

Essenes or Epicureans?

Post by “Don” of March 29, 2023 at 8:02 AM

DeWitt posits that the early Christian monastic communities were patterned after the Epicurean Gardens in the ancient world.

I was just listening to a Bart Ehrman podcast and he brought up the Essenes in relation to a topic.

[Essenes - Wikipedia](#)

I'm not sure if DeWitt mentions them, but they were a Jewish ascetic community set off from others founded in the 2nd c. BCE.

It seems more likely to me that this would have been a model for early Christians than the Gardens, although I suppose there could have been a conflation of the two groups.

Thoughts?

Post by “Cassius” of March 29, 2023 at 8:39 AM

Seems to me you're right. In the distant past I read some into the Essenes in regard to the Dead Sea scrolls and so forth. I don't recall whether the Essenes were into life after death or against it (was that the Sadducees?) but that would seem to be another potential point of crossover influence.

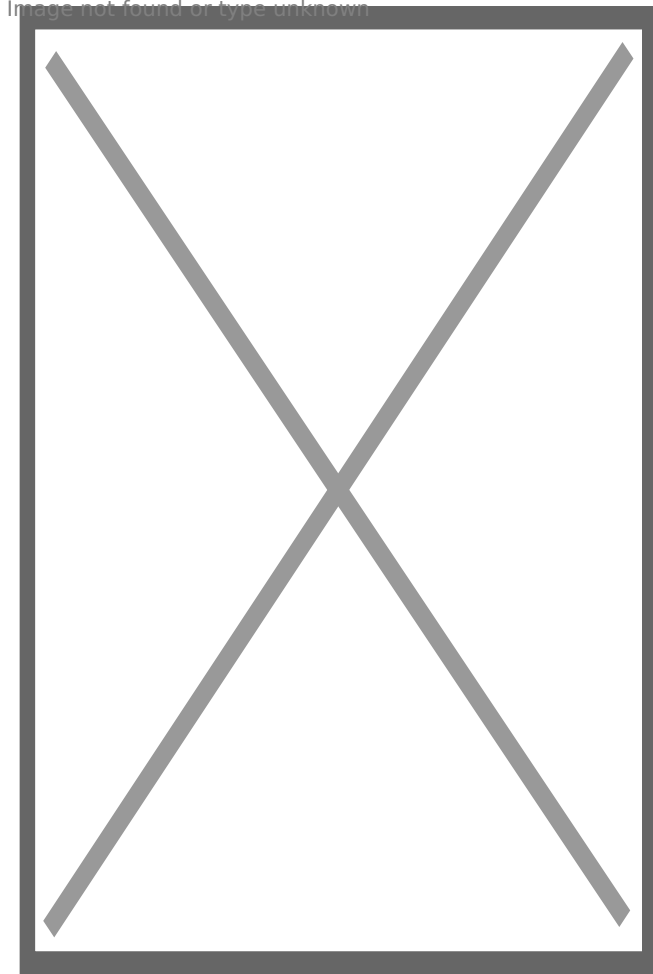
And of course I personally really don't buy into the argument that the Epicureans were significantly into "monastic" style living, so I don't agree with DeWitt's point for that reason too. I certainly don't see evidence of that in the Romans, in part because I don't see libraries as necessarily associated with monastic lifestyle, and I think if the Roman Epicureans were into that we'd see more evidence of it from Cicero or Atticus or Lucretius or any number of sources. I like to surround myself to the extent possible with friends, but that's just common sense, and doesn't make me dedicated to a monastic lifestyle.

Post by “Don” of March 29, 2023 at 11:47 AM

This timeline seems significant too:

[Chronology of early Christian monasticism - Wikipedia](#)

and this



[Christian monasticism - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

Post by “Eikadistes” of March 29, 2023 at 1:56 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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Pro-death. The Essenes were mystics.

I am curious if their social structure resembled Gardens, because they are opposed, ideologically.