

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

Post by “Don” of October 1, 2023 at 6:46 AM

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

Remember that Christianity did copy something from Epicureanism. Spreading your creed in the form of epistles and the early Christian vision of an 'agapetic community' were definitely inspired by Epicureanism

I'm skeptical of attributing Paul's and other early Church fathers' use of epistolography to an Epicurean source. There was a robust tradition of letter writing throughout the ancient world, including in Hebrew and Aramaic as well as Greek and Latin. It was even used as a literary form. The letters of Seneca to Lucilius, Ovid's Heroides, Cicero's and Pliny's voluminous letters, and so on are examples of this tradition.

See also:

[Ancient Epistolography Network - School of Arts, Languages and Cultures - The University of Manchester](#)

[Letters and Communities: Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography - Bryn Mawr Classical Review](#)

I also remain skeptical of attributing the early Christian agapetic community to Epicurus's influence as well. From my perspective, there are any number of models the early Christians could have looked to, including Essenes, mystery cults, etc.

Epicurus's philosophy was antithetical to Christian beliefs. Dr. Bart Ehrman recently posted an essay to his blog contrasting Epicurus and Paul. I'll respect his pay wall and not repost the full essay here ([He donates all proceeds from the blog to worthy charities in his local area.](#)) However, this is his conclusion:

"In short: for Paul true life meant living the life of the crucified victim. For Epicurus it meant living anything but the life of a crucified victim. Two billion people in the world today consider themselves devotees of Paul, but many (most?) of them actually agree with Epicurus."

Within that context, I find it hard to square that with Paul and other early Christians adopting Epicurean structures, strategies, and tactics. ****Maybe**** to counter the popularity of the philosophy? However, there were so many other similar structures, strategies, and tactics to draw from, I find it unnecessary to attribute Christian ones to Epicurean sources.

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3359-epicureanism-as-the-spiritual-essence-or-religion-of-an-entire-community/?postID=26240#post26240>