

INTRODUCTION



THE creation myths of America form a complete system; they give a detailed and circumstantial account of the origin of this world and of all things and creatures contained in it. In the course of the various narratives which compose this myth system an earlier world is described to us, with an order of existence and a method of conduct on which the life of primitive man in America was patterned.

That earlier world had two periods of duration, — one of complete and perfect harmony; another of violence, collision, and conflict. The result and outcome of the second period was the creation of all that is animated on earth except man. Man, in the American scheme of creation, stands apart and separate; he is quite alone, peculiar, and special. Above all, he belongs to this continent. The white man was unknown to American myth-makers, as were also men of every other race and of every region outside of the Western Hemisphere.

Described briefly and by an Indian, the American myth system is as follows: "There was a world before this one in which we are living at present; that was the world of the first people, who were dif-