

Thomas Jefferson's Religious Beliefs

Post by "Cassius" of February 1, 2022 at 10:28 AM

Epicureans have been unpacking this for 2000+ years

Lucretius Book One:

Brown:

[80] But in these things, I fear, you will suspect you are learning impious rudiments of reason, and entering in a road of wickedness. So, far from this, reflect what sad flagitious deeds Religion has produced. By her inspired, the Grecian chiefs, the first of men, at Aulis, Diana's altar shamefully defiled with Iphigenia's blood; her virgin hair a fillet bound, which hung in equal length on either side of her face. She saw her father, covered with sorrow, stand before the altar; for pity to his grief the butchering priests concealed the knife. The city, at the sight, overflowed with tears; the virgin, dumb with fear; fell low upon her knees on the hard Earth; in vain the wretched princess in distress pleaded that she first gave the honored name of Father to the King; but hurried off, and dragged by wicked hands, she, trembling, stood before the altar. Alas! not as a virgin, the solemn forms being duly done, drawn with pleasing force to Hymen's noble rites, but a chaste maid, just ripe for nuptial joy, falls a sad victim, by a father's hand, only to beg a kind propitious gale for Grecian ships. Such Scenes of villainy Religion could inspire!

Humphries:

I fear that, in these matters, you may think

You're entering upon a path of crime,

The A B C's of godlessness. Not so.

The opposite is true. Too many times

Religion mothers crime and wickedness.

Recall how once at Aulis, when the Greeks,

Those chosen peers, the very first of men,

Defiled, with a girl's blood, the altar-stone

Sacred to Artemis. The princess stood

Wearing the sacred fillets or a veil,

And sensed but could not see the king her father,
Agamemnon, standing sorrowful
Beside the altar, and the priests near-by
Hiding the knife-blade, and the folk in tears
At what they saw. She knelt, she spoke no word,
She was afraid, poor thing. Much good it did her
At such a time to have been the very first
To give the king that other title, Father!
Raised by men's hands and trembling she was led
Toward the altar, not to join in song
After the ritual of sacrifice
To the bright god of marriage. No; she fell
A victim by the sacrificing stroke
Her father gave, to shed her virgin blood-
Not the way virgins shed it - but in death,
To bring the fleet a happy exodus!
A mighty counselor, Religion stood
With all that power for wickedness.