The Implications of Hephaestus's Role as the Inventor of Metallurgy in the *Chronographia* of John Malalas*

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Abstract

John Malalas presents Hephaestus as a king of Egypt who was deified as an inventor who made weapons and so provided his subjects with nourishment and strength in war. In the context of the Greco-Roman discussion of the progress of civilization and the identification of inventors, this may seem innocuous, even a commendation. But this discourse does not unite war and hunting, as Hephaestus's inventions do. This combination seems to allude by inversion to the biblical ideal of harmony among people and between people and beasts, and so makes Hephaestus an agent of human delinquency. This denigration is confirmed by the magical initiation of Hephaestus's ironsmithing. It is, however, by implication and allusion, rather than outright denunciation, that Malalas achieves his critique of the traditional gods and their deification.

Keywords

John Malalas, Hephaestus, deification (Christian critique of), inventors and inventions, *euergesia*, weapons, metallurgy, hunting

* Dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Jeffreys (1941–2023). I owe her debts unpaid and beyond payment and acknowledge that I will spend my career responding to her learned and sagacious assertions. All students of the *Chronicle* of John Malalas are her beneficiaries, *nanos gigantis humeris insidentes*.

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When in this world's unpleasing youth
Our godlike race began,
The longest arm, the sharpest tooth,
Gave man control of man;

Till, bruised and bitten to the bone
And taught by pain and fear,
He learned to deal the far-off stone,
And poke the long, safe spear.
–Rudyard Kipling[1]

Introduction

In his treatment of the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon as ancient human kings, John Malalas adopts an evenhanded and dispassionate tone appropriate to the writing of history.[2] His *Chronographia* may be a Christian world chronicle, written in the reign of Justinian (527–565), who undertook strenuous legal and punitive measures to purge the traditional religion of the Greeks and Romans from the Roman Empire, but his work was not openly polemical.[3] Rather than fulminating

[1] Rudyard Kipling, "The Benefactors," in *The Complete Verse* (London: Kyle Cathie, 1990) 275.

[2] On the account of the gods in Malalas's chronicle, see Elsa Hörling, *Mythos und Pistis. Zur Deutung heidnischer Mythen in der christlichen Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas* (PhD diss., Lund University, 1980); Elizabeth Jeffreys, "The Chronicle of John Malalas, Book I: A Commentary," in *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?* (ed. Pauline Allen and Elizabeth Jeffreys; Byzantina Australiensia 10; Brisbane: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1996) 52–74. Although throughout this article, for the sake of simplicity, I will refer to John Malalas as the author of the treatment of the gods in his chronicle, it is probable that this material can be attributed to Bouttios, an obscure source Malalas cites elsewhere; see Benjamin Garstad, "Euhemerus and the *Chronicle* of John Malalas," *International History Review* 38 (2016) 900–29; idem, *Bouttios and Late Antique Antioch: Reconstructing a Lost Historian* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 48; Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2022) 79–114. On Malalas and his *Chronographia* in general, see *Studies in John Malalas* (ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys et al.; Byzantina Australiensia 6; Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1990); *Recherches sur la Chronique de Jean Malalas* (vol. 1; ed. Joëlle Beaucamp et al.; Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilization de Byzance, Monographies 15; Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilization de Byzance, 2004); *Recherches sur la Chronique de Jean Malalas* (vol. 2; ed. Sandrine Agusta-Boutarot et al.; Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilization de Byzance, Monographies 24; Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilization de Byzance, 2006). A long-term project on the *Chronographia* of John Malalas under the direction of Mischa Meier and the auspices of the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften has already produced three collections of studies—*Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas. Autor–Werk–Überlieferung* (ed. Mischa Meier, Christine Radtki, and Fabian Schulz; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2016); *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas. Quellenfragen* (ed. Laura Carrara, Mischa Meier, and Christine Radtki-Jansen; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2017); *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas im Kontext spätantiker Memorialkultur* (ed. Jonas Borsch, Olivier Gengler, and Mischa Meier; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2019)—and will culminate in a projected *Historisch-philologischer Kommentar zur Chronik des Johannes Malalas*.

[3] Malalas himself is one of our principal sources for the persecution of pagans during the reign of Justinian: *Chron.* 18.42, 47, 136, cf. 13.2, 37, 14.16, 38, 17.13. But see also *Cod. Iust.* 1.5.18, 1.11.9, 1.11.10; Procop., *Bell.* 1.19.35–37, *Aed.* 1.1.9, 6.2.14–20, 4.12, *Anec.* 11.21–23, 31–33, 19.11. See Demetrios J. Constantelos, "Paganism and the State in the Age of Justinian," *CHR* 50 (1964)

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against the error of deifying mere mortals or the utter unworthiness of the mortals selected for deification, Malalas conveys the facts in the matter with a minimum of comment. This is evident when we contrast Malalas's version with the account of the kings taken for gods in the contemporary original of the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, which tells much the same story, but with a strident insistence on the wickedness of the so-called gods and their deeds.[4] When speaking of the first men to be taken for gods, moreover, Malalas does not even use the same vituperative language that is employed in the text of his chronicle when discussing the gods as the objects of the devotion of contemporary idolaters; in the final chapters of the last book there is a note on the destruction of the images and statues of the abominable gods (εἰκόνες τῶν μυσερῶν θεῶν αὐτων καὶ ἀγάλματα) of the pagans.[5] All this is not to say, however, that Malalas is unbiased or that he does not have a message to convey concerning the old gods.[6] To mix a couple of metaphors—a solecism

372–80; Edward Watts, "Justinian, Malalas, and the End of Athenian Philosophical Teaching in A. D. 529," *JRS* 94 (2004) 168–82; Wolf Liebeschuetz, "The View from Antioch: From Libanius via John Chrysostom to John Malalas and Beyond," in *Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire: The Breaking of a Dialogue (IVth–VIth Century A.D.)* (ed. Peter Brown and Rita Lizzi Testa; Vienna: LIT, 2011) 332–35; Peter N. Bell, *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian: Its Nature, Management, and Mediation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 306–7, 315.

[4] *ELB* 1.6.1–3 (*Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian World Chronicle* [ed. Benjamin Garstad; Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 14; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012] 186–91); see Benjamin Garstad, "The Excerpta Latina Barbari and the 'Picus-Zeus Narrative,'" *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 34 (2002) 259–313, at 299–301.

[5] Malalas, *Chron.* 18.136 (*Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* [ed. Johannes Thurn; Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 35; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000] 424). It is quite possible that this statement, along with the rest of the material at the end of the text as we have it, does not belong to John Malalas, the author of the rest of the chronicle, but was added by a later continuator. It has long been recognized that there is a perceptible shift in the style and substance in the latter chapters of book 18. This shift has been explained by positing more than one phase in the writing of Malalas; Brian Croke, "Malalas, the Man and His Work," in *Studies* (ed. Jeffreys et al.) 1–25, at 17–25; Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 236–40, 245. Earlier scholars considered it the result of Malalas's work being taken up by a different author; Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1880–1889) 2:129–38; Ernst Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* (2 vols.; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949–1959) 2:703; Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (2 vols.; Munich: Beck, 1978) 1:320; cf. Croke, "Malalas, the Man," 21. Olivier Gengler, in a conference paper to be elaborated in the forthcoming *Tübingen Commentary on Malalas*, has revived a version of the thesis of a later continuator on an altogether more probable basis and seems to have offered the proposition upon which future scholarship will proceed; Olivier Gengler, "Time, Chronology, and Narrative in John Malalas" (paper presented at the "Time Calculation in Late Antiquity: The Chronicon Paschale and Beyond" conference, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 24 October 2018). Nevertheless, calling the pagan gods "abominable" expresses a sentiment not out of keeping with that of later portions of the chronicle indisputably belonging to Malalas; cf. *Chron.* 17.9.

[6] There is general agreement that "pagan" is a serviceable, but not entirely satisfactory term, in the context of the ancient Mediterranean world, for those who were neither Christians, nor Jews, nor Samaritans, their gods, and their cult. The English word is derived from the Latin *paganus* ("rural; countryman; civilian as opposed to soldier"), which, as it is used in ecclesiastical Latin to refer to those outside the Church or the Synagogue, has a slightly pejorative sense, not only implying that the worshippers of the old gods were excluded from the Church Militant, but also insinuating their

I'm not sure Malalas wouldn't appreciate—if he has an axe to grind, he refuses to show his hand while he's at it. He does not engage in open hostilities, which would be unsuitable to his chosen genre and would put off any reader not already convinced of the falsity of the pagan gods, but works by allusion and implication to create a negative impression of the men taken for gods. Thereby he lends the authority of history to his critique of the gods and allows his readers to draw the conclusions to which they have been carefully led for themselves. This is evident, for example, in the case of Hephaestus.

