

# From the Pen of the Master: Epicurus

Post by "Susan Hill" of October 28, 2020 at 10:00 AM

## Excerpts from Letter to Menoecus

*Translation is by Cyril Bailey from his book "Epicurus, The Extant Remains."*

First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed, even as the common idea of a god is engraved on men's minds, and do not assign to him anything alien to his immortality or ill-suited to his blessedness: but believe about him everything that can uphold his blessedness and immortality. For gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision.

But they are not such as the many believe them to be: for indeed they do not consistently represent them as they believe them to be.

And the impious man is not he who popularly denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to the gods the beliefs of the many.

For the statements of the many about the gods are not conceptions derived from sensation, but false suppositions, according to which the greatest misfortunes befall the wicked and the greatest blessings (the good) by the gift of the gods.

For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature?

For, indeed, it were better to follow the myths about the gods than to become a slave to the destiny of the natural philosophers: for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation.

As to chance, he does not regard it as a god as most men do (for in a god's acts there is no disorder), nor as an uncertain cause (of all things) for he does not believe that good and evil are given by chance to man for the framing of a blessed life, but that opportunities for great good and great evil are afforded by it.

Meditate therefore on these things and things akin to them night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men.

For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being.