CHAPTER ELEVEN

IS CHRIST BEING RESURRECTED AMONG THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE?

Moisés Colop

"If we reply that Christ is not being resurrected in our culture and people in Abia Yala, we simply mean that he has never left us ... Today he is allowing us to understand him with greater intensity". Pastor Colop is a K'iche' Maya a minister and a one-time Moderator of the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala. After several years of exile, he now directs the Guatemalan office of the Christian Reformed World Relief Commission.

Introduction

In order to immerse oneself in the difficult, yet fascinating, theological world of the indians, the following aspects need to be taken into consideration:

1. Accept from the outset that it is another theology about the same God of Abraham, but with a different understanding. This in itself should not be difficult to accept, since their are a great variety of theological approaches within Christian theology.

2. Understand that indigenous theology is not a distortion of Christian theology, but rather a proximate theological expression in a language which is not ours (Spanish), and using methods that are not our own.

3. Receive indigenous theology with respect and equality, instead of prejudice and misunderstanding. One cannot do indigenous theology from a superior vantage point.

1 This article first appeared in the Nicaraguan journal Xilotl: Revista nicaragüense de teología, no. 12/13, 1994. Used with permission.

2 The author uses the pejorative word "indio" with a new-found sense of pride. At one time, the Guatemalan Mayas preferred to be addressed as "indígenas" or "naturales", they now proudly adopt their tribal names.
Keeping these three facts in mind I would like to share a few insights that perhaps can help us to develop familiarity and understanding regarding indigenous theology.

A brief history of our theology

Prior to the Spanish invasion, more or less five hundred years ago, indigenous peoples worshipped the Supreme Being publicly, in a liturgy which invited people to participate in this relationship. When it met face to face with Christian theology, indigenous theology was forced to find new forms of survival. The altars and places of worship were moved to the highest mountains, while at the same time the signs and symbols were buried in the thick walls of the cathedrals and even placed within Catholic altars and symbols. Many indigenous who today bow before a cross, are not paying homage to the Christian cross, but to the age old cross of the Mayas, which symbolizes the unity of all creation.

When protestantism reached the Maya lands, it was even more intent upon annihilating any vestige of an indigenous God. However, the "Heart of Heaven and Earth" did not succumb to the strong Protestant winds. Many missionaries died with the mistaken conviction that they had wiped out *U Cux Caj Ulew*, but it was not so. We Mayas, honest and sincerely recognize that our God is alive, because we talk to him every day. Who is this God?

*He is U Cux Caj Ulew*

There is not a literal translation for this name of the Supreme Creator of the K'iche' Maya - *U Cux Caj Ulew*. The closest approximation is "Heart (or Spirit) of Heaven and Earth." It conveys the idea of a "living epicentre," of God being "the generator of life," the "absolute master" and "overseer of Heaven and Earth".

To be precise, we are not speaking here of heaven and earth in the non-indigenous worldview. Together, the terms include everything that is within them, as well as all of the influences that flow out of them. In other words, we are speaking of a total and unified universe - of universality and complementarity. As the Psalmist would say, "Herein is wisdom," or as the indigenous peoples would put it, "this is the guts of indigenous theology". "Heart of Heaven" is the expression and manifestation of the male side of