

Any Application of Epicurean Theology to the Christian God(s)

Post by "Eikadistes" of June 16, 2022 at 11:09 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Are you familiar with Thomas Jefferson's Bible editing?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jefferson_Bible?wprov=sfla1

There is an interesting historical connection between Epicurean philosophy and (heterodox) Christianity at the intersection of the American Revolution. While Colonial religion was dominated by the evangelism of the First Great Awakening, a notable group of critics (including *Ethan Allen*, a founder of Vermont, *Thomas Young*, organizer of the Boston Tea Party, and, of course, *Thomas Jefferson*, who re-wrote the Bible) represented a piety apart from religion.

Rather than dispense with Christianity altogether, some of these individuals sought to re-orient the narrative of *Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ* into the narrative of *Jesus of Nazareth*, a simple moral reformer in ancient Judaea. They generally rejected the *Epistles* and *Revelation* in their entirety, and saw Christian Churches as being subversive political institutions that repeatedly changed their doctrines to accommodate political interests.

At the same time, critics of Christianity heavily employed religious language that evangelists have cited to support the "American is a Christian Nation" argument. A closer reading of that language, and the philosophical context in which it was written, however, shows that "God" and "Creator" refer to "Nature" and never to "Jesus". Even so, many of these critics glorified the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth as the most morally "perfect" figure in history.

Nonetheless, these critics stand in contrast with the Christian authorities of the time (most notably the Catholic Church), so they are not great examples of typical Christians (if Christians at all). They derived their positions from a line that begins with *De Rerum Natura*, and grows through Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and then eventually American Revolutionaries like Jefferson who held on to some aspects of Christianity after applying an Epicurean critique.

If one is intending to interface with Christianity in a way that does not completely dismiss the tradition while maintaining an Epicurean position, Jefferson's approach seems appropriate.