

**THE HOMERIC HYMNS
A NEW PROSE TRANSLATION
AND ESSAYS, LITERARY AND
MYTHOLOGICAL,**

by Andrew Lang



DEDICATION

To Henry Butcher
A Little Token of
A Long Friendship

PREFACE

To translate the Hymns usually called "Homeric" had long been my wish, and, at the Publisher's suggestion, I undertook the work. Though not in partnership, on this occasion, with my friend, Mr. Henry Butcher (Professor of Greek in the University of Edinburgh), I have been fortunate in receiving his kind assistance in correcting the proofs of the longer and most of the minor Hymns. Mr. Burnet, Professor of Greek in the University of St. Andrews, has also most generously read the proofs of the translation. It is, of course, to be understood that these scholars are not responsible for the slips which may have wandered into my version, the work of one whose Greek has long "rusted in disuse." Indeed I must confess that the rendering "Etin" for $\pi\epsilon\lambda\omega\rho$ is retained in spite of Mr. Butcher, who is also not wholly satisfied with "gledes of light," and with "shieling" for a pastoral summer station in the hills. But I know no word for it in English south of Tweed.

Mr. A. S. Murray, the Head of the Classical Department in the British Museum, has also been good enough to read, and suggest corrections in the preliminary Essays; while Mr. Cecil Smith, of the British Museum, has obligingly aided in selecting the works of art here reproduced.

The text of the Hymns is well known to be corrupt, in places impossible, and much mended by conjecture. I have usually followed Gemoll (*Die Homerischen Hymnen*, Leipzig, 1886), but have sometimes preferred a MS. reading, or emendations by Mr. Tyrrell, by Mr. Verral, or the admirable suggestions of Mr. Allen. My chief object has been to find, in cases of doubt, the phrases least unworthy of the poets. Too often it is impossible to be certain as to what they really wrote.

I have had beside me the excellent prose translation by Mr. John Edgar (Thin, Edinburgh, 1891). As is inevitable, we do not always agree in the sense of certain phrases, but I am far from claiming superiority for my own attempts.

The method employed in the Essays, the anthropological method of interpreting beliefs and rites, is still, of course, on its trial. What can best be said as to its infirmities, and the dangers of its abuse, and of system-making in the present state of the evidence, will be found in Sir Alfred Lyall's "Asiatic Studies," vol. ii. chaps. iii. and iv. Readers inclined to pursue the subject should read Mr. L. R. Farnell's "Cults of the Greek

States" (Clarendon Press, 1896), Mr. J. G. Frazer's "Golden Bough," his "Pausanias," and Mr. Hartland's work on "The Myth of Perseus." These books, it must be observed, are by no means always in agreement with my own provisional theories.

ESSAYS INTRODUCTORY

THE SO-CALLED HOMERIC HYMNS

“The existing collection of the Hymns is of unknown editorship, unknown date, and unknown purpose,” says Baumeister. Why any man should have collected the little preludes of five or six lines in length, and of purely conventional character, while he did not copy out the longer poems to which they probably served as preludes, is a mystery. The celebrated Wolf, who opened the path which leads modern Homerologists to such an extraordinary number of divergent theories, thought rightly that the great Alexandrian critics before the Christian Era, did not recognise the Hymns as “Homeric.” They did not employ the Hymns as illustrations of Homeric problems; though it is certain that they knew the Hymns, for one collection did exist in the third century B.C. {4} Diodorus and Pausanias, later, also cite “the poet in the Hymns,” “Homer in the Hymns”; and the pseudo-Herodotus ascribes the Hymns to Homer in his Life of that author. Thucydides, in the Periclean age, regards Homer as the blind Chian minstrel who composed the Hymn to the Delian Apollo: a good proof of the relative antiquity of that piece, but not evidence, of course, that our whole collection was then regarded as Homeric. Baumeister agrees with Wolf that the brief Hymns were recited by rhapsodists as preludes to the recitation of Homeric or other cantos. Thus, in Hymn xxxi. 18, the poet says that he is going on to chant “the renowns of men half divine.” Other preludes end with a prayer to the God for luck in the competition of reciters.

