

## PREFACE

**T**ODAY the medley of outward life has made a perplexity of inward life. We moderns have ruffled our old incertitudes to an absurd point—incertitudes that are older than theology.

Not without justification have priests mounted altars for generations and cried, "Oh my soul, why dost thou trouble me?"

We are active, restless both in body and mind. Curiosity has replaced blind faith. We go groping, peering, searching, scornful of dogmas, back, further back to sources. And just as the physicist thrills at the universes he discovers as he works inward in the quest of his electrons, so the average man exults in his apprehension of fundamentals of psychology. New cults spring up, attesting to the Truth—as *they* see it—countless fleets of Theism, Buchmanism, Theosophy, Bahai'ism, etc., sail under brightly colored flags; and Atheism is flaunting itself on the horizon.

Almost the passengers have turned pilots. Everyman is thinking for himself.

The findings here—in this strange volume—bring the reader into a large inland sea, cut off from the traffic and the tempest that have sprung up in the West; and untouched by the cross-currents of dogmas and presumptions that have cluttered historic centuries. Here is virgin water that gushes, troubled by abysmal forces only, out of the very earth itself.

Whence are these writings—these emotions—these profound pages of wisdom? You might as well inquire, whence is human nature? The fact is—they *are*. It isn't as though you can compare this literature with any other, as you might compare the French Romanticists with the Russian school. If you do so, this man may say it is too fantastic; that man, it is too coarse; the other man, it is too "out of date"! And they straightway lose all sight of the fact that it is simply fundamental.

To be sure scholars will argue, and inquire. They would

find the exact history; the shape of this or that Greek stem; they would set the opinion of this erudite authority against the opinion of that. It is right that they, as scholars, should do so. It is right that the average man who is not a scholar should also do so—if he wants to; and should not have to do so, if he does not want to.

It is, however, only just to pay a tribute to scholarship which has preceded and made possible this book. The publishers are indispensably indebted to *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* edited by R. H. Charles, D. Litt., D. D.; *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* by Dr. Rendel Harris; *The Book of Adam and Eve* by the Rev. S. C. Malan, D. D., published in England in 1882.

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It is appropriate to leave this book in your hands with the invocation of San Peladan, which Conrad has translated for us. San Peladan believed in astrology, spirits of the air, elves, nymphs and everything that is deliciously fantastic. However, he did say:

“O Nature, indulgent Mother, forgive! Open your arms to the son, prodigal and weary.

“I have attempted to tear asunder the veil you have hung to conceal from us the pain of life, and I have been wounded by the mystery. . . . Œdipus, half way to finding the word of the enigma, young Faust, regretting already the simple life, the life of the heart, I come back to you repentant, reconciled, O gentle deceiver!”

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Adam and Eve; Solomon; Pharaoh; Aristeeas; Ahikar; and the Twelve Intellectual Giants—we come back to you.

R. H. P. JR.

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