

My struggle with Norman DeWitt

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2023 at 11:32 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

I presume his endless perceived connections between Christianity and Epicureanism were an attempt to get his Christian contemporaries to take another look at Epicurus.

I think that is definitely the central motivation. Again, DeWitt never (to my recollection) comes out and says that he is a Christian, or that we should accept Christian dogmas. In fact the more I think about it the more I see him doing what Gibbon did -- talking about the history of Christianity as a means of luring in the conventional Christian thinkers before setting the bait that catches them onto the truth.

Don't forget that DeWitt mentions more than once (and seems to enjoy repeating it) how Augustine would have "given the palm" to Epicurus were it not for (apparently) the immortality / life after death issue. In my mind DeWitt does much the same thing that Gibbon does -- he rims the cup with honey for the Christian with all the historical parallels, while he dispenses the medicine of true philosophy to the patient.

DeWitt wasn't in a position himself (and we don't really know whether he wanted to be or not) of writing an anti-Christian philosophy book. We don't know his motives, but I would say that what he in fact did was to provide the most sweeping and sympathetic overview available of a philosophy that makes holding the Christian viewpoint impossible. I doubt very much that he was blind to the natural result of what he had written.