This, then, is the plausible explanation of most of the brief Hymns—they were preludes to epic recitations—but the question as to the long narrative Hymns with which the collection opens is different. These were themselves rhapsodies recited at Delphi, at Delos, perhaps in Cyprus (the long Hymn to Aphrodite), in Athens (as the Hymn to Pan, who was friendly in the Persian invasion), and so forth. That the Pisistratidæ organised Homeric recitations at Athens is certain enough, and Baumeister suspects, in xiv., xxiii., xxx., xxxi., xxxii., the hand of Onomacritus, the forger of Oracles, that strange accomplice of the Pisistratidæ. The Hymn to Aphrodite is just such a lay as the Phæacian minstrel sang at the feast of Alcinous, in the hearing of Odysseus. Finally Baumeister supposes our collection not to have been made by learned editors, like Aristarchus and Zenodotus, but committed confusedly from memory to papyrus by some

amateur. The conventional attribution of the Hymns to Homer, in spite of linguistic objections, and of many allusions to things unknown or unfamiliar in the Epics, is merely the result of the tendency to set down "masterless" compositions to a well-known name. Anything of epic characteristics was allotted to the master of Epic. In the same way an unfathered joke of Lockhart's was attributed to Sydney Smith, and the process is constantly illustrated in daily conversation. The word ὑμνος, hymn, had not originally a religious sense: it merely meant a lay. Nobody calls the Theocritean idylls on Heracles and the Dioscuri "hymns," but they are quite as much "hymns" (in our sense) as the "hymn" on Aphrodite, or on Hermes.

To the English reader familiar with the Iliad and Odyssey the Hymns must appear disappointing, if he come to them with an expectation of discovering merits like those of the immortal epics. He will not find that they stand to the Iliad as Milton's "Ode to the Nativity" stands to "Paradise Lost." There is in the Hymns, in fact, no scope for the epic knowledge of human nature in every mood and aspect. We are not so much interested in the Homeric Gods as in the Homeric mortals, yet the Hymns are chiefly concerned not with men, but with Gods and their mythical adventures. However, the interest of the Hymn to Demeter is perfectly human, for the Goddess is in sorrow, and is mingling with men. The Hymn to Aphrodite, too, is Homeric in its grace, and charm, and divine sense of human limitations, of old age that comes on the fairest, as Tithonus and Anchises; of death and disease that wait for all. The life of the Gods is one long holiday; the end of our holiday is always near at hand. The Hymn to Dionysus, representing him as a youth in the fulness of beauty, is of a charm which was not attainable, while early art represented the God as a mature man; but literary art, in the Homeric age, was in advance of sculpture and painting. The chief merit of the Delian Hymn is in the concluding description of the assembled Ionians, happy seafarers like the Phæacians in the morning of the world. The confusions of the Pythian Hymn to Apollo make it less agreeable; and the humour of the Hymn to Hermes is archaic. All those pieces, however, have delightfully fresh descriptions of sea and land, of shadowy dells, flowering meadows, dusky, fragrant caves; of the mountain glades where the wild beasts fawn in the train of the winsome Goddess; and the high still peaks where Pan wanders among the nymphs, and the glens where Artemis drives the deer, and the spacious halls and airy palaces of the Immortals. The Hymns are fragments of the work of a school which had a great Master and great traditions: they also illustrate many aspects of Greek religion.

In the essays which follow, the religious aspect of the Hymns is chiefly dwelt upon: I endeavour to bring out what Greek religion had of human and sacred, while I try to explain its less majestic features as no less human: as derived from the earliest attempts at speculation and at mastering the secrets of the world. In these chapters regions are visited which scholars have usually neglected or ignored. It may seem strange to seek the origins of Apollo, and of the renowned Eleusinian Mysteries, in the tales and rites of the Bora and the Nanga; in the beliefs and practices of Pawnees and Larrakeah, Yao and Khond. But these tribes, too, are human, and what they now or lately were, the remote ancestors of the Greeks must once have been. All races have sought explanations of their own ritual in the adventures of the Dream Time, the *Alcheringa*, when beings of a more potent race, Gods or Heroes, were on earth, and achieved and endured such things as the rites commemorate. And the things thus endured and achieved, as I try to show, are everywhere of much the same nature; whether they are now commemorated by painted savages in the Bora or the Medicine Dance, or whether they were exhibited and proclaimed by the Eumolpidæ in a splendid hall, to the pious of Hellas and of Rome. My attempt may seem audacious, and to many scholars may even be repugnant; but it is on these lines, I venture to think, that the darker problems of Greek religion and rite must be approached. They are all survivals, however fairly draped and adorned by the unique genius of the most divinely gifted race of mankind.

