

Biographical Details of Norman W. DeWitt

Post by "Titus" of July 31, 2023 at 9:09 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

What I personally have issues with is his tendency to go far beyond what the texts and evidence have to offer. Especially the books written in retirement: Epicurus and His Philosophy and St. Paul and Epicurus. I think he often interprets and extrapolates far too much with very little evidence to make a point he wants to make. Following up on his references is frustrating because his text will say one thing and the reference don't back it up. Or he'll simply make things up for the sake of historical narrative or philosophical stance. He was skilled at creating historical fiction based loosely on the evidence. That's one of my big issues with DeWitt.

Personally speaking, his creative stance "creating historical fiction" is the reason why I adore "St. Paul and Epicurus" so much. While his assumptions are often experimental and lacking obvious evidence, this is exactly the reason why his work is so valueable. Deciphering and reinterpreting of texts relating to a 2000 years old tradition is quite a tricky task. No other person than an expert in ancient languages and Epicureanism seems to be qualified of recognizing hidden parallels in the original texts. Any other interpreter, who are usually theologians, would be stuck in the spider's net of tradition - or promoting their own agenda. DeWitt's analyses in "St. Paul and Epicurus" can hardly be read as hard evidence, but they are interpretations to talk about. Unfortunately, it seems hardly anyone have discussed his assumptions. In my opinion, they are more groundet than most of theologian's writings.

Relating to "St. Paul and Epicurus" this is, for the first time, a Christianity which makes sense to me. While DeWitt doesn't formulate his final conclusion, the reader imagines St. Paul bringing the heavens of the blissful and eternal gods to Earth, offering their salvation to mankind!

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The other, again especially in Epicurus and His Philosophy, is his antiquated and sometimes opaque writing style. Parsing DeWitt can sometimes be almost as difficult as parsing ancient Greek! That is one of the reasons I'm reluctant to fully endorse DeWitt as an introduction to Epicurus and his philosophy.

As a non-native speaker, I definitively agree with you. 😊