In his account of the gods as kings, Malalas describes not only the descent of the family line of Cronus through his sons, "Picus, who is also Zeus" and Ninus, but also its bifurcation into two branches, one of which remains in Assyria, its country of origin, and one of which first sojourns in Italy and then establishes itself in Egypt. "Faunus, who is also Hermes," the son of Picus-Zeus, becomes the king of Egypt and is succeeded by his son, Hephaestus.[7] The first thing Malalas says of Hephaestus is that he ruled the Egyptians for 1,680 days, and his reign was measured thus because the Egyptians were as yet ignorant of measuring time by years. We are at once transported back to a primitive stage of technological development, when human society still lacked many of the inventions taken for granted at the present, the sixth-century present of Malalas, as well as our own. The next thing

rusticity in contrast to the urbanity of the progressive Christians. Inasmuch as it was one side's term for the other in an ideological confrontation, it does not seem to reflect the even-handed detachment expected of academic discourse. But no one has yet to hit upon an accurate alternative that does not impede fluid writing and ready comprehension. "Polytheist" is simply incorrect, as it obscures the complex theology of late antique paganism and its tendency toward monotheism or at least henotheism—and "polytheist" reflects another talking point in Christian polemics. "Adherent of traditional Graeco-Roman culture and religion" is immediately awkward and verbose, before reflection shows it to be paltry and problematic. "Non-Christian" ignores the presence of Jews and Samaritans in the equation—and early Christian authors were certainly not decrying the worship of Jewish and Samaritan gods! The term that John Malalas, the author we are discussing, along with almost all other Byzantine writers, uses for the group we call pagan is Ἑλληνικός, that is, "Hellenic" or "Greek," which might suggest a neutral alternative to "pagan." But confronted by "Hellenic" instead of "pagan," in every instance the reader must wonder in what sense the word is being used. And replacing "pagan" with "Greek" would hardly aid clarity or allay concerns about insensitivity. "Hellenic" can mean so much more than "pagan;" using the one term as a substitute for the other obscures not only the deep learning of so many early Christian authors, but also the fact that even a derogation of the pagan gods is a profoundly meaningful form of Christian engagement with Hellenism. If we want to capture the disdain and opprobrium in which early Byzantine authors held the followers of the old religion, instead of "pagan" we might use the term "heathen," which lacks the neutrality of its German cognate *Heide*, but singles out precisely the group we want to discuss. So, "pagan" remains the recognized term for a broad group with a complex identity in the field that devotes the most energy and enthusiasm to coming to grips with the nature and subtleties of ancient paganism. Nevertheless, it is conceded that this is an imperfect term, though the least imperfect of the choices set before us. Moreover, "pagan" is not necessarily used in a negative sense at present; far from it. When Burton Raffel selected *Pure Pagan* as the title of his collection of Greek lyric poetry in translation (New York: Modern Library, 2004), he clearly meant to tantalize prospective readers and to capture all that was most humane and charming about the life of the ancient Greeks.

[7] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.8–2.2.

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Malalas tells us is that the Egyptians said Hephaestus was a god, but his enigmatic reason for this, that "he was warlike and mystical" (πολεμιστὴς καὶ μυστικός), requires the explanation of the rest of the account.[8] Malalas goes on to describe how Hephaestus was lamed in a fall with his horse, how he decreed chastity laws that were gratefully received by the Egyptians, and how he received a pair of tongs out of the air in answer to his prayers, which allowed him to make weapons of iron. This last attainment made Hephaestus overwhelming in the wars he fought. And so, Hephaestus is said to have been deified by his subjects as a lawgiver who cultivated chastity and "an inventor who found sustenance for men by making arms and one who produced power and safety in war; for before his time they made war with clubs and rocks" (καὶ τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις διὰ κατασκευῆς ὅπλων εὑρηκότα καὶ ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις δύναμιν καὶ σωτηρίαν ποιήσαντα· πρὸ γὰρ αὐτοῦ ῥοπάλοις καὶ λίθοις ἐπολέμουν).[9] On the face of it, to be accorded the status of a god by the Egyptians, and for such apparently unimpeachable grounds as legislation and invention, seems like high praise indeed for Hephaestus. We should, however, cast a suspicious eye on accounts of deification in Christian chronicles, and this is no

[8] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.15 (ed. Thurn, 16). There is perhaps a certain irony in Hephaestus being described as mystical or a mystic (μυστικός), as well as being responsible for the chastity laws of the Egyptians, since it was because he was a mystic and performed marvellous spectacles (ἦν γὰρ καὶ μυστικὸς καὶ φαντασίας τινὰς ποιῶν) that Picus-Zeus managed to seduce numerous noble ladies and persuade them that he was a god (*Chron.* 1.13 [ed. Thurn, 13]). But describing Hephaestus as both warlike and a mystic is consistent with Malalas's identification of other mystics in his chronicle; see Anne-Marie Bernardi, "Les *mystikoi* dans la chronique de Jean Malalas," in *Recherches* (vol. 1; ed. Beaucamp et al.) 53–64. He says that Samson, the strong man of the Bible, was a nobly born mystic who performed miracles (4.12), but he says nothing of his strength; likewise, he describes both Heracles and his opponent as mystics (4.17). There is a discernable tendency to have great physical strength, a propensity to violence, and an ability in conflict to go under the name of mysticism. In a similar fashion, Malalas says Cleopatra was profoundly beautiful and a mystic (10.9), just after reports that she seduced Antony, and sums up the life of Octavian by saying he was "a mystic high priest and a king" (10.6). The identification of Hephaestus as warlike (πολεμιστής) is also quite possibly relevant to the overall concern of this passage with his deification. In his more programmatic account of the origins of Hellenism, that is, paganism, in the time of the patriarch Serug (*Chron.* 2.18 [ed. Thurn, 38]), Malalas says that idolatry began when statues were first raised to admirable men, warlike leaders (πολεμιστὰς ἡγεμόνας) among them, who were revered as benefactors as if divine (ὡς εὐεργέτας εἰς θεὸν προσεκύνουν). Dindorf and Thurn, following the text of the *Chronicon Paschale*, both added an ἢ between the πολεμιστὰς and ἡγεμόνας found in the manuscript, so as to give the reading of πολεμιστὰς <ἢ> ἡγεμόνας and the sense of "warlike men or leaders," rather than "warlike leaders." "Warlike leader," however, would be an apt description of Hephaestus, who was a king and a warrior. Otherwise, Malalas uses the word πολεμιστής, if not rarely, then in specific contexts. Thouras-Ares, another member of the family of Picus-Zeus who is also deified and receives divine cult, is referred to as πολεμιστής (*Chron.* 1.12). The same adjective is used several times in Malalas's pen portraits of several heroes of the Trojan War (*Chron.* 5.9–10), namely, Achilles, Patroclus, Telamonian Ajax, Protesilaus, Meriones, Locrian Ajax, and Troilus, who in most cases were accorded heroic cult, even if Malalas does not say as much. Apart from these instances, in which the word is used of figures who received worship, Malalas uses πολεμιστής to describe the 15,000 young Scythian warriors Sostris settled in Persia (2.3) and the 400 fighting men Pallas and Evander provided to Aeneas (6.24), cases that still belong to the earliest historical epochs.

[9] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.15 (ed. Thurn, 16). All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

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exception. But the full import of this passage is to be found with reference to the texts not only that informed the author's composition but also that he expected to inform his audience's apprehension of what he wrote.

Hephaestus's role as a lawgiver and a promoter of marital fidelity requires a separate discussion, particularly in light of the elaborate narrative Malalas provides of his son Helios's efforts to enforce the chastity laws of Hephaestus. We may pursue the point we have in hand while concentrating on Hephaestus's invention of ironworking and weapons. This is an accomplishment, after all, that seems to address the quintessence of the smith god, rather than one of the most famous deeds attributed to him in myth and poetry. Before we begin to unfold the implications of this statement, however, we should determine just what it says.

In Malalas's construction, the indication of the invention of weapons as grounds for deification emphasizes not the invention itself but the benefits that spring from it. Hephaestus is not said to invent weapons, but rather, through the manufacture of arms, to discover nourishment or a means of living for human beings and to provide power and safety in battle. Malalas could be a bit clearer about what he means by Hephaestus discovering "nourishment" (τροφὴν), but the unavoidable intention seems to be that the weapons made by Hephaestus were used for hunting as well as for war. The acknowledged purpose of hunting, at least at first, was not sport, but the provision of food, and hunting required the deadly tools only the smith could make.[10] "Food" or "victuals" was the principal sense of τροφή, and if Malalas wanted to say that Hephaestus made a warlike "way of life" or "livelihood" (a secondary sense of τροφή) possible, there were more straightforward ways to do so. Malalas has already expressed an interest in the invention of hunting and its capacity to feed the multitude, when, just before beginning his account of the so-called gods, he identifies Nimrod, that "mighty hunter before the Lord," as the first to teach hunting and provide everyone with animals for food, and—presumably for this reason—he was prominent among the Persians (οὗτος πρῶτος κατέδειξεν τὸ κυνήγιν

[10] Oppian, *Cyn*. 1.91–96, 146–157, 2.7, cf. 3.136. Oppian, *Cyn*. 2.7 (*Oppien d'Apamée, La Chasse* [ed. Pierre Boudreaux; Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1908] 71), says that the Centaurs "invented hunting for supper's sake" (ἐπιδόρπιον εὕρετο θήρην). Mair (*Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus* [trans. A. W. Mair; LCL 219; London: Heinemann, 1928] 55) translates this same phrase, "did . . . invent the chase for pastime after the banquet," but achieving this sense of postprandial sport requires him to draw in evidence Plato's (*Criti.* 115B) use of a quite different word, μεταδόρπια. "For the sake of the banquet," rather than "after the banquet," seems the natural meaning of ἐπιδόρπιος. Xenophon (*Cyn*. 6.11, 17) sends his hunter out armed only with a cudgel, but then he is almost exclusively concerned with hunting hares. He does advise javelins for hunting deer (9.2, 20) and javelins and a spear for boar (10.1, 3). In conclusion, though, he commends hunting because it accustoms men to bear arms in the field, as in war (12.2)—equating the equipment of war and the hunt, as does Malalas. Pliny, *HN* 8.(17) 44 (*C. Plini Secundi Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII* [ed. Karl Frederich Theodor Mayhoff; 6 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1892–1909] 2:65–66), speaks of Alexander giving orders to "all those who provided nourishment by hunting, fowling and fishing" (*omnium quos venatus, aucupia, piscatusque alebant*) to forward reports to Aristotle; *alo* is a transitive verb, without any necessary implication of the middle voice, and *alebant* here indicates that the practitioners of these arts fed other people by their proper activities.

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καὶ ἐχορήγει πᾶσιν θηρία εἰς βρῶσιν καὶ ἐπρώτευεν ἐν Πέρσαις) and was deified and catasterized.[11] The weapons of Hephaestus make the Egyptians formidable in war, affording them the power (δύναμιν) of superior armament and, perhaps on the understanding that the best defence is a good offence, safety (σωτηρίαν) as well. The final note, that before Hephaestus people made war with sticks and stones, gives a vivid impression of the advancement in technology Hephaestus accomplished and sets what Malalas has to say about him in the context—the first of several we will identify—of the Hellenistic discourse on social and cultural progress.

