

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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I HAVE written this work more for the thoughtful general reader than the antiquary. It is a study of an obscure portion of the intellectual history of our species as exemplified in one of its varieties.

What are man's earliest ideas of a soul and a God, and of his own origin and destiny? Why do we find certain myths, such as of a creation, a flood, an after-world; certain symbols, as the bird, the serpent, the cross; certain numbers, as the three, the four, the seven—intimately associated with these ideas by every race? What are the laws of growth of natural religions? How do they acquire such an influence, and is this influence for good or evil? Such are some of the universally interesting questions which I attempt to solve by an analysis of the simple faiths of a savage race.

If in so doing I succeed in investing with a more general interest the fruitful theme of American ethnology, my objects will have been accomplished.

PHILADELPHIA, 1868.