The method of translation is that adopted by Professor Butcher and myself in the *Odyssey*, and by me in a version of Theocritus, as well as by Mr. Ernest Myers, who preceded us, in his *Pindar*. That method has lately been censured and, like all methods, is open to objection. But I confess that neither criticism nor example has converted me to the use of modern colloquial English, and I trust that my persistence in using poetical English words in the translation of Greek poetry will not greatly offend. I cannot render a speech of Anchises thus:—

“If you really are merely a mortal, and if a woman of the normal kind was your mother, while your father (as you lay it down) was the well-known Otreus, and if you come here all through an undying person, Hermes; and if you are to be known henceforward as my wife,—why, then nobody, mortal or immortal, shall interfere with my intention to take instant advantage of the situation.”

That kind of speech, though certainly long-winded, may be the manner in which a contemporary pastoralist would address a Goddess “in a coming on humour.” But the situation does not occur in the prose of our

existence, and I must prefer to translate the poet in a manner more congenial, if less up to date. For one rare word “Etin” (πελωρ) I must apologise: it seems to me to express the vagueness of the unfamiliar monster, and is old Scots, as in the tale of “The Red Etin of Ireland.”

THE HYMN TO APOLLO

The Hymn to Apollo presents innumerable difficulties, both of text, which is very corrupt, and as to the whole nature and aim of the composition. In this version it is divided into two portions, the first dealing with the birth of Apollo, and the foundation of his shrine in the isle of Delos; the second concerned with the establishment of his Oracle and fane at Delphi. The division is made merely to lighten the considerable strain on the attention of the English reader. I have no pretensions to decide whether the second portion was by the author of the first, or is an imitation by another hand, or is contemporary, or a later addition, or a mere compilation from several sources. The first part seems to find a natural conclusion, about lines 176-181. The blind singer (who is quoted here by Thucydides) appears at that point to say farewell to his cherished Ionian audience. What follows, in our second part, appeals to hearers interested in the Apollo of Crisa, and of the Delphian temple: the *Pythian* Apollo.

According to a highly ingenious, but scarcely persuasive theory of Mr. Verrall's, this interest is unfriendly. [\[13\]](#) Our second part is no hymn at all, but a sequel tacked on for political purposes only: and valuable for these purposes because so tacked on.

From line 207 to the end we have this sequel, the story of Apollo's dealings as Delphinian, and as Pythian; all this following on detached fragments of enigmatic character, and containing also (305-355) the intercalated myth about the birth of Typhaon from Hera's anger. In the politically inspired sequel there is, according to Mr. Verrall, no living zeal for the honour of Pytho (Delphi). The threat of the God to his Cretan ministers, —“Beware of arrogance, or . . .”—must be a prophecy after the event. Now such an event occurred, early in the sixth century, when the Crisæans were supplanted by the people of the town that had grown up round the Oracle at Delphi. In them, and in the Oracle under their management, the poet shows no interest (Mr. Verrall thinks), none in the many mystic peculiarities of the shrine. It is quite in contradiction with Delphian tradition to represent, as the Hymn does, Trophonius and Agamedes as the *original* builders.

Many other points are noted—such as the derivation of “Pytho” from a word meaning *rot*,—to show that the hymnist was rather disparaging than celebrating the Delphian sanctuary. Taking the Hymn as a whole, more is done for Delos in three lines, says Mr. Verrall, than for Pytho or Delphi in three hundred. As a whole, the spirit of the piece is much more Delian (Ionian) than Delphic. So Mr. Verrall regards the *Cento* as “a religious pasquinade against the sanctuary on Parnassus,” a pasquinade emanating from Athens, under the Pisistratidæ, who, being Ionian leaders, had a grudge against “the Dorian Delphi,” “a comparatively modern, unlucky, and from the first unsatisfactory” institution. Athenians are interested in the “far-seen” altar of the seaman’s Dolphin God on the shore, rather than in his inland Pythian habitation.