Weapons, Technology, and the Advance of Civilization

The image of primitive humans using sticks and stones as weapons recalls the way that Agatharchides of Cnidos describes the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi, or Fiber-eaters and Seed-eaters, in his *On the Erythraean Sea*. These tribesmen, he says, fight with one another over places (διαπολεμοῦσι δὲ πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ τῶν τόπων)—a perfectly serviceable definition of war, whether between altogether primitive or the most advanced societies—arming themselves with sticks (ῥάβδοις ὡπλισμένοι), by which means they also ward off attackers (καὶ ταύταις ἀμυνόμενοι τοὺς ἐναντίους) and, as a reminder of the savagery of the people he is discussing, they dismember the defeated.[12] There is a clear parallel here not only to the attribution of the use of crude and uncrafted weapons by primitive people, but also to the offensive and defensive use of weapons indicated by Malalas. But Agatharchides describes the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi, along with the other peoples along the Red Sea coast, not only according to their traits and habits, as Walter Ameling notes, but also as a demonstration of technical and social progress, from the utterly primitive and inarticulate Ichthyophagi, or Fish-eaters, to the civilized Sabaeans.[13] On the one hand, the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi display the characteristics of an undeveloped society; they forage for food, go about naked, and hold their women and children in common.[14] On the other, they can be placed on a continuum, particularly in regard to their use of tools and weapons. The Rhizophagi, or Root-eaters, mentioned just before them, know only stones as tools, though they do not

[11] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.7 (ed. Thurn, 9).

[12] Diod. Sic., 3.24.4 (*Diodori Bibliotheca Historica* [ed. Friedrich Vogel; 5 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1888–1906] 1:299); cf. Photius, *Bibl*. 250.51 (452a). See Agatharchides of Cnidus, *On the Erythraean Sea* (trans. and ed. Stanley M. Burstein; Hakluyt Society, 2nd ser. 172; London: Hakluyt Society, 1989) 92–94. Burstein, following Keller and McDermott—quite unhelpfully, I think—offers the behavior of chimpanzees as observed by Jane Goodall for comparison to the ways of the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi. Agatharchides may have been in receipt of confused reports, but there can be little doubt that in his mind he was engaged in an ethnographic exercise, describing fellow human beings at a different stage in social and technical development.

[13] Walter Ameling, "Ethnography and Universal History in Agatharchides," in *East & West: Papers in Ancient History Presented to Glen Bowersock* (ed. T. Corey Brennan and Harriet I. Flower; Loeb Classical Monographs 14; Cambridge: Department of the Classics, Harvard University, 2008) 13–59, at 37–47.

[14] Diod. Sic., 3.24.1–4; Photius, *Bibl.* 250.51 (452a).

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use them in warfare but in food preparation.[15] The Hunters, who come just after the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi, hunt animals at watering holes using a variety of weapons: clubs hardened with fire, stones, and even bows and arrows.[16] Then there are the Struthophagi, or Bird-eaters, who meet the constant attacks of their neighbors with weapons made from the horns of gazelles.[17] Further along, the Nomads or Trogodytes engage in battles over pasturage with a relatively elaborate panoply that includes iron-studded clubs, shields, and bows and arrows.[18]

Ameling sees the Hylophagi and Spermatophagi as the most advanced of the primitive tribes on the Red Sea, who "lived without any social organization, without any food shortage, possessing children and females in common."[19] And their advancement is demonstrated by their waging wars with their rustic weapons. Agatharchides appears to have thought that not just the use of weapons but the replacement of crude and accidental weapons like sticks with implements made for the purpose is to be seen as a tipping point from one stage to the next in the progress toward civilization. For a historian not insensitive to human suffering, as Agatharchides demonstrably was, progress ceases to be a term with exclusively positive connotations.[20] A very similar understanding of technological advancement and the march of civilization seems to have informed the description of Hephaestus's invention of iron-working and its consequences in Malalas. But, while what Agatharchides says of primitive peoples might reflect the details and even the tone of Hephaestus's provision of arms to the Egyptians, his relation is very different inasmuch as he eschews any mention of inventors. He describes the technical attainments of various peoples, but does not identify who might have been responsible for them. And, since Malalas's account of Hephaestus is essentially an explanation of how he came to be taken for a god, Hephaestus's role as an inventor is particularly important.

The Inventor of Weapons

The Greeks and Romans had undertaken to name the inventors of various arts and crafts and tools that were supposed to have advanced the quality and stability of human life, and in many cases the advancements they introduced were considered grounds for deification.[21] As early as the fifth century BCE, Prodicus of Ceos

[15] Diod. Sic., 3.23.1; Photius, *Bibl.* 250.50 (451b).

[16] Diod. Sic., 3.25.2; Photius, *Bibl.* 250.52 (452a–b).

[17] Diod. Sic., 3.28.6; Photius, *Bibl.* 250.57 (453a).

[18] Diod. Sic., 3.33.1, 3; Photius, *Bibl.* 250.61 (453b–454a).

[19] Ameling, "Ethnography and Universal History," 43.

[20] Burstein (Agatharchides, *On the Erythraean Sea* [ed. Burstein], 28–29) eloquently notes that while Agatharchides's history did praise the achievement of the Ptolemies in pushing their frontiers southward, it was not altogether triumphalist propaganda, but also displayed a remarkable sensitivity to the human price of imperial expansion that was paid, not by kings and generals, but by the "small men"; cf. Ameling, "Ethnography and Universal History," 14, 31–32.

[21] See Adolf Kleingünther, *Protos Euretes: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer Fragestellung*

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held the view that certain individuals had been promoted to godhead on account of the benefits they bestowed on the human race, such as Demeter for revealing the cultivation of grain and Dionysus for the grape.[22] Hellenistic theorists on the origins of religion, Hecataeus of Abdera, Euhemerus, and Diodorus Siculus among them, maintained that some of the rulers of the earliest epoch had been deified as benefactors, or *euergetai*, on account of their contributions to the common life of humanity.[23] This understanding of the relation between benefactions and the entitlement to divine honors was, no doubt, encouraged by the importance of the concept of *euergesia* in the official rhetoric of the Hellenistic kings.[24] Ironworking was considered a dubious benefaction—Herodotus says that iron was discovered as a bane to humanity (ἐπὶ κακῷ ἀνθρώπου σίδηρος ἀνεύρηται)—and arms may never have been thought as benign a gift as bread or wine, but some account was, nevertheless, taken of them in the enquiry into inventors.[25]

Malalas's proposal of Hephaestus as the inventor of weapons is without parallel but hardly insensible; in a famous passage in the fundamental work of Greek literature, after all, Hephaestus forged a panoply for Achilles, a masterpiece of the smith's craft.[26] Nor was there any agreement in the Greco-Roman tradition over who had invented weapons of war. It seems not to have been a question of who invented arms and armor in general but, more often, as in Malalas's account of Hephaestus, of who introduced their use to a specific people or place. In his diffuse catalogue of human inventions, the Elder Pliny separates the smelting and forging

(Leipzig: Dieterich, 1933); Thomas Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology* (American Philological Association Monographs 25; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 5, 48–50; Mary Beagon, *The Elder Pliny on the Human Animal: "Natural History," Book 7* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005) 56–57, 416–20.

[22] Albert Henrichs, "Two Doxographical Notes: Democritus and Prodicus on Religion," *HSCP* 79 (1975) 107–23; idem, "The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as the Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretalogies," *HSCP* 88 (1984) 139–58.

[23] Hecataeus of Abdera: *FGrH* 264 F 25 (= Diod. Sic., 1.13.1–3); see Oswyn Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic Kingship," *JEA* 56 (1970) 141–71, at 160. Dionysius Scytobrachion: *FGrH* 32 FF 7, 8 (= Diod. Sic., 3.56.5, 72.4, 73.3, 5–6); see Jeffrey S. Rusten, *Dionysius Scytobrachion* (Papyrologica Coloniensia 10; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982) 102–12. Diodorus Siculus: see Kenneth S. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 61–82; Iris Sulimani, *Diodorus' Mythistory and the Pagan Mission: Historiography and Culture-Heroes in the First Pentad of the "Bibliotheke"* (Mnemosyne Supplements 331; Leiden: Brill, 2011) 64–73.

[24] Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera," 159–61; Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus*, 69–70; A. E. Samuel, "The Ptolemies and the Ideology of Kingship," in *Hellenistic History and Culture* (ed. Peter Green; Hellenistic Culture and Society 9; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 168–92, at 190–91; Marek Winiarczyk, *The "Sacred History" of Euhemerus of Messene* (trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa; Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 312; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013) 41–46.

[25] Hdt., 1.68.4, (*Herodoti Historiae* [ed. Charles Hude; 3rd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1927] unnumbered pages). Weapons find no place, for instance, in the list of beneficial arts and crafts he gave mankind that Prometheus reels off to the Oceanids in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* (441–506).

[26] Hom., *Il.* 18.368–616. Not the least indication of the fame of this passage is its imitation by Virgil in his Roman epic: *Aen.* 8.370–453, 608–731.

of iron, which he attributes to the Cretan Dactyls and the Cyclopes, respectively, from the invention of all sorts of arms and armor and modes of fighting, but he does begin his list of the inventors of weapons by saying that the Africans first made war against the Egyptians with clubs, which they call "phalangae" or poles (*proelium Afri contra Aegyptios primi fecere fustibus, quos vocant phalangas*).[27] He thus, like Agatharchides and Malalas, situates the primeval forms of warfare, conducted with the most basic weapons, in the region of Africa and Egypt and imagines that, before they moved on to forged weapons, the people there fought with sticks. The Roman mythographer Hyginus, likewise, has the first warriors do battle with sticks and sets the innovation that revolutionizes warfare in Egypt: "The Africans and Egyptians at first fought with clubs, but afterward Belus, the son of Neptune, made war with a sword, whence it is called *bellum*," that is, war (*Afri et Aegyptii primum fustibus dimicauerunt, postea Belus Neptuni filius gladio belligeratus est, unde bellum est dictum*).[28] But Hyginus had already said that it was Phoroneus, the son of Inachus, who first made arms for Juno, and for this reason was the first to have the power of ruling as a king (*Phoroneus Inachi filius arma Iunoni primus fecit, qui ob eam causam primus regnandi potestatem habuit*).[29] The capacity to reign as a king seems to be conferred not so much by the gift of Juno as by the ability to make arms. In Malalas, Hephaestus is not merely a craftsman accorded divine honors, we should remember, but also a king—perhaps he is supposed to be a king who rules because of his craft.

