

two chief poems bearing Hesiod's name which have come down to us—the "Theogony" and the "Works and Days." The account given in the former is as follows: At Mekone (that is, Sicily) gods and men meet to settle their respective privileges, the main question to be decided being what share in the victim slain in sacrifice shall fall to each. Prometheus is the partial advocate of the claims of man. He dares to measure himself in wisdom with Zeus, whom he attempts by a sly artifice to outwit. He slays a great ox and divides him with forward zeal, making two heaps, in one of which are all the really good parts, the flesh, lungs, heart and liver, hidden beneath the hide and stomach with which he covers them; the other heap, which contains only the bones, concealed, however, beneath the glistening fat, is the more attractive to the eye. Prometheus bids Zeus choose. Zeus is not really deceived by the trick; but he is already angry with man, and therefore avails himself of the opportunity to acquire a tangible ground of complaint against him. So ironically twitting Prometheus with the partiality of his division, as if it were the gods who were favoured by it, he makes choice of the poorer portion, plunging his hand into the worthless heap of bones. The deception being now manifest his wrath against men finds free vent. He punishes them for the sin of their champion by withdrawing from them the gift of fire. Prometheus, however, steals back the fire, which he conveys to his protégés in the hollow of a reed. Hereupon the rage of Zeus breaks forth in its deadliest form. He resolves upon a signal vengeance. Hephaestus is commissioned to fashion woman out of the earth in the likeness of a modest maiden. Athene decks the new-created wonder with a girdle, a silver-spangled robe and an embroidered veil, crowning her brows with a garland of fresh flowers. When all is ready Zeus takes this vision of delight and exhibits her to the astonished gaze of gods and men. To the latter he gives her, the fair evil, to their lasting bane. For from her have sprung all the daughters of Eve, who in the poet's eyes are little better than a burden and a snare. They are not sharers in the toils, but only in the luxuries of man. They are to him what the drones are to the bees. "The bees are busy all the day to the sun's setting weaving the white honeycombs. But the drones abide indoors in the sheltered hives and gather for their bellies the fruits of others' labours. Even in this wise hath high-thundering Zeus given woman unto man to his harm—a sharer in nought save in his sorry deeds."

Such is the condign punishment of man. Prometheus, for his share, is fettered to a pillar and visited every day by the eagle of Zeus, which gnaws his liver, the seat of pride and evil passions. Each

night what was devoured during the day grew up afresh. At length, however, the eagle is slain by Heracles, the mortal son of Zeus, not without the will of his sire, who is well-pleased that his son's name should be spread abroad over all the earth. When we recall the fact that Prometheus is the obvious representative of sinful humanity, stricken under the curses of heaven, this story of his release by the much-enduring son of Zeus, whose whole life is spent in manifest toils and labours for the benefit of his fellow-mortals, cannot fail to strike us as an extraordinary anticipation of the profoundest arcana in the symbolism of religion.

At the same time the extreme naivete of most of the tale needs no emphasizing. It is clearly an attempt to explain the origin of evil, the commencement of discord between God and man. But the narrative is forced to pre-suppose the very discord which it is intended to explain. Zeus is already angry with man before Prometheus has provoked him, and but for this pre-existing anger the provocation could neither have been given or taken. The trick of the sacrifice is obviously not an early myth but a comparatively late effort to account for the striking fact that the gods receive so small a part of that offering which men profess to make in their honour. Again the interesting account of the origin of woman, not altogether unlike the Semitic tradition recorded in Genesis, seems to stand in no necessary relation with Prometheus and his theft of fire, and belongs no doubt originally to a quite distinct mythological region.

The account given in the "Works and Days" is, in essentials, almost the same as the above, the chief difference being the fuller expansion in it of the primitive part assigned to woman. Zeus is angry with man because Prometheus has deceived him (no doubt as above). Therefore, as before, he hides the fire which Prometheus steals. It is but a short-lived triumph. The mind of Zeus is not to be deceived or out-witted. He causes Hephaestus to fashion a creature of wondrous beauty out of moistened earth, who is endowed by each of the gods with a special gift, by Athene with skill in cunning handiwork, by Aphrodite with witching grace, languors and dainty coquettish ways, by Hermes with flattering humility and sly craft. She is adorned by Athene, the Graces and the Hours in such bravery that it is a delight for men and gods to look upon her. The gods call her Pandora because she is a fateful gift to man from all the gods together. Then Hermes leads her to the house of Epimetheus. This foolish brother of the wise man, though he had been warned expressly by Prometheus not to accept any gift from Zeus, is overwhelmed by the innumerable graces of the lovely snare. He masks not the evil (according to his nature and name) till he has it for his own. Now