All this, with much more, is decidedly ingenious. If accepted it might lead the way to a general attack on the epics, as *tendenz* pieces, works with a political purpose, or doctored for a political purpose. But how are we to understand the uses of the pasquinade Hymn? Was it published, so to speak, to amuse and aid the Pisistratidæ? Does such remote antiquity show us any examples of such handling of sacred things in poetry? Might we not argue that Apollo’s threat to the Crisæans was meant by the poet as a friendly warning, and is prior to the fall of Crisa? One is reminded of the futile ingenuity with which German critics, following their favourite method, have analysed the fatal Casket Letters of Mary Stuart into letters to her husband, Darnley; or to Murray; or by Darnley to Mary, with scraps of her diary, and false interpolations. The enemies of the Queen, coming into possession of her papers after the affair of Carberry Hill, falsified the Casket Letters into their present appearance of unity. Of course historical facts make this ingenuity unavailing. We regret the circumstance in the interest of the Queen’s reputation, but welcome these illustrative examples of what can be done in Germany. [{16a}](#)

Fortunately all Teutons are not so ingenious. Baumeister has fallen on those who, in place of two hymns, Delian and Pythian, to Apollo, offer us half-a-dozen fragments. By presenting an array of discordant conjectures as to the number and nature of these scraps, he demonstrates the purely wilful and arbitrary nature of the critical method employed. [{16b}](#) Thus one learned person believes in (1) two perfect little poems; (2) two larger hymns; (3) three lacerated fragments of hymns, one lacking its beginning, the other wofully deprived of its end. Another *savant* detects no less than eight fragments, with interpolations; though perhaps no biblical critic *ejusdem farinae* has yet detected eight Isaiahs. There are about ten other theories of similar plausibility and value. Meanwhile Baumeister argues

that the Pythian Hymn (our second part) is an imitation of the Delian; by a follower, not of Homer, but of Hesiod. Thus, the Hesiodic school was closely connected with Delphi; the Homeric with Ionia, so that Delphi rarely occurs in the Epics; in fact only thrice (l. 405, θ. 80, λ. 581). The local knowledge is accurate (Pythian Hymn, 103 *sqq.*). These are local legends, and knowledge of the curious chariot ritual of Onchestus. The Muses are united with the Graces as in a work of art in the Delphian temple. The poet chooses the Hesiodic and un-Homeric myth of Heaven and Earth, and their progeny: a myth current also in Polynesia, Australia, and New Zealand. The poet is full of inquiry as to origins, even etymological, as is Hesiod. Like Hesiod (and Mr. Max Muller), *origines rerum ex nominibus explicat*. Finally, the second poet (and here every one must agree) is a much worse poet than the first. As for the prophetic word of warning to the Crisæans and its fulfilment, Baumeister urges that the people of Cirrha, the seaport, not of Crisa, were punished, in Olympiad 47 (Grote, ii. 374).

Turning to Gemoll, we find him maintaining that the two parts were in ancient times regarded as one hymn in the age of Aristophanes. {18} If so, we can only reply, if we agree with Baumeister, that in the age of Aristophanes, or earlier, there was a plentiful lack of critical discrimination. As to Baumeister's theory that the second part is Hesiodic, Gemoll finds a Hesiodic reminiscence in the first part (line 121), while there are Homeric reminiscences in the second part.

Thus do the learned differ among themselves, and an ordinary reader feels tempted to rely on his own literary taste.

According to that criterion, I think we probably have in the Hymn the work of a good poet, in the early part; and in the latter part, or second Hymn, the work of a bad poet, selecting unmanageable passages of myth, and handling them pedantically and ill. At all events we have here work visibly third rate, which cannot be said, in my poor opinion, about the immense mass of the Iliad and Odyssey. The great Alexandrian critics did not use the Hymns as illustrative material in their discussion of Homer. Their instinct was correct, and we must not start the consideration of the Homeric question from these much neglected pieces. We must not study *obscurum per obscurius*. The genius of the Epic soars high above such myths as those about Pytho, Typhaon, and the Apollo who is alternately a dolphin and a meteor: soars high above pedantry and bad etymology. In the Epics we breathe a purer air.

Descending, as it did, from the mythology of savages, the mythic store of Greece was rich in legends such as we find among the lowest races. Homer usually ignores them: Hesiod and the authors of the Hymns are less noble in their selections.

