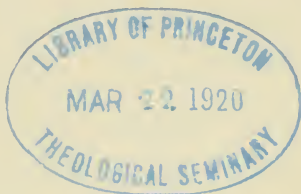


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# GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL IDEAS IN EGYPT

By

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TO  
WILLIAM COPLEY WINSLOW  
PIONEER AND PROMOTER OF  
EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY  
WITH AFFECTIONATE REGARD



## PREFACE

The magic of Egypt's ancient past is irresistible; the fascination of her present is perennial. Much has been written on the greatness and grandeur of her mighty civilization, but much more remains to be done before it can be said that we comprehend her. There are still great gaps in our knowledge of her history; and her art and architecture, though assiduously studied, are yet but poorly understood. Her picturesque script and her strange religion still bristle with unsolved problems.

This little book, by a student and lover of Egypt, aims only at a glimpse of one of the most enchanting problems of Egyptology. The religious and moral ideas of ancient Egypt yield to no other problem in human interest. How they arose, grew, and developed is the subject of this study.

The author has assumed a certain knowledge of the history of Egypt on the part of the reader, but he has endeavoured to make what he has to say as readable for the layman as possible. In order to assist the reader in forming an historical background for his study, the author has prefixed a chronological outline; and to avoid overcrowding the pages with references and footnotes, he has appended a selected

bibliography. But be it noted, in order to inspire due confidence in our study, that no assertion has been made, and no conclusion has been drawn, which cannot be thoroughly substantiated by reference to the original texts. So that our study, while aiming at a modern presentation of Egyptian religious and moral ideas, has never once consciously departed from facts deducible from the monuments.

On account of the limitations of our plan, much detail has had to be omitted. But this, it is hoped, has permitted a clearer and more connected exposition of the ideas of God and Man, of Mediation and the Future, and of Morality, in ancient Egypt, than could have been gained in a more detailed study.

It only remains to hope that this little essay will not merely call forth criticism, adverse as well as favourable, but will also lead others toward an interest in this ancient land of rich culture, deep religious conceptions, and noble moral ideals.

SAMUEL A. B. MERCER.

Hibbard Egyptian Library,  
Western Theological Seminary, Chicago  
March 20, 1919

## CONTENTS

|                                                           |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF EGYPTIAN<br>HISTORY . . . . . | 1   |
| II. INTRODUCTION . . . . .                                | 5   |
| III. THE IDEA OF GOD IN EGYPT . . . .                     | 10  |
| IV. THE IDEA OF MAN IN EGYPT . . . .                      | 47  |
| V. THE IDEA OF MEDIATION IN EGYPT . .                     | 58  |
| VI. THE IDEA OF THE FUTURE IN EGYPT .                     | 68  |
| VII. THE IDEA OF MORALITY IN EGYPT . .                    | 79  |
| VIII. A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . .                     | 103 |
| IX. INDEX . . . . .                                       | 107 |



# I

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF EGYPTIAN HISTORY\*

- 4500-3400 B. C. Historical-predynastic period.  
3400       “    Union of Upper and Lower Egypt under  
              Menes.  
3400-2980   “    First and Second Dynasties. Capital at  
              Thinis.

### MIDDLE KINGDOM, 2160-1788 B. C.

- 2980-2900 B. C. Third Dynasty. Capital at Memphis. The  
terraced pyramid of Sakkara built by  
Zoser. Time of the philosopher Imhotep.  
2900-2750   “    Fourth Dynasty. Capital at Memphis.  
Great pyramid of Gizeh built by Khufu.  
Establishment of Solar Theology by priests  
of Heliopolis. Period of great prosperity.  
2750-2625   “    Fifth Dynasty. Capital at Memphis.  
Earliest Pyramid Texts from reign of Uni,  
2655-2625.  
2625-2475   “    Sixth Dynasty. Capital at Memphis. Be-  
ginning of feudalism, and of the decline of  
the Old Kingdom.  
2475-2445   “    Seventh and Eighth Dynasties. Collapse  
of Memphis.

---

\* Breasted's chronology is followed.

2445-2160 B. C. Ninth and Tenth Dynasties. Capital at Heracleopolis. Rise of Thebes.