According to Arrian, who seems to depend upon Megasthenes, Dionysus served the same function for the Indians as Malalas's Hephaestus does for the Egyptians, equipping them with weapons of war (ὁπλίσαι ὅπλοισι τοῖσιν ἀρηίοισι). But his provision of arms is just one of many of the arts of civilization he introduced to the Indians. The others are city building, laws, wine, tilling the earth, yoking oxen, the settled life of agriculturalists, and the worship of the gods, not least himself.[30] It is remarkable, in comparison, that Malalas mentions only metalworking and the forging of weapons when he discusses the material benefits offered by a man deified by his beneficiaries, and so has his readers concentrate exclusively on these dubious "gifts of the gods" and their implications.

In his first invective against the emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus takes issue with an argument he imputes to Julian—apparently the basis of his notorious School Law—that by rights the use of the Greek language belongs exclusively to the Hellenes, not simply as ethnic Greeks, but as upholders of the traditional

[27] Pliny, *HN* 7.(56) 197, 198, 200 (ed. Mayhoff, 2:50). See Beagon, *Pliny on the Human Animal*, 430–32, 438.

[28] Hyg., *Fab*. 274.22 (Hyginus, *Fabulae* [ed. Peter K. Marshall; Munich: Saur, 2002] 198). Cassiodorus (*Var*. 1.30.5) recalled this bit of trivia in a discussion of the nature of human conflict.

[29] Hyg., *Fab*. 274.8 (ed. Marshall, 196).

[30] Arr., *Ind*. 7.2–9, esp. 7 (Arrien, *L'Inde* [ed. Pierre Chantraine; 2nd ed.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1952] 32) = Megasthenes *FGrH* 715 F 12.

paideia, including the worship of the gods.[31] Gregory points out the absurdity of this contention by drawing attention to the many foreign inventions used by the Greeks. Does the emperor, he asks, pride himself on arms? And where do those arms come from (παρὰ τίνων σοι τὰ ὅπλα)? Is it not from the Cyclopes, who invented metalworking (οὐ τῶν Κυκλώπων, ἐξ ὧν τὸ χαλκεύειν)?[32] Notably, Gregory, like Malalas in regard to Hephaestus, identifies smithing as preliminary to the manufacture and use of weapons.

By making the Cyclopes the first to work metal and so to make arms, Gregory is, of course, alluding to Hesiod, who says that the Cyclopes forged thunder and lightning for Zeus in gratitude for their release from imprisonment within the earth.[33] Hesiod underscores the relationship between armament and rule over one's fellows, which we have already noted in regard to Hyginus on Phoroneus, when he says that it is trusting in the thunder and lightning that Zeus holds sway over mortals and immortals (τοῖς πίσυνος θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνάσσει).[34] But there may also be a glancing reference to Callimachus's hymn to Artemis, in which the goddess goes to see the Cyclopes busy working iron and bronze in their smithy under the Lipari Islands and asks them to make her a bow and arrows and quiver.[35] This is a reminder, just as we have in Malalas's account of Hephaestus, that arms are useful in the hunt as well as in war. And just as Malalas says the manufacture of arms provided food for men (τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις διὰ κατασκευῆς ὅπλων), Callimachus has Artemis promise that if she kills some beast, it will be food for the Cyclopes (τὸ δέ κεν Κύκλωπες ἔδοιεν).[36] The invention of hunting was also a matter of record in the Greco-Roman tradition, although its attribution seems to have come about as the result of a gradual development.

The Inventor of Hunting

Xenophon begins his treatise on the subject by stating that hunting was invented by the gods, Apollo and Artemis, and granted by them as a boon to Cheiron, who in turn taught it to many of the great men of the Age of Heroes, whose excellence and

[31] Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.100–109.

[32] Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.108 (*Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 4-5. Contre Julien* [ed. Jean Bernardi; SC 309; Paris: Cerf, 1983] 260). See Jennifer Nimmo Smith, *A Christian's Guide to Greek Culture: The Pseudo-Nonnus "Commentaries" on "Sermons" 4, 5, 39 and 43 by Gregory of Nazianzus* (Translated Texts for Historian 37; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001) 45; Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 49; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) 394.

[33] Hes., *Theog.* 139–146, 501–506.

[34] Hes., *Theog.* 506 (Hesiod, Theogony [ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1966] 130).

[35] Callim., *Hymn* 3.46–89. See *Callimaque. Épigrammes, Hymnes* (ed. Émile Cahen; 5th ed.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961) 238–43; *Calímaco*, *Himnos* (ed. Diego Honorato Errázuriz; Madrid: Cátedra, 2019) 118–23.

[36] Callim., *Hymn* 3.85 (*Callimachus* [ed. Rudolf Pfeiffer; 2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1949–1953] 2:12).

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famous deeds commend his theme to earnest students.[37] Oppian notes the various inventors of different aspects of the hunt but recognizes the Centaurs and, among humans, Perseus as the inventors of hunting in general.[38] The sense of Oppian's poetic elaborations is often remarkably similar to what Malalas has to say; he tells us that the Centaurs invented hunting for the sake of the supper table (ἐπιδόρπιον εὕρετο θήρην) and when he opens his poem with a description of the habitual equipment of the hunter, two javelins and a curved blade, he says these serve the double purpose of killing animals and offering defence against wicked men (καὶ γὰρ καὶ θήρεσσι πικρὸν φόνον ἐντύνοιντο, / καί τε κακῶν φορέοιεν ἀλεξητήρια φωτῶν), just as the weapons Hephaestus makes are used in the hunt and in war.[39] Oppian also mentions Aristaeus as the inventor of various rustic arts: shepherding, olive pressing, cheesemaking, and beekeeping but—notably, considering his subject—not hunting.[40]

The invention of hunting is eventually credited to Aristaeus, but this is no more than adumbrated in many of our earlier sources on this figure and only clearly indicated in rather late ones. Our earliest testimony on Aristaeus, one of Pindar's *Pythian Odes*, associates his mother, Cyrene, with the hunt and mentions him only as the promised child of her union with Apollo, though it does give "Hunter" (Ἀγρεύς) as one of his names.[41] Apollonius Rhodius also notes "Hunter" (Ἀγρεύς) as one of the epithets of Aristaeus, but speaks of him rather as a healer and prophet blessed by the Muses, and their shepherd, and as the inventor of beekeeping and the cultivation of olives.[42] Diodorus Siculus relates that Aristaeus was called "Hunter" (Ἀγρεύς) by the Nymphs who nursed him, but was—more significantly—taught by them the arts of cheesemaking, apiculture, and olive farming and went on to be the first to

[37] Xen., *Cyn*. 1.1–4, 17–18, 12.17–18.

[38] Oppian, *Cyn*. 2.5–30. In making the Centaurs the first hunters, Oppian must be indebted to Xenophon naming Cheiron the teacher of venery. Perhaps he credits Perseus with the invention of hunting because he identified (1.92) as the basic and regular weapon of the hunter the curved blade or hooked sword (δρεπάνη)—it is presumably a sword or knife, rather than a long-hafted weapon like a spear or bill, since the hunter is supposed to keep it tucked in his sash (ἐπὶ μεσσόθι ζώνης)—which, as a sickle-sword or scimitar, was also considered Perseus's weapon of choice when he beheaded Medusa.

[39] Oppian, *Cyn*. 2.7, 1.93–94 (ed. Boudreaux, 71, 49). Employing the same obfuscation going under the name of convenience as those who cite Homer without elaboration of explanation, I have simply referred to Oppian, but perhaps I should have spoken of the author of the *Cynegetica*, as opposed to the *Halieutica*, as pseudo-Oppian or Oppian of Apamea, as a strong case can—and has—been made for the former poem being written by a later Syrian imitator of the Cilician poet of the latter. The latest arguments for one poet and for two different poets have been made, respectively, by Heather White, "Notes on Oppian's Halieutica," *L'Antiquité Classique* 70 (2001) 171–75, at 173–75, and in response Sebastián Martínez and Tomás Silva, "Opiano, ¿un poeta o dos?" *L'Antiquité Classique* 72 (2003) 219–30.

[40] Oppian, *Cyn*. 4.265–75.

[41] Pind, *Pyth*. 9.6, 20–25, 58, 65. See Claude Calame, *Myth and History in Ancient Greece: The Symbolic Creation of a Colony* (trans. Daniel W. Berman; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 78–79.