For this reason and for many others, we regard the Hymns, on the whole, as post-Homeric, while their collector, by inserting the Hymn to Ares, shows little proof of discrimination. Only the methods of modern German scholars, such as Wilamowitz Möllendorf, and of Englishmen like Mr. Walter Leaf, can find in the Epics marks of such confusion, dislocation, and interpolations as confront us in the Hymn to Apollo. (I may refer to my work, "Homer and the Epic," for a defence of the unity of Iliad and Odyssey.) For example, Mr. Verrall certainly makes it highly probable that the Pythian Hymn, at least in its concluding words of the God, is not earlier than the sixth century. But no proof of anything like this force is brought against the antiquity of the Iliad or Odyssey.

As to the myths in the Hymns, I would naturally study them from the standpoint of anthropology, and in the light of comparison of the legends of much more backward peoples than the Greeks. But that light at present is for me broken and confused.

I have been led to conclusions varying from those of such students as Mr. Tylor and Mr. Spencer, and these conclusions should be stated, before they are applied to the Myth of Apollo. I am not inclined, like them, to accept "Animism," or "The Ghost Theory," as the master-key to the *origin* of religion, though Animism is a great tributary stream. To myself it now appears that among the lowest known races we find present a fluid mass of beliefs both high and low, from the belief in a moral creative being, a judge of men, to the pettiest fable which envisages him as a medicine-man, or even as a beast or bird. In my opinion the higher belief may very well be the earlier. While I can discern the processes by which the lower myths were evolved, and were attached to a worthier pre-existing creed, I cannot see how, if the lower faiths came first, the higher faith was ever evolved out of *them* by very backward savages.

On the other side, in the case of Australia, Mr. Tylor writes: "For a long time after Captain Cook's visit, the information as to native religious ideas is of the scantiest." This was inevitable, for our information has only been obtained with the utmost difficulty, and under promises of secrecy, by later inquirers who had entirely won the confidence of the natives, and had been initiated into their Mysteries. Mr. Tylor goes on in the same sentence: "But, since the period of European colonists and missionaries, a

crowd of alleged native names for the Supreme Deity and a great Evil Deity have been recorded, which, if really of native origin, would show the despised black fellow as in possession of theological generalisations as to the formation and conservation of the universe, and the nature of good and evil, comparable with those of his white supplanter in the land.” {23a} Mr. Tylor then proceeds to argue that these ideas have been borrowed from missionaries. I have tried to reply to this argument by proving, for example, that the name of Baiame, one of these deities, could not have been borrowed (as Mr. Tylor seems inclined to hold) from a missionary tract published sixteen years after we first hear of Baiame, who, again, was certainly dominant before the arrival of missionaries. I have adduced other arguments of the same tendency, and I will add that the earliest English explorers and missionaries in Virginia and New England (1586-1622) report from America beliefs absolutely parallel in many ways to the creeds now reported from Australia. Among these notions are “ideas of moral judgment and retribution after death,” which in Australia Mr. Tylor marks as “imported.” {23b} In my opinion the certainty that the beliefs in America were not imported, is another strong argument for their native character, when they are found with such striking resemblances among the very undeveloped savages of Australia.

Savages, Mr. Hartland says in a censure of my theory, are “guiltless” of Christian teaching. {24} If Mr. Hartland is right, Mr. Tylor is wrong; the ideas, whatever else they are, are unimported, yet, *teste* Mr. Tylor, the ideas are comparable with those of the black man’s white supplinters. I would scarcely go so far. If we take, however, the best ideas attributed to the blacks, and hold them disengaged from the accretion of puerile fables with which they are overrun, then there are discovered notions of high religious value, undeniably analogous to some Christian dogmas. But the sanction of the Australian gods is as powerfully lent to silly, or cruel, or needless ritual, as to some moral ideas of weight and merit. In brief, as far as I am able to see, all sorts of ideas, the lowest and the highest, are held at once confusedly by savages, and the same confusion survives in ancient Greek belief. As far back as we can trace him, man had a wealth of religious and mythical conceptions to choose from, and different peoples, as they advanced in civilisation, gave special prominence to different elements in the primal stock of beliefs. The choice of Israel was unique: Greece retained far more of the lower ancient ideas, but gave to them a beauty of grace and form which is found among no other race.

