

have transcribed, it is because I think that, though each of them is given the outward garb of an apologue, the events they refer to can, without exaggeration, be considered as endowing them with the character more of traditions than of myths properly speaking. My meaning will become more apparent from a perusal of the comments wherewith I have ventured to accompany them.

These, I fully expect, will find many an incredulous reader, when they do not excite the supercilious pity of the modern critic. Speaking of the Vedas and the Rigveda is much more fashionable in certain circles than quoting the Bible and referring to the momentous events mentioned in Moses' Genesis. Another school of folk-lorists would also see in the native American myths nothing but personifications of natural phenomena. But I cannot help thinking that the latter's ingenuity would have to be exercised to a rather remarkable degree if they were looking, as they are wont, to the following detailed legends for a figurative account, say, of the daily conflict between light and darkness or some other physical phenomenon. As to the former, I suppose one may always be permitted to refer to the Biblical narratives, were it only as to historical chronicles, independently of the inspired character of their authors.

Moreover, it is but just to add that most of my commentaries are merely hints thrown out more in the shape of queries than as incontrovertible facts. Attempts at identifications, I know, are generally dangerous, especially when their basis is such vague and disconnected elements as those furnished by the stories upon which the present paper is founded. Yet these stories contain a few points which, to my mind, are not without significance, and these I shall try to bring out in all sincerity. I am wedded to no pet theory as to the origin of our Indians, and this freedom from preconceived ideas leaves me so much the more at liberty to speak out my mind frankly.

To the proper understanding of an aboriginal myth's meaning, one should not forget that the native chronicles have absolutely no regard for chronology and very little, indeed, for consistency. They abound in anachronisms no less than in synchronisms; and no wonder. A people having no written literature cannot be expected to have preserved in narratives handed down by word of mouth only the exact order of events. Furthermore, the real facts thereby related are almost invariably hidden under a thick veil of details more or less puerile, and these details are always coloured after the particular environment of the tribe. The human mind cannot grasp or imagine that a duplicate of which the eyes have never seen in whole or, separately, in its component parts. Therefore one cannot reasonably exact from a native story a correct ac-