[42] Ap. Rhod., *Argon.* 2.507, 511–13, 4.1132–33.

teach these arts to people, for which reason those who received the benefit of his discoveries rendered him honors equal to those of a god. He associates Aristaeus with hunting by recalling that he was the father of Actaeon and expatiating on the reasons for that unfortunate youth's destruction by Artemis.[43] For Apollodorus likewise Aristaeus is worthy of mention as the father of Actaeon.[44] The Elder Pliny, like Oppian, credits Aristaeus with the invention of olive oil and honey but says nary a word about hunting.[45]

The poetry of Nonnus may be further removed from the wellsprings of myth, but it does bring us closer to the time of Malalas than the prosaic mythological compendia and lists of inventors, and it is here that we find Aristaeus explicitly identified as the inventor of hunting—and in terms remarkably reminiscent of those Malalas chooses. He was the first of all to discover the work of hunting (κεῖνος ἀνὴρ πρώτιστος . . . εὗρε . . . πόνον . . . ἄγρης), but Nonnus goes into some detail, describing how he learned to employ bloodhounds, make nets, and track spoors, and how he taught hunters to wear boots and short tunics on the chase.[46] He also credits Aristaeus with the invention of beekeeping, olive pressing, and animal husbandry, which he taught to herdsmen.[47] As the first to discover all of these arts, Aristaeus is dubbed "a master of the art of feeding many" (πολυφερβέος ἴδμονα τέχνης) and "a life-preserver" (βιοσσόον), phrases that recall Malalas describing how the hunting invented by Nimrod and the weapons made by Hephaestus provided sustenance for their fellows.[48] What is absent from the identification of Aristaeus as the inventor of hunting, however, is any suggestion that the hunt, violent as it may be, has anything to do with war, or that the skills the followers of Aristaeus honed on the chase could be transferred to the battlefield.[49]

Hunting, Weapons, and the Biblical Ideal

The odd combination of hunting and warfare as undertakings benefiting from the inventor's ingenuity, unparalleled in the classical tradition, is one of the features that makes the account of Hephaestus idiosyncratic. Arms are said to have been invented or provided, whether by Belus, or Dionysus, or the Cyclopes, for use in war,

[43] Diod. Sic., 4.81.2–5, 82.4–5.

[44] Apollod., *Bibl.* 3.4.4.

[45] Pliny, *HN* 7.(56) 199; see Beagon, *Pliny on the Human Animal*, 436.

[46] Nonnus, *Dion.* 5.229–41 (*Nonnos de Panopolis, Les Dionysiaques. Tome II: Chants III–V* [ed. Pierre Chuvin; 2nd ed.; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003] 118).

[47] Nonnus, *Dion.* 5.242–68.

[48] Nonnus, *Dion.* 5.218–19 (ed. Chuvin, 118). Malalas, *Chron.* 1.7, 15.

[49] Following Xenophon (*Cyn*. 1.18, 12.1–9), Philo of Alexandria (*Ios*. 3, *Mos*. 60–61, *Spec*. 4.120–21) considered hunting an appropriate training for the general in the arts of war, but this sentiment is neither his only view of the matter nor consistent with other opinions he expresses elsewhere in his vast and diffuse corpus of writings; see Benjamin Garstad, "The Greek Character of Philo's Biblical Giants: A Reading of QG 2.82," in P*hilo of Alexandria and Greek Myth: Narratives, Allegories, and Arguments* (ed. Francesca Alesse and Ludovica De Luca; Studies in Philo of Alexandria 10; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 200–230, at 224–25.

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as a replacement for more primitive ways for people to do violence to one another, and no mention is made of their potential utility in the hunt. Aristaeus discovered hunting as one more means of affording sustenance to humanity, a complement to beekeeping, cheesemaking, and olive farming, but the capacity to sustain life is not associated with the capacity to protect, enlarge, or end life in battle. The pairing of war and the chase, as well as the emphasis on weapons, seems to point us in the direction of a different set of allusions, to the Bible and its imagery and ideas.

The combination of hunting and warfare as tasks abetted by the implements made by Hephaestus seems to offer an antithesis to the biblical vision of placid cohabitation and tranquil concord among people and between people and beasts that is supposed to characterize the prelapsarian paradise of Eden, as well as its eschatological restoration. This vision is cultivated in the description of the blissful state of the unsullied creation in the book of Genesis. On the sixth day of creation, although God had granted humanity dominion over the lesser animals, God instructed humanity that he, God, had provided both people and beasts with the same bountiful vegetable diet, every green herb for meat.[50] And God brought every living creature to Adam to be named.[51] The serpent, one of the beasts, even holds an unsurprising conversation with Eve.[52]

This vision of peace between people and beasts is elaborated in the prophets' hope for renewal. In Isaiah's prophecy of a branch sprung from the root of Jesse and his peaceable kingdom,

> The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.[53]

This state of affairs is understood to be consequent upon a restored intimacy with the Divine: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."[54] This

[50] Gen 1:29–30.

[51] Gen 2:19–20.

[52] Gen 3:1.

[53] Isa 11:6–8 KJV. Inasmuch as the authors of the early Byzantine period like John Malalas stood in a linguistic and cultural relation to the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament much as we ourselves stand in relation to the Authorized Version — and Bible translations that strive for a contemporary rendering of the text tend to obscure this relation, especially when Byzantine texts are translated into modern English — I have drawn this and all the rest of my quotations of the Bible from the Authorized or King James Version.

[54] Isa 11:9 KJV. This vision was not necessarily unfamiliar to those schooled only in the Greco-Roman *paideia*. Lactantius (*Div. inst.* 7.24) presents the Golden Age under the reign of Saturn and its return predicted by Virgil (*Ecl.* 4.21–45) as pale imitations of the real prophecies of the restoration of justice when God subjects the world to himself, and Lactantius is not wrong in perceiving similarities in theme and image.

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expectation is reiterated when the Lord promises to create new heavens and a new earth: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."[55] Hunting is done away with not only by a renewed amity between people and beasts, but also among the beasts, as even carnivorous animals find their nourishment without killing in a vegetarian diet.

It is the prophet Hosea who brings up weapons in painting this same picture of peace and harmony. The Lord declares through him:

> And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them lie down safely.[56]

By having the Lord promise here to break the bow and the sword, the prophet associates the expectation of a peaceful coexistence of people and beasts—an end of hunting—with the eschatological anticipation of the destruction of weapons and an end of warfare. This longed for elimination of the tools of war, and war itself, which Hosea draws into his vision of renewal, is expressed by the Psalmist: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in fire."[57] An even more vivid image is offered by Isaiah: "and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."[58] Isaiah's vision of the cessation of war is not far from that of the peaceful cohabitation of people and beasts, since weapons are to be transformed into the tools of cereal and vegetable agriculture, not animal husbandry. Moreover, it is the work of the smith to beat swords into plowshares, and we are reminded of the role of the smith in introducing weapons in the first place.

The Biblical View of Technology, Specifically Metalworking

Malalas, after all, alludes to the biblical vision of a world without war and hunting in order to show how this idyllic state was broken and came to require restoration. And the blame he implicitly lays on Hephaestus is consistent with the progress of sin related in the book of Genesis. One of the immediate consequences of the fall is that God made coats of skin to clothe Adam and Eve.[59] This is not hunting, but as the killing of animals for the use of human beings, it is something very similar and, at the very least, it signals the sundering of the friendly bond between people and beasts that had prevailed in the garden of Eden. One of the eventual consequences

[55] Isa 65:25 KJV.

[56] Hos 2:18 (LXX 2:20) KJV. See Hans Walter Wolff, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea* (ed. Paul D. Hanson; trans. Gary Stansell; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 50–52.

[57] Ps 46:9 KJV.

[58] Isa 2:4 KJV.

[59] Gen 3:21.

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of the fall, and the next significant narrative episode, is Cain's murder of Abel.[60] This incident does not have the usual scale of war, but brother rising up against brother to slay him is, from a certain perspective, an adequate definition of war. The benefits of Hephaestus's inventions seem to indicate the results of humanity's alienation from God.

The allusive relation comes to a finer point as we follow Cain in his fugitive wanderings "out from the presence of the Lord" and observe his descendants. The Bible has its own list of inventors, analogous to the catalogs of *protoi heuretai* found in the Greco-Roman tradition: the "fathers" of those who practice animal husbandry, play music, and work metal.[61] The last of these, Tubal-Cain, "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," is obviously most similar to Hephaestus, a smith who works iron, but all of these inventors might have something to say about the accomplishment of Hephaestus. All of the "fathers" of the various arts and crafts are descended from the sinful Cain. Indeed, there is a steady narrative progression from the sin and exile of Cain to his descendants and their inventions. Whatever the offspring of the righteous Seth were doing in the antediluvian epoch, it was not contributing to the technological advancement of humanity. The inventors in Genesis are, moreover, not only descendants of Cain; they are the sons of Lamech, who is depicted as a thoroughgoing scoundrel, boasting of his homicidal vengeance to his wives.[62] The Bible, at least in discussing inventors and the introduction of arts and crafts, takes an essentially negative view of technology, and all inventors, including Malalas's Hephaestus, are implicated in this antipathy.

Modern commentators have been at some pains to deny that there is any note of censure to the list of inventors in Genesis, insisting rather that the tone is neutral, if not glowingly positive. John Skinner insists that the underlying text, if not its context in Genesis, is neutral:

> It has commonly been held that the passage involves a pessimistic estimate of human civilization, as a record of progressive degeneracy and increasing alienation from God. That is probably true of the compiler who placed the section after the account of the Fall, and incorporated the Song of Lamech, which could hardly fail to strike the Hebrew mind as an exhibition of human depravity. In itself, however, the genealogy contains no moral judgment on the facts recorded.[63]

[60] Gen 4:3–15.

[61] Gen 4:20–22. See Herbert H. Gowen, "The Cainite and Sethite Genealogies in Gen. 4 & 5," *AThR* 2 (1924) 326–27; Johannes Gabriel, "Die Kainitengenealogie, Gn 4, 17–24," *Biblica* 40 (1959) 409–27; J. Maxwell Miller, "The Descendents of Cain: Notes on Genesis 4," *ZAW* 86 (1974) 164–74; Peter Klemm, "Kain und die Kainiten," *ZTK* 78 (1981) 391–408; cf. Morton S. Enslin, "Cain and Prometheus," *JBL* 86 (1966) 88–90.

[62] Gen 4:19, 23–24.

[63] John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (2nd ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930) 115–24, at 115.

