admonished the