

tooms, myths and traditions. While the Indian, in his innermost heart, sincerely believes the myths and traditions of his fathers, it is only once in awhile one can be induced to open his mind and freely communicate them to others. He knows the white man disbelieves, and even ridicules, them, and an Indian can bear almost anything better than he can ridicule—and who is there that likes to have the religion of his fathers belittled, or to see those things he has always been taught to regard as sacred, treated as if they were fables and lies? Having no written language, the Indian could not record facts and phenomena, and therefore, his history is a bundle of traditions. These are his bible and code of laws; they comprise his system of religion, and are his philosophy of the origin of things. They are sacred to him because they are ancient, and because his ancestors believed them and taught them to him.

There has been much said and written about the monotheistic ideas of the American Indian. We hear much about his worship of the great spirit, and one would naturally infer that his system of mythology would only have reference to one god; but an examination into his myths shows that in common with all savage nations, the Indian believes in the existence of many gods and demigods. While he seems to believe in a great spirit, who is far above all other spirits in intelligence and power, we do not find that, according to his myths, this great spirit had much to do directly in the work of creation. According to his cosmogony, nearly everything was made by animal gods, or demigods, having almost unlimited power, and yet being themselves mortal, and having the same appetites and passions as the Indian himself.

In all nations the idea has prevailed that former times were better than the

present, that man is in a degenerate and fallen condition, and that anciently, man was purer and better, and lived longer. Among our own people we find the same thing. Who has not heard old men tell about the degeneracy of the present times, as compared with the years of their early life? Boys are not what they used to be; the times are out of joint; men are growing more corrupt all the time. We hear of the present degeneracy of our republic, and the purity and patriotism of our forefathers are lauded to the skies, while history shows those same forefathers were berated by their cotemporaries, and that they themselves were lamenting their own times, and pointing back to the better days and better men before them. We find this is almost an innate tendency of the human mind, and this gives origin to what has been styled "ancientism." This natural impulse of the mind finds expression with the Indian in his wonderful stories of the long, long ago.

It is the belief of all the tribes of the Columbia river valley, and almost all over the continent, that the present race of Indians sprang from an ancient "animal people," and that the animals existing on earth at present are diminutive and degenerate representatives of an ancient race of animal gods. "Long, long ago," there were no Indians such as now exist; there were "animal people," the *Wat-tée-tash*, or the "ancients." These *Wat-tée-tash* were prodigiously large, and all animals, beasts, birds, insects, and even trees and plants and inanimate objects, could talk, and spoke one language. To all are attributed the speech and doings of rational, intelligent beings, in those wonderful ancient times. The bear, eagle, hawk, rattlesnake, owl, coyote, humming bird, and indeed, nearly every living thing known to the Indian, has connected with it some mystic story, accounting for its origin and pe-