

# Hesiod's Hymn to Hecate

From *Theogony and Works and Days*, translated by M.L. West

1Hecate, whom Zeus son of Kronos honoured above all others, granting her magnificent privileges: a share both of the earth and of the undraining sea. From the starry heaven too she has a portion of honour, and she is the most honoured by the immortal gods.

2 Even now, when an earthly man sacrificing fine offerings makes ritual propitiation, he invokes Hecate, and great favour readily attends him, if the goddess is well disposed to his prayers, and she grants him prosperity, for she has the power to do so.

3From all those that were born of Earth and Heaven and were allotted honour, she has a share. The son of Kronos did not oppress her or take away from her anything of what she had been allotted among the Titans, the former gods: she keeps it even as the distribution was first made, from the beginning. 4Nor does her being an only child mean that the goddess has received less honour and privilege in earth and sky and sea, but much more, because Zeus honours her. By whomsoever she chooses, she comes and stands in full presence and helps him.



5In time of judgment, she sits beside august kings; in the public gathering the man of her choice shines out among the crowd.

6When men arm themselves for battle and slaughter, there the goddess comes and stands by whichever side she chooses to grant victory with her favour and hand them glory.

7 She is good for standing by cavalry, when she chooses to; and good again when men compete in athletic contest – there the goddess comes and stands by them too and helps them; and victorious by his strength and power, a man wins the fine prize with ease and joy, conferring glory on his parents.

8To those too who till the surly grey, and who pray to Hecate and the strong-thundering Shaker of Earth, easily the proud goddess grants a large catch; but easily she takes it away when it is sighted, if she so chooses.

9She is good for increasing the livestock in the folds together with Hermes. Herds of cattle and broad herds of goats and flocks of fleecy sheep, if so, she chooses, she makes great out of small, and less out of many.

10So, even though she is an only child on her mother's side, she is honoured among the immortals with every privilege. And the son of Kronos made her a fosterer of the young, for those whose eyes since her birth have seen the light of far-sighted day. So she has been a nurse of the young from the beginning, and these are her privileges.