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The standard modern commentaries seem to agree that the development of human arts and technology are to be viewed in a positive light, even as a blessing. Victor Hamilton is perhaps most effusive: "This point may provide another illustration of the grace of God at work in this fallen line. They [the descendants of Cain] too have an important and wholesome contribution to make to God's world."[64] Claus Westermann is hardly less emphatic: "Technology as such is regarded positively."[65] Even an author like Warren Gage, whose hermeneutic tends to take a decidedly dim view of this world, sees the problem as not being with technology itself; rather, because of the impiety of the Cainites, their skills (similar to those required to build the Tabernacle) serve no useful purpose but instead serve the earthly city, which is a parody of the heavenly city, the Edenic Zion.[66] A plain reading of the text, which progresses directly from the atrocious sin of Cain and its punishment to the "fathers" of various technical skills and hems their identification about with mention of the villainous Lamech, seems to put the lie to all these hermeneutics. The attempts to read the Cainite genealogy in a positive light serve as a reminder that even biblical commentators are children of their own age and probably reveal more about their authors' predispositions, conscious or not, in favor of technology and progress than about the intentions of the ancient writer.

Readers of Genesis in antiquity, those who transferred its ideas from the Jewish to the Greek milieu, did not fail to see something nefarious in inventions and technology, especially metalworking and the weapons it produced. In the Book of the Watchers, as it is preserved in the Book of Enoch, skill in numerous arts and crafts, including the manufacture of arms and armour, was supposed to be a great part of the forbidden knowledge that the fallen angels conveyed to humanity.[67] This notion also enters Christian literature. According to the *Clementine Homilies*, the fallen angels tried to impress the women they had seduced by revealing to them the treasures of the earth, including precious and useful metals, as well as the skill of metallurgy.[68] Josephus depicted inventions as going back all the way to Cain, a sinner whose punishment by no means checked his iniquity, and as a blight on the human race. Cain's innovations served only to do away with the easy leisure in which people had lived together beforehand (τὴν ἀπραγμοσύνην, ᾗ πρότερον συνέζων

[64] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 236–41, at 239.

[65] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 321–37, at 334.

[66] Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, IN: Carpenter Books, 1984) 58–61, 112.

[67] 1 Enoch 7.1, 8.1, 3. See Ida Fröhlich, "Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions," in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Angela Kim Harkins, Kelley Coblentz Bautch, and John C. Endres; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014) 11–24, at 13, 18; Jeremy Corley, "The Enochic Watchers Traditions and Deuterocanonical Literature," in *The Watchers* (ed. Harkins, Bautch, and Endres) 51–68, at 59–60; Leslie Baynes, "The Watchers Traditions in 1 Enoch's Book of Parables," in *The Watchers* (ed. Harkins, Bautch, and Endres) 151–63, at 155, 158–59.

[68] *Clem. Hom.* 8.14.1–2.

οἱ ἄνθρωποι . . . μετεστήσατο) and to cater to his own selfish and vicious ends.[69] In discussing the descendants of Cain, the sons of Lamech, and their inventions, Josephus pays special attention to Tubal-Cain, whom he calls Ἰουβῆλος or "Jubêl," and his metalwork—and in terms remarkably similar to Malalas's account of Hephaestus. Josephus identifies Jubêl first as an individual of extraordinary strength, who conspicuously pursued warlike enterprises, and from them contrived a way to gratify the lusts of the flesh (ἐκ τούτων καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἡδονὴν τοῦ σώματος ἐκπορίζων), and it is only noted at the end, as something of an addendum, that he was the first to invent metalsmithing (χαλκείαν τε πρῶτος ἐπενόησεν).[70] Perhaps he depends here upon Philo of Alexandria, who took the hammering of Tubal as an emblem of the soul of the one who concentrates on bodily pleasure, beaten and attenuated by the appetites, and said such people and their drive to indulge the body to excess were responsible for wars, and so they were naturally described as workers in brass and iron, the metals used to wage wars.[71] At any rate, like Josephus, Malalas introduces Hephaestus not as a smith but as "a warrior and a mystic" (πολεμιστὴς καὶ μυστικός), whose craftsmanship is not his principal identity but serves the purposes of a more fundamental character that exerts strength for ends of its own, and speaks of his inventions and bellicose undertakings providing sustenance for people (τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις)—a more generous turn of phrase than "gratifying the lusts of the flesh," but not essentially different.

Lest it be thought that we have artificially imposed a connection between Hephaestus as depicted by Malalas and the Cainite genealogy of Genesis on our reading of the text, it should be pointed out that at least one early reader—but one intensely engaged with both the text of Malalas's *Chronographia* and the Bible—also made this connection. John of Nikiu, writing no more than a century and a half after Malalas, treats the early history of the world very much in terms of Malalas's record of the primeval god-kings and delivers a rendition, garbled and abbreviated by the vagaries of translation and manuscript transmission, of the account of Picus-Zeus and his family, including Hephaestus.[72] He interrupts his discussion of Hephaestus, however, to include a portion of the Cainite genealogy from Genesis. This portion covers only the descent from Methusaleh through Lamech to Qâbêl and his brother Tôbêl (Tubal-Cain) and only the arts of Tôbêl are mentioned, but

[69] Joseph., *A.J.* 1.60–62 (*Flavii Iosephi Opera* [ed. Benedikt Niese; 7 vols.; Berlin: Weidmanns, 1887–1895] 1:15; cf. Flavius Josèphe, *Les Antiquités Juives, Livres I à III* [ed. Étienne Nodet; Paris: Cerf, 1990] 1:10). See Louis H. Feldman, *Flavius Josephus, "Judean Antiquities" 1–4* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 21–22; W. Bejda, "The City of Cain—The City of a Tyrant: The Political Aspect of the Cain Narrative in Josephus Flavius's *Antiquitates Judaicae*," *RB* 121 (2014) 283–97, at 286. On Josephus's presentation of the Old Testament in general, see H. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the "Antiquitates Judaicae" of Flavius Josephus* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion 7; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976).

[70] Joseph., *A.J.* 1.64 (ed. Niese, 1:16; cf. ed. Nodet, 1:11). See Feldman, *Flavius Josephus*, 23.

[71] Philo, *De posteritate Caini* 34.116–19.

[72] John of Nikiu, *Chron.* 5–15 (*The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu, Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text* [trans. R. H. Charles; London: Williams & Norgate, 1916] 16–20).

twice in this short passage he is said to have wielded the hammer and worked as a smith in brass and iron. This interjection is clearly about Tubal-Cain and his metalwork, but just what implications John of Nikiu found in his technical skill is difficult to tell, since he explains Tubal-Cain's work as a smith by saying, "for he had received wisdom from God—Praise be to him."[73]

Metallurgy and Magic

Perhaps John of Nikiu was trying to set up a contrast between the inspiration of the metalworking skill of Tubal-Cain and Hephaestus, respectively, since he says of the latter, "And men believed that he investigated hidden things and received weapons of war from the non-existent; for he was an ironsmith and the first to make weapons of war."[74] Even if it has not survived perfectly intact, this is a detail he has taken over from Malalas, who discusses the origin of the smithcraft of Hephaestus, at least:

> ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς Ἥφαιστος ἀπὸ μυστικῆς τινος εὐχῆς τὴν ὀξυλάβην ἐδέξατο ἐκ τοῦ ἀέρος εἰς τὸ κατασκευάζειν ἐκ σιδήρου ὅπλα. ὅθεν καὶ ἐπικρατὴς ηὑρέθη εἰς τοὺς πολέμους.[75]
>
> This Hephaestus, through a certain mystical prayer, obtained a pair of tongs out of the air for the making of weapons out of iron. And for this reason, he proved to be overwhelmingly mighty in his wars.

And this strange supernatural origin makes the metallurgy of Hephaestus as a whole, as well as its products, highly suspect.

In both biblical and classical literature there was some precedent for iron having some mystical and unearthly associations. The story is told of the prophet Elisha that he caused an iron axe head, lost in the River Jordan, to float to the surface of the water.[76] In the Bible, however, things that fall from heaven, like the "image which fell down from Jupiter" worshiped by the Ephesians in Paul's day, tend to be associated with the cult of heathen gods, rather than with the gifts of God.[77] In Homer, iron might be said to appear in contexts that are "magical or marvellous," as when the axle of Hera's splendid chariot is made of iron, but there is no agreement that iron is not supposed to be simply valuable, rather than mysterious.[78] Herodotus

[73] John of Nikiu, *Chron.* 11 (trans. Charles, 19).

[74] John of Nikiu, *Chron.* 10 (trans. Charles, 18–19).

[75] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.15 (ed. Thurn, 16).

[76] 2 Kgs (LXX 4 Kgdms) 6:4–7.

[77] Acts 19:35. The source may be hostile, but this detail of the cult of Artemis in Ephesus has the ring of authenticity, since Euripides (*Iph. Taur.* 88) relates that the image of Artemis adored by the Taurians is also supposed to have fallen from heaven; see M. Platnauer, *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938) 67; Edith Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides' Black Sea Tragedy* (Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 24, 144–45, 150.

[78] Hom., *Il.* 5.723. See R. Hope Simpson and J. F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of Ships in Homer's "Iliad"* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970) 1; but also D. H. F. Gray, "Metal-Working in Homer," *JHS* 74 (1954) 1–15, at 14: "The axle of Hera's chariot is iron, but other parts are bronze, gold, and silver.

speaks of even the Spartan Lichas, a historical rather than mythological figure, observing the work of an ironsmith with wonder (ἐν θώματι).[79] The rarity that had endowed iron with weird qualities in Homer's day was still imaginable in Malalas's. His contemporary, Procopius, reports that neither the Indians nor the Ethiopians possess iron and the Romans are forbidden under pain of death from providing them with any; Procopius mentions this fact only to explain why ships that ply the Red Sea and Indian Ocean are constructed in an unusual fashion, but the stringent laws limiting commerce in iron and their severe penalties imply that the Romans wanted to maintain a military advantage.[80]

There was, moreover, a long association between metallurgy and magic, inasmuch as the mythical practitioners of one were supposed to be adept at the other.[81] The Idaean Dactyls were renowned as wizards who introduced mysteries and initiatory rites and as smiths who first discovered the smelting and forging of iron.[82] The Telchines were famous as workers in metal, who reputedly made the first images of the gods and forged the trident of Poseidon, but they were also known as powerful wizards who could control the weather and as baleful demons to later Christian scholars.[83] The reputation of the Dactyls and the Telchines for combining the roles of metalworker and magician seem to have rubbed off on the quite historical Chalybes, a people who were "iron-working and therefore rather uncanny" or at least "savage and unapproachable to strangers" (ἀνήμεροι γὰρ οὐδὲ

Mundane wood and leather are replaced by the metal which seems suitable. There is no clear trace in Homer of the magical qualities with which iron was from time to time endowed in Egypt and the Near East; it is one example among many of the striking absence from the poems of superstition and mysticism."

