Preconceptions and PD24

Post by “Cassius” of December 28, 2021 at 9:29 PM

I will look for a more definite statement of what I just wrote, but it is my understanding that that is a fair rendition of this section of the letter to Menoeceus:

everything necessary to regain it.

123-4) Ἃ δέ σοι συνεχῶς παρήγγελλον, ταῦτα καὶ πρᾶττε καὶ μελέτα, στοιχεῖα τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν ταῦτ’ εἶναι διαλαμβάνων. Πρῶτον μὲν τὸν θεὸν ζῷον ἄφθαρτον καὶ μακάριον νομίζων, ὡς ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις ὑπεγράφη, μηθὲν μήτε τῆς ἀφθαρσίας ἀλλότριον μήτε τῆς μακαριότητος ἀνοίκειον αὐτῷ πρόσαπτε· πᾶν δὲ τὸ φυλάττειν αὐτοῦ δυνάμενον τὴν μετὰ ἀφθαρσίας μακαριότητα περὶ αὐτὸν δόξαζε. θεοὶ μὲν γὰρ εἰσίν· ἐναργὴς γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ γνῶσις· οἵους δ’ αὐτοὺς <οἱ> πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν, οὐκ εἰσιν· οὐ γὰρ φυλάττουσιν αὐτοὺς οἵους νομίζουσιν. ἀσεβὴς δὲ οὐχ ὁ τοὺς τῶν πολλῶν θεοὺς ἀναιρῶν, ἀλλ’ ὁ τὰς τῶν πολλῶν δόξας θεοῖς προσάπτων. οὐ γὰρ προλήψεις εἰσίν ἀλλ’ ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς αἱ τῶν πολλῶν ὑπὲρ θεῶν ἀποφάσεις. ἔνθεν αἱ μέγισται βλάβαι ἐκ θεῶν ἐπάγονται καὶ ὠφέλειαι <τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς>. ταῖς γὰρ ἰδίαις οἰκειούμενοι διὰ παντὸς ἀρεταῖς τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀποδέχονται, πᾶν τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον ὡς ἀλλότριον νομίζοντες.

123-4) I encourage you, as always, to study and practice the things which are the ingredients of happiness. First of all, consider that a god is an immortal and happy being, as is commonly written. But do not believe anything about divine nature other than what is congenial for an eternally happy existence. The gods do exist because we have preconceived notions of them. But they are not like how most people describe them, because they do not retain the notion of the gods that they first receive. Rejecting the popular myths does not make one impious. Impious is one who upholds popular beliefs about the gods, because those pronouncements are false opinions rather than actual preconceptions. Hence the severest harm from the gods is anticipated by the many, while benefits are reaped by the virtuous. The reason being is that those who reflect upon their own virtues regard the gods as resembling themselves, and reject all else as outlandish.