Questions 43–45

The mighty, warlike Aztec nation existed in Mexico from 1195 to 1521. The high priests taught the people that the sun would shine, the crops would grow, and the empire would prosper only if the gods were appeased by human sacrifices and blood offerings from all levels of their society. The priests practiced forms of self-mutilation, such as piercing their tongues with thorns and flagellating themselves with thorn branches. They collected the small amount of blood produced by these practices and offered it to Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl, their chief gods. They insisted that all Aztecs needed to make some sort of daily sacrifice. Warriors were promised a place of honor in the afterlife if they died courageously in battle.

The Aztecs were constantly at war in order to have enough captives from battle to serve as sacrificial victims. The prisoners were indoctrinated before their deaths into believing that they, too, would find a place of honor in the afterlife and that their death insured the prosperity of the great Aztec nation. After being heavily sedated with mari-) juana or a similar drug, they were led up the steps to the top of the ceremonial centers where they accepted their fate passively, and their palpitating hearts were removed from their bodies as an offering to the gods.