If this view be admitted for the moment, and for the argument’s sake, we may ask how it applies to the myths of Apollo. Among the ideas which

even now prevail among the backward peoples still in the neolithic stage of culture, we may select a few conceptions. There is the conception of a great primal anthropomorphic Being, who was in the beginning, or, at least, about whose beginning legend is silent. He made all things, he existed on earth (in some cases), teaching men the arts of life and rules of conduct, social and moral. In those instances he retired from earth, and now dwells on high, still concerned with the behaviour of the tribes.

This is a lofty conception, but it is entangled with a different set of legends. This primal Being is mixed up with strange persons of a race earlier than man, half human, half bestial. Many things, in some cases almost all things, are mythically regarded, not as created, but as the results of adventures and metamorphoses among the members of this original race. Now in New Zealand, Polynesia, Greece, and elsewhere, but not, to my knowledge, in the very most backward peoples, the place of this original race, "Old, old Ones," is filled by great natural objects, Earth, Sky, Sea, Forests, regarded as beings of human parts and passions.

The present universe is mythically arranged in regard to their early adventures: the separation of sky and earth, and so forth. Where this belief prevails we find little or no trace of the primal maker and master, though we do find strange early metaphysics of curiously abstract quality (Maoris, Zuñis, Polynesians). As far as our knowledge goes, Greek mythology springs partly from this stratum of barbaric as opposed to strictly savage thought. Ouranos and Gaea, Cronos, and the Titans represent the primal beings who have their counterpart in Maori and Wintu legend. But these, in the Greece of the Epics and Hesiod, have long been subordinated to Zeus and the Olympians, who are envisaged as triumphant gods of a younger generation. There is no Creator; but Zeus—how, we do not know—has come to be regarded as a Being relatively Supreme, and as, on occasion, the guardian of morality. Of course his conduct, in myth, is represented as a constant violation of the very rules of life which he expects mankind to observe. I am disposed to look on this essential contradiction as the result of a series of mythical accretions on an original conception of Zeus in his higher capacity. We can see how the accretions arose. Man never lived consistently on the level of his best original ideas: savages also have endless myths of Baiame or Daramulun, or Bunjil, in which these personages, though interested in human behaviour, are puerile, cruel, absurd, lustful, and so on. Man will sport thus with his noblest intuitions.

In the same way, in Christian Europe, we may contrast Dunbar's pious "Ballat of Our Lady" with his "Kynd Kittok," in which God has his eye on

the soul of an intemperate ale-wife who has crept into Paradise. "God lukit, and saw her lattin in, and leugh His heart sair." Examples of this kind of sportive irreverence are common enough; their root is in human nature: and they could not be absent in the mythology of savage or of ancient peoples. To Zeus the myths of this kind would come to be attached in several ways.

As a nature-god of the Heaven he marries the Earth. The tendency of men being to claim descent from a God, for each family with this claim a myth of a separate divine amour was needed. Where there had existed Totemism, or belief in kinship with beasts, the myth of the amour of a wolf, bull, serpent, swan, and so forth, was attached to the legend of Zeus. Zeus had been that swan, serpent, wolf, or bull. Once more, ritual arose, in great part, from the rites of sympathetic magic.

This or that mummery was enacted by men for a magical purpose, to secure success in the chase, agriculture, or war. When the performers asked, "Why do we do thus and thus?" the answer was, "Zeus first did so," or Demeter, or Apollo did so, on a certain occasion. About that occasion a myth was framed, and finally there was no profligacy, cruelty, or absurdity of which the God was not guilty. Yet, all the time, he punished adultery, inhospitality, perjury, incest, cannibalism, and other excesses, of which, in legend, he was always setting the example. We know from Xenophanes, Plato, and St. Augustine how men's consciences were tormented by this unceasing contradiction: this overgrowth of myth on the stock of an idea originally noble. It is thus that I would attempt to account for the contradictory conceptions of Zeus, for example.