[79] Hdt., 1.68.1 (ed. Hude).

[80] Procop., *Bell*. 1.19.24–25. Pausanias (1.21.5) similarly relates that the Sarmatians have no iron, either mined or imported, and for their arms and armor make do with bone, wood, and horse-hoof. He explains, however, that this is not due to any technological deficiency—on the contrary, he insists that the evidence of a Sarmatian corselet proves barbarians possess no less technical skill than Greeks—but to a certain misanthropy on the part of the Sarmatians, who are the most unsociable of barbarians; cf. Amm. Marc., 17.12.2; see J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* (6 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1898) 2:242.

[81] Sandra Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[82] Diod. Sic., 5.64.4–6 = Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F104; Pliny, *HN* 7.(56) 197 = Hesiod fr. 282 (*Fragmenta Selecta* [ed. R. Merkelbach and M. L. West], in *Hesiodi Theogonia, Opera et Dies, Scutum* [Friedrich Solmsen, ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970] 205); Clem. Al., *Strom*. 1.16.75 = Hesiod fr. 282 (ed. Merkelbach and West: 205), 1.21.136 = Thrasyllus *FGrH* 253 F 1; Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.1129 = Pherecydes fr. 47 (*Early Greek Mythography* [ed. Robert L. Fowler; 2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000–2013] 1:304–5); see Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 192–214; eadem, "Daimones in the Thracian Sea: Mysteries, Iron, and Metaphors," *AR* 14 (2013) 155–82, at 167–69.

[83] Callim., *Hymn*. 4.30–33; Diod. Sic., 5.55.2–3 (= *FGrH* 523 F 1; cf. Schol. Pindar *Ol*. 7.95); Strabo, 14.2.7, cf. 10.3.7; Stat., *Silv*. 4.6.47–49, *Theb*. 2.274; *Suda* T 293: Τελχῖνες. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (trans. Janet Lloyd; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 259–75, explain the relation between the physical form of the Telchines and their role as metallurgists with reference to their likeness to seals.

πρόσπλατοι ξένοις), as Aeschylus puts it.[84] Apollonius of Rhodes describes these Chalybes as blacksmiths who do not engage in agriculture but exchange the pay for their mining and smithing for their sustenance (ὦνον ἀμείβονται βιοτήσιον), which might give an entirely different sense to the livelihood for people (τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις) that Malalas says Hephaestus's invention of weapons provided, which has nothing to do with hunting.[85] In reworking the themes of Apollonius, Valerius Flaccus seems to draw the Chalybes even closer to the concerns of Malalas in his treatment of Hephaestus, for he says that their discovery of iron and invention of weapons introduced war to the world:

> Nocte sub extrema clausis telluris ab antris
> pervigil auditur Chalybum labor: arma fatigant
> ruricolae, Gradive, tui; sonat illa creatrix
> prima manus belli, terras crudelis in omnes.
> Nam prius ignoti quam dura cubilia ferri
> eruerent ensesque darent, Odia aegra sine armis
> errabant Iraeque inopes et segnis Erinys.[86]
>
> In darkest night from the close caves of the earth
> Is heard the sleepless labor of the Chalybes: weapons they weary
> Those rustic tenants of yours, O Gradivus; sounds the hand
> That first brought war into being, cruel, stretching into all lands.
> For before they the ever so hard beds of unknown iron
> Dug up and provided swords, sickening Hatred without arms
> Wandered about, Wrath was destitute, and the Fury slothful.

Hephaestus himself seems to cross over from the role of marvellous craftsman to magician, especially when we see him binding and paralyzing his enemies, as when he traps Ares and Aphrodite in an invisible and unbreakable net—a scene not neglected by Malalas—or providing his friends with magically animated guardians for their thresholds or borders, like the undying gold and silver dogs he made to stand at the doorway of Alcinous's palace.[87]

This pervasive association of metallurgy and magic prepares us to read the incident of Hephaestus receiving tongs from the air by which he practiced his

[84] Aesch., *PV* 714–16 (*Aeschyli Septem Quae Supersunt Tragoediae* [ed. Gilbert Murray; 2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1955] 130–31); Hdt., 1.28; Xen., *An*. 4.7.15–18, 5.5.1; Strabo, 12.3.19, cf. 11.14.5, 14.5.23; Plin. *HN* 6.(4) 11. See J. Oliver Thomson, *History of Ancient Geography* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1948) 58, cf. 18, 84, 289.

[85] Ap. Rhod., *Argon.* 2.1000–1008 (*Apollonii Rhodii Argonautica* [ed. Hermann Fränkel; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961] 100–101).

[86] Val. Flacc., *Argon.* 5.140–46, cf. 4.610–12 (*C. Valeri Flacci Argonauticaon, Libri Octo* [ed. Edward Courtney; Leipzig: Teubner, 1970] 100). Cf. Ovid, *Metam*. 1.141–43.

[87] Hom., *Od*. 7.91–94, 8.296–99; cf. Malalas, *Chron.* 2.1. See Marie Delcourt, *Héphaistos ou la légende du magicien* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982); Christopher A. Faraone, "Hephaestus the Magician and Near Eastern Parallels for Alcinous' Watchdogs," *GRBS* 28 (1987) 257–80. But see Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 270–73, who interpret the characteristics of Hephaestus, especially his physical features, almost entirely in terms of his role as a blacksmith, without considering the possibility that he might also be seen as a wizard.

art as very similar in form and intent to one from the *Clementine Recognitions*. Ham, the son of Noah, or his son Mizraim—the grammar is ambiguous—was, we are told, the first to discover the magical art, disastrously, for he intently studied the stars and, wishing to be considered a god by his contemporaries (*volens apud homines videri deus*), he began to draw forth "certain things like sparks" from the stars and show them to people (*velut scintillas quasdam ex stellis producere et hominibus ostentare coepit*), which they did indeed find miraculous. Wanting to increase his prestige, he tried this trick too often and was incinerated by the demon he had importuned too assiduously. Nevertheless, the ignorant people of his day worshiped him as a friend of God and a living star, whom they called Zoroaster.[88] In the parallel passage in the *Clementine Homilies*, it is Nimrod, not Ham or Mizraim, who indulged in magical practices in order to achieve his real goal of kingship and, being a powerful wizard, he exerted compulsion on the ascendant star of the wicked ruler of the present age (μέγας ὢν μάγος, τοῦ νῦν βασιλεύοντος κακοῦ τὸν ὡροσκοποῦντα κόσμον ἀστέρα . . . ἠνάγκαζε) to grant him kingship, but this prince was offended and poured out kingship as a fire, lightning falling from heaven to earth. Once again, though, the stupid people of that age called him Zoroaster, after the living bolt of the star that fell on him (διὰ τὸ τὴν τοῦ ἀστέρος κατ' αὐτοῦ ζῶσαν ἐνεχθῆναι ῥοήν), collected his remains at a shrine in the place where he had been burned up, and worshiped him as a god.[89]

Similar stories of supernatural fire descending from heaven also appear in Malalas's chronicle, as when Zoroaster is consumed by the aerial fire in answer to prayer or when Perseus witnesses a ball of fire fall from the sky and still a storm and hold back the waters of a river in spate.[90] So, we are hardly in a different conceptual world from the Clementine literature. But if the descent of something from heaven is the most spectacular point of comparison between the origin of Hephaestus's tongs in Malalas and the stories in the *Clementina*, it is not the only one. The magicians in the *Recognitions* and *Homilies* employ magic, not as an end in itself but in pursuit of larger objectives, to be thought a god or to win kingship. Hephaestus seems to inherit the rule of Egypt from Faunus-Hermes, but he also appears to retain and augment this rule by means of the capacity for making weapons of iron that results from his receipt of tongs out of the air. Practically the whole of Malalas's account of Hephaestus falls between the statements that the Egyptians claimed he was a god and that he was deified as a lawgiver and an inventor, so the intervening material may be taken as an explanation of how his deification came about. The work of Hephaestus to advance technology and provide his people with weapons, as well as its supernatural origin, can be seen as an effort to be considered

[88] Clem. *Rec*. 4.27.2–28.3 (*Die Pseudoklementinen II. Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung* [ed. Bernard Rehm; Berlin: Akademie, 1965] 159–60).

[89] Clem. *Hom*. 9.4.1–5.2 (*Die Pseudoklementinen I. Homilien* [ed. Bernard Rehm; Berlin: Akademie, 1969] 133).

[90] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.11, 2.12.

a god, no more or less tawdry and self-serving than the philandering and fantastic demonstrations of Picus-Zeus or the prognostications and money distributed by Faunus-Hermes.[91] What might, at first glance, seem like benefactions are seen to be no more than ploys in an endeavor to be taken for a god.

This sort of subtle deprecation is thoroughly consistent with the rejection of inventions and benefactions as grounds for deification by the early Christian apologists. They were certainly aware that *euergesia* and the advancement of civilization were pointed out as the basis on which certain primeval mortals were supposed to have been elevated to divine status, and some were even willing to concede that it was at least understandable that culture heroes might be taken for gods—although they never allowed the legitimacy of such deification.[92] Others acknowledged how the process might have occurred but strenuously denounced the confusion of the exercise of human ingenuity and the operation of divine wisdom.[93] At any rate, the identification of an individual known to have been taken for a god as an inventor need not be taken as an endorsement of his deification. Christian authors knew that excessive adulation by the beneficiaries of inventions and technical discoveries had led to some of the errors of paganism. But from a Christian perspective the metalworking and weapons of Hephaestus are not merely insufficient grounds for deification; they can also be understood, as we have seen, to contribute to the delinquency and degeneration of humanity and to humanity's alienation from the ideal state of affairs ordained by God.

