

Epicurean Similarities With Early Christianity

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 27, 2022 at 4:22 PM

Regarding Epicurus as the *sōtēr* of humanity:

“It is interesting that a man like Epicurus—who later was so much attacked by the Christians that only some of his fragments remain—was called *soter* by his pupils. This is the Greek word which the New Testament uses and which we translate as “savior”. Epicurus the philosopher was called a savior. [...] He was called *soter* because he did the greatest thing anyone could do for his followers: he liberated them from anxiety.” (Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought, from Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism* 5 [1972])

“The similarity of god and sage reaches out of the paradisiacal realms of the Garden and *intermundia* into the world inhabited by common men, for it is in the world of the common man that the effects of divinity and deosimilitude are most visible. Both the sage and the gods are called *sōtēres* in Epicurean writings, for both effect acts of salvation for the benefit of the common man still in the world.” (Frischer, *The Sculpted Word: Epicureanism and Philosophical Recruitment in Ancient Greece* 79)

“**[T]he Lord Jesus Christ . . . our Savior.** In the Greco-Roman world, it was common for the Caesars to call themselves “Lord” (*kurios* [...]) and “Savior” (*sōtēr* [...]) [...] For example, Epicurus is called *sōtēr* by his followers.” (Hoehner and Davids, *Ephesians; Philippians, 1-2 Thessalonians; Colossians, Philemon* 209)

“Epicurus is occasionally described as a savior (*sōtēr*) or messenger (*kēryx*), terms which are also used by Epicureans themselves and are reminiscent of Old Testament expressions. Perhaps such a choice of words was intended as a kind of ‘competitive offer’ to the blossoming of Christianity. Lucian’s *Alexander* seeks to put up a monument to Epicurus the ‘saviour’, ‘for this in the truest sense holy and divine man, the only one actually to recognize that which is true and good and, through its dissemination, to become a liberator and benefactor of his disciples’.” (*The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* 53)