

Episode 233 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 08 - An Epicurean Attack On The False God Of Stoicism

Post by “Cassius” of June 19, 2024 at 1:49 PM

More reference background:

[Cleanthes' "Hymn To Zeus" - Wikiquote](#)

But we seem to discover in Cleanthes, when we read his hymn^[6] (was it written in early, middle, or later life?), a genuinely religious man, “bent on giving a theological interpretation of the world, and breathing a pious submission to the world-order which it is refreshing to feel and come in contact with” (Davidson, *The Stoic Creed*, p. 27). Notwithstanding the materialism apparent in his physical speculations, “he can yet infuse into his submission to the cosmic order such an amount of willing acquiescence as to give the impression of the deepest religious feeling” (*ib.*, p. 229).^[7] Lightfoot was justified in calling his hymn the noblest expression of heathen devotion which Greek literature has preserved to us. Nothing quite so impressive, of its kind, was ever again to appear in pagan history till, nearly half a millennium later, **Stoicism was destined to produce its final and exquisite fruit in the Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.**

Most glorious of Immortals, mighty God,
Invoked by many a name, O sovran King
Of universal Nature, piloting
This world in harmony with Law,—all hail!
Thee it is meet that mortals should invoke,
For we Thine offspring are, and sole of all
5Created things that live and move on earth
Receive from Thee the image of the One.
Therefore I praise Thee, and shall hymn Thy power
Unceasingly. Thee the wide world obeys,
As onward ever in its course it rolls
Where'er Thou guidest, and rejoices still
Beneath Thy sway so strong a minister
Is held by Thine unconquerable hands,—
10
That two-edged thunderbolt of living fire
That never fails. Under its dreadful blow
All Nature reels; therewith Thou dost direct
The Universal Reason which, commixt
With all the greater and the lesser lights,
Moves thro' the Universe. How great Thou art,

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The Lord supreme for ever and for aye!

15

No work is wrought apart from Thee, O God,
Or in the world, or in the heaven above,
Or on the deep, save only what is done
By sinners in their folly. Nay, Thou canst
Make the rough smooth, bring wondrous order forth
From chaos; in Thy sight unloveliness
Seems beautiful; for so Thou hast fitted things
20 Together, good and evil, that there reigns
One everlasting Reason in them all.

The wicked heed not this, but suffer it
To slip, to their undoing; these are they
Who, yearning ever to secure the good,
Mark not nor hear the law of God, by wise

25

Obedience unto which they might attain
A nobler life, with Reason harmonized.
But now, unbid, they pass on divers paths
Each his own way, yet knowing not the truth,—
Some in unlovely striving for renown,
Some bent on lawless gains, on pleasure some,

30

Working their own undoings self-deceived.
O Thou most bounteous God that sittest throned
In clouds, the Lord of lightning, save mankind
From grievous ignorance! Oh, scatter it
Far from their souls, and grant them to achieve
True knowledge, on whose might Thou dost rely
To govern all the world in righteousness;

35

That so, being honoured, we may Thee requite
With honour, chanting without pause Thy deeds,
As all men should: since greater guerdon ne'er
Befalls or man or god than evermore
Duly to praise the Universal Law.