Malalas's Context and Composition

It is relatively easy to set Malalas's treatment of Hephaestus in the broader context of an understanding of technological advancement and of the invention of weapons and hunting. It is rather harder to determine the extent to which Malalas was aware of the intellectual or textual conversation we have been trying to explicate and to trace definite lines of transmission that lead to him. The study of Malalas's sources still has a long way to go, but there is a broad scholarly consensus that while Malalas cites a great number and variety of authorities, he most likely had firsthand access to only a very few and wrote on this much more limited basis.[94] But even identifying

[91] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.13, 14.

[92] Athenagoras, *Leg. pro Christ.* 30.2; Clem. Al., *Protr.* 2.26.7; Lactant., *Div. inst.* 1.15.2–7; Ps.-Clement, *Rec.* 4.30.1; August., *De civ. D.* 18.2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 15, *Enarrationes in Pslamos* 93.3; Theodoret, *Gr. affect. cur.* 2.97. See Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 38.

[93] Tert., *Apol.* 11.6–9; Arn., *Adv. nat.* 3.20–22; Lactant., *Div. inst.* 1.18.1–2, 18–25, 7.14; Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 18; see Athanase d'Alexandrie, *Contre les Païens* (ed. Pierre Thomas Camelot; 2nd ed.; SC 18 bis; Paris: Cerf, 1977) 27, 108–9; E. P. Meijering, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1984) 67–69.

[94] See Hermann Bourier, *Über die Quellen der ersten vierzehn Bücher des Johannes Malalas* (Augsburg: Pfeiffer, 1899); Elizabeth Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources," in *Studies* (ed. Jeffreys et al.) 167–216; *Johannes Malalas. Quellenfragen* (ed. Carrara, Meier, and Radtki-Jansen).

Malalas's textual sources does not close the book on the question of what ideas he was exposed to in one way or another and sought to express in his chronicle or, for that matter, the question of the sources utilized by the sources Malalas himself drew upon, especially when his sources are incompletely preserved—even more so if Malalas alone preserves any memory of them![95]

Sometimes quotations and clear verbal correspondences assure us of a familiarity on the part of Malalas—or a source he has followed closely—with another text, but sometimes we are left to wonder what the relation was between two texts articulating more or less similar sentiments. For instance, we may be fairly certain from the number and accuracy of his references to it and quotations from it that Malalas knew the Bible reasonably well. Indeed, even without these indicators, we would probably be safe in assuming that in his day and age both Malalas and his audience were familiar with the Bible from lectionary readings and with at least the rudiments of its current interpretation from homilies. So, even if he does not quote the verses we have raised above, we may take it that he had at least been exposed to them, whereas nothing in Malalas's discourse suggests an appetite for—perhaps not even a capacity to handle—an epic poem of baroque virtuosity, such as the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus of Panopolis. Nevertheless, Wolf Liebeschuetz has shown that Nonnus anticipated the interests and intentions evident in Malalas's handling of mythological material, its geographical and chronological range, and its comprehensive scope.[96] Thus, even works Malalas probably did not read can still help us to comprehend the intellectual milieu in which he wrote.

Even if we cannot always determine the relation between Malalas and the authors we have identified as engaged with the varied topics that inform his treatment of Hephaestus, we may still note a consistency with his own broader discussion of inventions and technology. There are a few perfunctory and innocuous references to the invention of various arts and sciences that Malalas seems to have picked up from the chronicle tradition to which he was privy.[97] And in his description of the rise of Hellenic religion, which seems to come from a source distinct from that on the lives of the so-called gods, he speaks of those who invented some benefit being honored with statues and as benefactors with the reverence due a god—a memorialization which was corrupted to idolatry only when its origins were forgotten.[98] The inventors of entertainments with dubious astrological and

[95] And this is largely the situation we are in with Malalas's treatment of Hephaestus, which, as noted above (n. 2), was probably first composed by Bouttios, a decidedly obscure figure.

[96] Wolf Liebeschuetz, "The Use of Pagan Mythology in the Christian Empire with Particular Reference to the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus," in *The Sixth Century (*ed. Allen and Jeffreys) 75–91, at 87–89.

[97] Malalas, *Chron.* 4.3, 5.38, 6.27, 8.19. The derivation of these passages from the chronicle tradition is indicated by the correspondence of passages in the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* (1.5.2) and the *Ecloga Chronographica* of George the Syncellus (282–83, cf. 308, 455, 470, 489).

[98] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.18.

divinatory implications are also noted: Palamedes, who invented the game of tabla, and Romus (that is, Romulus), the racecourse.[99]

But for the most part Malalas's handling of inventors and their supposed contributions to the progress of civilization is at best ambiguous, though really mutedly critical. Their inventions are seen to serve, not the needs of the common good, but rather the demands of individual pride, ambition, and greed. So, Cronos invented kingship, defined not as the selfless expenditure of oneself in the interests of one's subjects but as "ruling or exercising power over other men" (ἤτοι ἄρχειν καὶ κρατεῖν τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων).[100] Faunus-Hermes discovered the mining and smelting of gold—not some base but useful metal—with which he eventually bribed the Egyptians into thinking him a god.[101] Helios's reign, like that of Hephaestus, is calculated in days, and Malalas explains that time was not counted in months and years until people began paying taxes to kings, leaving us to assume that advanced timekeeping was only invented to serve the purposes of tax collection.[102] Cadmus taught the Boeotians the Phoenician script, and they rewarded him by making him their king.[103] Dionysus, like Hephaestus, was deified for what appears to be a commendable benefaction: "they deified him as the inventor of nourishment for human beings through the vine" (ἀπεθέωσαν αὐτὸν εὑρηκότα δι' ἀμπέλου τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις), but Malalas observes that he exploited his religious leadership to usurp the throne of his cousin Pentheus.[104]

Malalas spells out the connection between inventions and cultural contributions, the presumption to divinity, and the dire consequences that follow most clearly in the case of Marsyas—one with obvious affinities to that of Hephaestus. Marsyas, he says, invented the reed flute and then went mad, deifying himself and declaring, "I have discovered nourishment for men through the melody of musical reeds" (εὗρον τροφὴν ἀνθρώποις διὰ τοῦ μέλους τῶν μουσικῶν καλάμων).[105] The phrase is the very one used to explain the deification of Hephaestus—though its application to Marsyas's invention seems to depend on his insanity—but rather than being taken for a god by his fellows, Marsyas stirred up divine wrath and went out of his mind, threw himself in a river and died. Here, myth itself allows a more clear-cut exposition of what happens when men make a bid for godhead.

There remains the troubling ambivalence of the grounds for Hephaestus's deification; even if his inventions, on balance, can hardly be described as benefactions, he was still a legislator whose laws upheld chastity and prohibited fornication, abiding concerns in Malalas's treatment of the mythological period. But

[99] Malalas, *Chron.* 5.9, 7.4–5, cf. 18.35.

[100] Malalas, *Chron.* 1.8 (ed. Thurn, 10).

[101] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.14.

[102] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.1.

[103] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.14. By contrast, Hesiod is said to have invented the Greek alphabet (3.5), but no recompense is recorded.

[104] Malalas, *Chron.* 2.15 (ed. Thurn, 30).

[105] Malalas, *Chron.* 4.7 (ed. Thurn, 54).

this is not an isolated instance of the presentation of a character with inconsistent traits in his chronicle. Malalas also presents Alexander the Great as a lawgiver but introduces him inaugurating his city foundation at Alexandria with a virgin sacrifice.[106] It is not, however, that Malalas is comfortable blithely ascribing incompatible qualities and actions to historical characters, but that he intends a startlingly incongruent misdeed to indicate that there is something more to an otherwise commendable figure and that his story should be read with a degree of sceptical enquiry. In the case of Alexander, for instance, his perpetration of human sacrifice is the most obvious hint that we should read the repeated references to his comrades as allusions to Alexander's dependence on his lieutenants and his high-handed and even homicidal conduct toward them as described in fuller accounts.[107] Such allusions serve to undermine an apparently positive or neutral presentation without revealing Malalas as a critical or partisan reporter. They might even flatter the readers' vanity by allowing them to assume they themselves have drawn the conclusions to which they have been led.

Conclusion

Without adopting an openly negative posture or obviously assuming the stance of a Christian apologist or polemicist, John Malalas is nevertheless able to undermine the presentation of one of the so-called gods—and by implication, all of them—even as a praiseworthy historical figure. He concentrates on the most deadly and destructive of what were touted as his divine benefactions and indicates their utility in hunting and warfare so as to suggest a deviation from the biblical ideal of peaceful cohabitation among people and between people and beasts. While not showing his hand with an explicit reference to the Bible or an outright condemnation, he seeks to impart a biblical understanding of the dubious, if not wicked, nature of technology and human invention, and to disqualify these as adequate grounds for deification. This subtlety, this avoidance of intrusive authorial comment, is a technique that is tuned to an audience's sensibilities. On the one hand, there is nothing at first blush to put off an unsympathetic reader, a pagan or one who is looking merely for the facts, not a sermon. On the other, readers are ostensibly allowed to draw their own conclusions from what appears to be a simple, uneditorialized statement of historical fact. All people are more convinced by the discoveries they make themselves, even if they are ineluctably led to those discoveries by a skillful—dare we say, manipulative—author.

[106] Malalas, *Chron.* 8.1, 3; see Benjamin Garstad, "The Tyche Sacrifices in John Malalas: Virgin Sacrifice and Fourth-Century Polemical History," *Illinois Classical Studies* 30 (2005) 83–136.

[107] See Benjamin Garstad, "Alexander's Comrades in the *Chronicle* of John Malalas," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 4 (2020) 452–85.

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