

Linguistic Connection Between "Hedone" and "Eden" ?

Post by "Cassius" of June 26, 2019 at 8:20 AM

(1) Dewitt's book talks about this connection, especially in connection with the Sadducees and the view that there is no afterlife. See attached graphic.

(2) This is focused on the christian texts rather than the jewish, but Thomas Jefferson's friend Thomas Cooper argued at length that materialism was the true premise of biblical theology
<https://thomascoopermd.wordpress.com/the-scripture-...of-materialism/>

phy, there can be little doubt that this was part of his program. It is on record that a gymnasium was built in Jerusalem,²⁹ abhorrent to the orthodox Jew not only as an alien institution but specifically because of nudity in sports and the threat of sodomite practices associated with it. It signified also the virtual licensing of public teachers free of priestly control. That some progress was made in this direction is evidenced by the word *Ecclesiastes*, which means public teacher. Moreover, the book that goes under this name is abundantly sprinkled with atoms of Epicureanism; it was squeezed into the canon only by drastic and incongruous editing.

It derives its startling literary quality from the combination of luminous Hebraic imagery with the stark materialism of Epicurus. Consider, for example, the following, 9:4-5: "A living dog is better than a dead lion, for the living know that they shall die but the dead know not anything." Here we see transposed into the Hebraic idiom of thought the doctrine of the Garden that the most precious of all things is life itself and "that death is nothing to us"; it is anesthesia. The opinion has been expressed that the author was a Jewish physician of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.³⁰

The hatred of the orthodox Jew for the heretical teaching is on record to this day in the rabbinical term *apikoros*, "unbeliever." Jewish students were exhorted "to study the Law and know how to make answer to an unbeliever [lit. "Epicurean"]."³¹

It may be added that, even apart from attempts at cultural regimentation, an opening had been afforded for the infiltration of Epicurean doctrines among the Jews by the division between Pharisees and **Sadducees**. The beliefs of the latter, as recorded by Josephus,³² including the denial of divine providence and the assertion of free will, exhibit an unmistakable coincidence with the teachings of Epicurus. This coincidence is the more noticeable because the reluctance of the Sadducees to hold public office is likewise mentioned. That Epicurus was in the mind

335

EPICURUS AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

of Josephus when penning his account of this sect, even if not mentioned by name, becomes the more probable when it is recalled that his defense of the prophet Daniel concludes with a spirited and extended diatribe against Epicurus and his views on the government of the universe.³³ On this occasion the arch-heretic is specifically named.