

Would Epicurus approve of Biblical or Quranic studies in order to be confident in disproving it?

Post by “wbernys” of January 22, 2026 at 3:24 PM

Didn't really know where to put this thread.

So before I became a full fledged Epicurean I was quite addicted to academic study of the Bible and Quran. Not for religious reasons but to be confident in my own opposition to religion. When I saw things like the "minimal facts" argument about Jesus empty tomb or resurrection or the Quranic scientific miracles I looked to various sources in order to be confident in refuting them.

Would Epicurus approve of this, or would he think simply looking toward nature was enough and trying to refute obviously nonsense texts was a waste of time? I know he apparently disliked the study of Homer, seeing it as a waste of energy but I wonder if the field of modern apologetics would cause him to change his outlook if he were around today.

Post by “Cassius” of January 22, 2026 at 3:42 PM

By coincidence I was posting earlier about [an article by David Sedley](#), in which he makes the point that fundamental Epicurean argument in favor of both atomism and the pleasure of ethics involves refuting claims that contradict the view that you are asserting.

I don't see how it's possible to provide a comprehensive refutation of adverse arguments unless you understand them, and understanding them involves at least some degree of studying them.

I can see that it's possible to carry studying the opposition so that you can "be the devil's advocate" too far, but I doubt that any balanced person would be in danger of making that mistake.

The statement by Frances Wright I recently cited from Chapter Nine of [A Few Days In Athens](#) also applies:

Quote

With regard to the sciences, if it be said, that they are neglected among us, I do not say that our master, though himself versed in them, as in all other branches of knowledge, greatly recommends them to our study but that they are not unknown, let Polyenus be evidence.

“He, one of the most amiable men of our school, and one most highly favored by our master, you must have heard mentioned throughout Greece as a profound geometrician.”

“Yes,” replied Theon, “but I have also heard, that since entering the garden, he has ceased to respect his science.”

“I am not aware of that,” said Leontium, “though I believe he no longer devotes to it all his time, and all his faculties. Epicurus called him from his diagrams, to open to him the secrets of physics, and the beauties of ethics; to show him the springs of human action, and lead him to the study of the human mind. He taught him, that any single study, however useful and noble in itself, was yet unworthy the entire employ of a curious and powerful intellect; that the man who pursued one line of knowledge, to the exclusion of others, though he should follow it up to its very head, would never be either learned or wise; that he who pursues knowledge, should think no branch of it unworthy attention; least of all, should he confine it to those which are unconnected with the business, and add nothing to the pleasures of life; that further not our acquaintance with ourselves, nor our fellows; that tend not to enlarge the sphere of our affections, to multiply our ideas and sensations, nor extend the scope of our inquiries. On this ground, he blamed the devotion of Polyenus to a science that leads to other truths than those of virtue, to other study than that of man.”

Also - You included *Biblical* and *Quranic* in your title -- I would include *Talmudic* in that list as well, and no doubt others too. We wouldn't want any of the usual suspects to feel left out! 😊

Post by “wbernys” of January 22, 2026 at 3:57 PM

Quote

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Frances Wright for the win!

I wonder if another reason he potentially didn't try to refute poetry so much was because of the extreme religious diversity in ancient Greece with some having very different views on Homer, who was not really seen as central to proving their religion to be true. (Zeno of Citium interpreting it metaphorically for example) unlike today where the bible or Quran are seen as the proofs of religious faith, with various bad arguments.

Post by “Bryan” of January 24, 2026 at 11:59 AM

[Quote from wbernys](#)

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Regarding critique of form, Epicurus disapproved of the study of Homer in terms of comparative literature and analysis of poetic meter (*which were very popular pastimes among the elites in his day -- elites who were not inclined to take Homer literally, but still had a lot of respect for his work from a cultural perspective*).

Regarding acceptance of content, Epicurus also disapproved of Homer being so highly respected among the middle class, who were more inclined to take Homer literally, and who viewed Homer's work as an ancient source of actual information about the gods.

However, regarding critique of content, Epicurus certainly did approve of studying Homer in order to criticize his content.

According to Plutarch (*Non Posse*, 2, 1086F), Metrodorus himself "rebuked (λελοιδορηκεν)" Homer "in many of his writings."

In his criticisms of Homer, Metrodorus wrote about "the poetic rabble (ἡ ποιητικὴ τύρβη)" and "the foolish sayings of Homer (τὰ Ὁμήρου μωρολογήματα)."

So Metrodorus produced multiple books about Homer, digging deep into his specific claims, and highlighting their absurdity.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4919-would-epicurus-approve-of-biblical-or-quranic-studies-in-order-to-confident-in-d/>