



# Pythagoras and the Delphic Mysteries

*Edouard Schuré*

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THE soul of Orpheus had passed like a divine meteor across the troubled heavens of a new-born Greece. When the meteor had disappeared, the land was again wrapt in darkness. After a series of revolutions, the tyrants of Thrace committed his books to the flames, overthrew his temples and drove away his disciples. The Greek kings and numerous cities followed this example, more jealous of their unbridled licence than of that justice which is the source of pure doctrine. They were determined to efface his very memory, to leave no sign of his existence, and they succeeded so well, that, a few centuries after his death, a portion of Greece even doubted whether he had ever lived. It was in vain that the initiates kept alive his tradition for over a thousand years; in vain that Pythagoras and Plato spoke of him as divine; the sophists and the rhetoricians saw in him no more than a legend regarding the origin of music. Even at the present time, savants stoutly deny the existence of Orpheus, basing their assertion on the fact that neither Homer nor Hesiod mentioned his name. The silence of these poets, however, is fully explained by the interdict under which the local government had placed the great initiator. The disciples of Orpheus lost no opportunity of rallying all the powers under the supreme authority of the temple of Delphi, and never tired of repeating that the differences arising between the divers states of Greece must be laid before the council of the Amphictyons. This was displeasing to demagogues and tyrants alike. Homer, who probably received his initiation in the sanctuary of Tyre, and whose mythology is the poetical translation of the theology of Sankoniaton, Homer the Ionian might very well have known nothing of the Dorian Orpheus whose tradition was kept all the more secret as it was the more exposed to persecution. As regards Hesiod, who was born near Parnassus, he must have known the name and doctrine of Orpheus through the temple at Delphi; but silence was imposed on him by his initiators, and that for good reasons.

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