

Epicurean substitute for prayer

Post by “Pacatus” of November 10, 2022 at 4:40 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So just like a lot of words we have to parse "belief" and even "faith" to be sure exactly what we mean.

Somewhere I have an etymology book that indicates “believe” in English originally meant “to hold dear.” This seems to have been (e.g. in the KJV Bible) a valid (if perhaps poetic) rendering of the Greek pisteo.

Cognates of “believe” include lief, leave, furlough, love.

But the word came to mean “what one thinks” – rather than a confidence or trust – which is what I take “faith” (in a very mundane sense) to mean. Christians often tend to take both terms to mean what one is certain of, regardless of actual evidence (as in the phrase “I believe in”) – whereas I view “faith” more as an attitude of – decisional – confidence in the face of uncertainty; something how the sports psychologists use it.

For myself, I only use the word “believe” (or “belief”) in the fairly mundane sense of: “it seems to me” or “it appears to be so” or “I think so” or “the evidence indicates that ...”. Thus, it always something “checkable” empirically.

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Some years ago, I wrote a whimsy poem playing with the cognate words mentioned above:

Belief

(an etymological poem)

What is belief except to give leave
to what your own heart’s desire
would lief allow for you to follow,
and to hallow always with your love?
That is as much as I will believe—
so long as beauty is safely left,
her colorful tapestries, without

furlough, to weave. As for all the rest:
An it will harm none, do as ye lief
and may all be well—beyond belief.

I really think it is not a good poem - but it was fun to write. 😊