

CHAPTER XVI

PARALLELS IN OTHER SYSTEMS

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.—*Joel*.

How is it then, brethren? When ye come together every one of you hath a doctrine, hath a revelation.—*I Corinthians*.

THE BIBLICAL PERIOD

The remote in time or distance is always strange. The familiar present is always natural and a matter of course. Beyond the narrow range of our horizon imagination creates a new world, but as we advance in any direction, or as we go back over forgotten paths, we find ever a continuity and a succession. The human race is one in thought and action. The systems of our highest modern civilizations have their counterparts among all the nations, and their chain of parallels stretches backward link by link until we find their origin and interpretation in the customs and rites of our own barbarian ancestors, or of our still existing aboriginal tribes. There is nothing new under the sun.

The Indian messiah religion is the inspiration of a dream. Its ritual is the dance, the ecstasy, and the trance. Its priests are hypnotics and cataleptics. All these have formed a part of every great religious development of which we have knowledge from the beginning of history.

In the ancestors of the Hebrews, as described in the Old Testament, we have a pastoral people, living in tents, acquainted with metal working, but without letters, agriculture, or permanent habitations. They had reached about the plane of our own Navaho, but were below that of the Pueblo. Their mythologic and religious system was closely parallel. Their chiefs were priests who assumed to govern by inspiration from God, communicated through frequent dreams and waking visions. Each of the patriarchs is the familiar confidant of God and his angels, going up to heaven in dreams and receiving direct instructions in waking visits, and regulating his family and his tribe, and ordering their religious ritual, in accord with these instructions. Jacob, alone in the desert, sleeps and dreams, and sees a ladder reaching to heaven, with angels going up and down upon it, and God himself, who tells him of the future greatness of the Jewish nation. So Wovoka, asleep on the mountain, goes up to the Indian heaven and is told by the Indian god of the coming restoration of his race. Abraham is "tempted" by God and commanded to sacrifice his son, and proceeds to carry out the supernatural injunction. So Black Coyote dreams and is commanded to sacrifice himself for the sake of his children.