

Epicureanism as the spiritual essence or 'religion' of an entire community

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[On Piety](#) will be the big resource here:

"Furthermore, | it will appear that **Epíkouros loyally observed all the forms of worship and enjoined upon his friends to observe them**, not only on account of the laws but for physical reasons¹⁰⁵ as well. For in *On Lifecourses* he says that **to pray is natural**¹⁰⁶ | for us, not because the gods would be hostile if we did not pray, but in order that, according to the understanding of beings surpassing in power and excellence, we may realize our¹⁰⁷ fulfilments | and social conformity with the laws. And besides writing this as well, in *On Gods* he¹⁰⁸ says that as being both the greatest thing, and that which as it were excels in sovereignty, it possesses everything: for every wise man holds pure and | holy beliefs about the divine and has understood that this nature¹⁰⁹ is great and august. And **it is particularly at festivals that he**, progressing to an understanding of it,¹¹⁰ through having its name the whole time | on his lips, **embraces**¹¹¹ **with conviction more seriously** [...] not from things¹¹² (*several words missing*) of some things better by effectively preserving one's conception of the gods during certain | times.¹¹³ And not only did he¹¹⁴ teach these things but also **by his very deeds he is found to have taken part in all the traditional festivals and sacrifices**. In the archonship of Aristonymus,¹¹⁵ for instance, writing to Phyrson about a countryman of | his¹¹⁶, Theodotus, he¹¹⁷ says that **he shared in all the festivals** (*several words missing*), and that while he¹¹⁸ was joining in celebrating **the festival of the Choes**¹¹⁹ and **the urban mysteries**¹²⁰ | and the other festivals at a meagre dinner, and that it was necessary for him¹²¹ to **celebrate this feast of the twentieth**¹²² for distinguished revellers, while those in the house decorated it most piously, and after making invitations¹²³ to host a feast for all of them. | Now it would be absurd to relate in addition that they¹²⁴ thought it right to make use of oaths and epithets of the gods, since their philosophical writing is filled with them. But it is proper to say that he¹²⁵ advised | them to retain asseverations made by means of these and similar expressions, and above all to preserve those made by Zeús himself in this open manner,¹²⁶ and not writing 'by the twin shoots!'¹²⁷ or merely 'it must be so'. Moreover to Kolotes he took pains with regard to all forms of oaths and | speaking about the gods. And in the archonship of Charinus¹²⁸ and that of Diotimus¹²⁹ **he warns against violating the covenant of the sacred festival table**. | [...] But also writing to Polýainos that the **Anthésteria too must be celebrated** and that **it is necessary to make mention of the gods** (*one word missing*) | of many [...] to conceive of their¹³⁰ nature as accurately constituting the notion of benefit according to the epistemological standard. And, lest I extend my discussion, again: 'Let us sacrifice | to the gods', he¹³¹ says, '**devoutly and fittingly on the proper days, and let us fittingly perform all the acts of worship in accordance with the laws, in no way disturbing ourselves with opinions in matters concerning the most excellent and august of being**. Moreover, |

let us sacrifice justly, on the view that I was giving. For in this way it is possible for mortal nature, by Zeús, to live like Zeús, as it seems.' [...] And **in his Symposium concerning the rites**²⁴⁵ (he says): **'Let us celebrate the festivals',** | and **'Make fine sacrifices to a god'**, [...] from the holy rites in prayers against these cities..." (Philodemos, [On Piety](#), translated by Obbink)