As to Apollo, I do not think that mythologists determined to find, in Apollo, some deified aspect of Nature, have laid stress enough on his counterparts in savage myth. We constantly find, in America, in the Andaman Isles, and in Australia, that, subordinate to the primal Being, there exists another who enters into much closer relations with mankind. He is often concerned with healing and with prophecy, or with the inspiration of conjurers or shamans. Sometimes he is merely an underling, as in the case of the Massachusetts Kiehtan, and his more familiar subordinate, Hobamoc. [{30}](#) But frequently this go-between of God and Man is (like Apollo) the *Son* of the primal Being (often an unbegotten Son) or his Messenger (Andaman, Noongaburrah, Kurnai, Kamilaroi, and other Australian tribes). He reports to the somewhat otiose primal Being about men's conduct, and he sometimes superintends the Mysteries. I am disposed to regard the prophetic and oracular Apollo (who, as the Hymn to Hermes tells us, alone knows the will of Father

Zeus) as the Greek modification of this personage in savage theology. Where this Son is found in Australia, I by no means regard him as a savage refraction from Christian teaching about a mediator, for Christian teaching, in fact, has not been accepted, least of all by the highly conservative sorcerers, or shamans, or wirreenuns of the tribes. European observers, of course, have been struck by (and have probably exaggerated in some instances) the Christian analogy. But if they had been as well acquainted with ancient Greek as with Christian theology they would have remarked that the Andaman, American, and Australian "mediators" are infinitely more akin to Apollo, in his relations with Zeus and with men, than to any Person about whom missionaries can preach. But the most devoted believer in borrowing will not say that, when the Australian mediator, Tundun, son of Mungun-gnaur, turns into a porpoise, the Kurnai have borrowed from our Hymn of the Dolphin Apollo. It is absurd to maintain that the Son of the God, the go-between of God and men, in savage theology, is borrowed from missionaries, while this being has so much more in common with Apollo (from whom he cannot conceivably be borrowed) than with Christ. The Tundun-porpoise story seems to have arisen in gratitude to the porpoise, which drives fishes inshore, for the natives to catch. Neither Tharamulun nor Hobamoc (Australian and American Gods of healing and soothsaying), who appear to men as serpents, are borrowed from Asclepius, or from the Python of Apollo. The processes have been quite different, and in Apollo, the oracular son of Zeus, who declares his counsel to men, I am apt to see a beautiful Greek modification of the type of the mediating Son of the primal Being of savage belief, adorned with many of the attributes of the Sun God, from whom, however, he is fundamentally distinct. Apollo, I think, is an adorned survival of the Son of the God of savage theology. He was not, at first, a Nature God, solar or not. This opinion, if it seems valid, helps to account, in part, for the animal metamorphoses of Apollo, a survival from the mental confusion of savagery. Such a confusion, in Greece, makes it necessary for the wise son of Zeus to seek information, as in the Hymn to Hermes, from an old clown. This medley of ideas, in the mind of a civilised poet, who believes that Apollo is all-knowing in the counsels of eternity, is as truly mythological as Dunbar's God who laughs his heart sore at an ale-house jest. Dunbar, and the author of the Hymn, and the savage with his tale of Tundun or Daramulun, have all quite contradictory sets of ideas alternately present to their minds; the mediæval poet, of course, being conscious of the contradiction, which makes the essence of his humour, such as it is. To Greece, in its loftier moods, Apollo was, despite his myth, a noble source of inspiration, of art, and of

conduct. But the contradiction in the low myth and high doctrine of Apollo, could never be eradicated under any influence less potent than that of Christianity. [{34}](#) If this theory of Apollo's origin be correct, many pages of learned works on Mythology need to be rewritten.

THE HYMN TO HERMES



The Hymn to Hermes is remarkable for the corruption of the text, which appears even to present *lacunæ*. The English reader will naturally prefer the lively and charming version of Shelley to any other. The poet can tell and adorn the story without visibly floundering in the pitfalls of a dislocated text. If we may judge by line 51, and if Greek musical tradition be correct, the date of the Hymn cannot be earlier than the fortieth Olympiad. About that period Terpander is said to have given the lyre seven strings (as Mercury does in the poem), in place of the previous four strings. The date of Terpander is dubious, but probably the seven-stringed lyre had long been in common use before the poet attributed the invention to Hermes. The same argument applies to the antiquity of writing, assigned by poets as the invention of various mythical and prehistoric heroes. But the poets were not careful archæologists, and regarded anachronisms as genially as did Shakespeare or Scott. Moreover, the fact that Terpander did invent the seven chords is not beyond dispute historically, while, mythically, Apollo and Amphion are credited with the idea. That Hermes invented

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