

Oedipus the King,
Sophocles 497 /6 - 405B.C.

CHORUS (Str. 1) My lot be still to lead The life of innocence and fly
Irreverence in word or deed, To follow still those laws ordained on high
Whose birthplace is the bright ethereal sky No mortal birth they own,
 Olympus their progenitor alone: Ne'er shall they slumber in oblivion cold,
The god in them is strong and grows not old. (Ant. 1) Of insolence is bred
The tyrant; insolence full blown, With empty riches surfeited,
Scales the precipitous height and grasps the throne.
 Then topples o'er and lies in ruin prone;
 No foothold on that dizzy steep. But O may Heaven the true patriot keep
Who burns with emulous zeal to serve the State.
God is my help and hope, on him I wait. (Str. 2)
But the proud sinner, or in word or deed, That will not Justice heed,
 Nor reverence the shrine Of images divine,
Perdition seize his vain imaginings, If, urged by greed profane,
 He grasps at ill-got gain, And lays an impious hand on holiest things.
 Who when such deeds are done Can hope heaven's bolts to shun?
If sin like this to honor can aspire,
Why **dance** I still and lead the sacred choir? (Ant. 2)
No more I'll seek earth's central oracle, Or Abae's hallowed cell,
 Nor to Olympia bring My votive offering.
If before all God's truth be not bade plain. O Zeus, reveal thy might,
 King, if thou'rt named aright Omnipotent, all-seeing, as of old;
 For Laius is forgot; His weird, men heed it not;
Apollo is forsook and faith grows cold. [Enter JOCASTA.]

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OEDIPUS Let the storm burst, my fixed resolve still holds,
To learn my lineage, be it ne'er so low. It may be she with all a woman's pride
Thinks scorn of my base parentage. But I
Who rank myself as Fortune's favorite child,
The giver of good gifts, shall not be shamed.
She is my mother and the changing moons
My brethren, and with them I wax and wane.
Thus sprung why should I fear to trace my birth?
Nothing can make me other than I am. **CHORUS** (Str.)
If my soul prophetic err not, if my wisdom aught avail,

*Thee, Cithaeron, I shall hail,
As the nurse and foster-mother of our Oedipus shall greet
Ere tomorrow's full moon rises, and exalt thee as is meet.
Dance and song shall hymn thy praises, lover of our royal race.
Phoebus, may my words find grace!*

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Translation by Francis Storr