

Joseph Thompson - "Lucretius Or Paul?" 1875

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 8:40 PM

He closes mentioning lack of "feeling" and then lack of "hope"

Quote

We come now to the final test of these systems in their application to that feeling of Hope which is native and imperishable in man, and to that cheerful and beneficent working that should realize the hopes of Humanity. It may fitly characterize the system of Lucretius to say, there is no hope in it; and it was a fitting commentary on such a system that he who framed it, seeing nothing to live for and nothing to hope for, should end his life by his own hand. Not that I would charge the suicide of Lucretius as a crime upon his system or himself. So far from being put under the ban of priestly superstition, or the more mercenary ban of Life Insurance companies, the suicide should be looked upon with a tender, even sacred pity, as the victim of mental or moral disease. Yet when Lucretius was so tempted, we find in his system nothing of the hope that could have restrained the hand which had written "alter death there will remain no self"—that is no conscious personality—and "no one wakes up upon whom the chill cessation of life has once come.." Thus we see this proud master of the material universe succumbing to the fate that befalls his atoms.

And then winds up for the close:

Quote

But the scheme of Lucretius admits of no expansion. It is shut down within its own horizon—rather it is shut up within a cavern of endless gloom, where those who enter must bid farewell to Hope. The scheme of Paul has made peoples wiser and better in the degree that they have accepted it; it wants but to be accepted in its completeness, to fill the world with light and peace and joy. It carries in itself the future of all poetry and prophecy, and they who teach it are messengers of gladness and joy. But how can the followers of Lucretius exult in such a system? Does the physician put on airs of mirth and exultation when he tells his patient there is no hope? Yet this message of despair is what the priests of Materialism bring from the arcana of nature. One would think they would go forth in sackcloth and ashes, with inverted torches, to the grave of all things. Against a nature of such origin and end, I pit my own manhood, and do not fear the issue. Would I cherish the tender, graceful sentiment of gratitude? then must I

follow Paul, and not Lucretius. Would I yield to the noble impulses of patriotism? then must I follow Paul, and not Lucretius. Would I rise to the magnanimous heights of philanthropy? then must I follow Paul, and not Lucretius. Would I help Mankind in their sorrows, deliver them from their superstitions, raise them from their sins? then must I follow Paul, and not Lucretius. Would I lift myself and my race to immortal hopes? then must I drop Lucretius, and follow Paul to the life everlasting.