MIDDLE KINGDOM, 2160-1788 B. C.

2160-2000 B. C. Eleventh Dynasty. Capital at Thebes.

2000-1788 " Twelfth Dynasty. Capital at Thebes. Feudalism at its height. Period of great prosperity. Social and Moral literature, such as, Ptah-Hotep, The Misanthrope, Complaint of the Peasant. Decline of Feudalism, 1849-1801; and fall of Middle Kingdom, 1792-1788.

1788-1580 " Thirteenth to Seventeenth Dynasties. A period of great confusion, of which little is known. Thebes is still the capital.

EMPIRE, 1580-1150 B. C.

1580-1350 B. C. Eighteenth Dynasty. Capital at Thebes. Hyksos driven from Egypt. Military state organized. Thutmose III, 1479-1447, led seventeen campaigns in Asia. Egypt becomes a great empire. Theban Book of the Dead. Height of splendour in reign of Amenhotep III, 1411-1375, and beginning of period of the Tell el-Amarna letters. Ikhnaton's reform in religion, 1375-1358. Thebes exchanged for Akhetaton. After the reign of Ikhnaton, the first period of the Empire came to an end, with the fall of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

1350-1205 " Nineteenth Dynasty. Thebes restored, with the restoration of the worship of Amon-Rā. Great Hall of Karnak built. Reign of Merneptah, 1225-1215, the probable "Pharaoh of the Oppression".

1205-1200 " Complete anarchy.

- 1200-1090 B. C. Twentieth Dynasty. Thebes is the capital. Power of the priesthood increases. The high-priest Herihor seized the throne at Thebes at the end of this period.

TANITE-AMONITE PERIOD, 1090-945 B. C.

- 1090-945 B. C. Twenty-first Dynasty. Period of priestly power. Capital at Tanis.

LIBYAN PERIOD, 945-712 B. C.

- 945-745 B. C. Twenty-second Dynasty. Capital at Bubastis.  
745-718 " Twenty-third Dynasty. Capital at Bubastis.

NUBIAN PERIOD, 722-660 B. C.

- 718-712 B. C. Twenty-fourth Dynasty. Capital at Sais.  
712-663 " Twenty-fifth Dynasty. Capital at Napata. Assyrian supremacy, 670-660.  
663-525 " Twenty-sixth Dynasty. Capital at Sais.

RESTORATION PERIOD, 660-525 B. C.

- 660-525 B. C. Continuation of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. Renaissance in religion, literature, art, and government. Imitation of the past. Egypt conquered by the Persians under Cambyses, 525.  
The Persians ruled Egypt from 525-332, when Alexander conquered Egypt and founded Alexandria. Egypt then remained a part of the Greek empire till 30 B. C. when it was incorporated into the Roman empire.



## II

### INTRODUCTION

The modern world has learned to gather up the fragments that remain, to conserve the waste product. The deposit of coal-tar in the manufacture of illuminating gas, the waste accumulated in a packing-house, and the by-products in the industry of oil-refining are all utilised. They very often become as valuable as the product originally sought. The ancient Egyptians, many thousand years ago, had learned this lesson in a far higher realm. They had learned to conserve human personality.

But, unfortunately, their lesson was not an un-mixed blessing. They never forgot. Their great power of retention sadly mixed their growing world of religious and moral thought. Instead of being able to cast off worn-out religious and moral ideas, their power of conservation preserved them alongside higher and more advanced conceptions, resulting very often in much confusion.

In tracing the growth of Egyptian religious and moral ideas, therefore, this fact must be carefully borne in mind. Otherwise confusion will result, and a false verdict will be rendered. Failure to observe

this fact has led to the most diverse views as to the nature and value of Egyptian religious ideas.

There have been those who have seen in the ancient Egyptian religion a perfect monotheism; others have found therein merely an African barbarism; and still others have discovered a religion so solemn and gloomy as to be altogether sad and repulsive. These estimates are all false. It is questionable whether the Egyptians ever developed a real monotheism, even in the palmiest religious days of Ikhnaton. The verdict of solemnity and gloom has resulted from the mistaken idea that, because a large percentage of religious literature is mortuary and was inscribed on the walls of tombs and burial chambers, the outlook was solemn and gloomy. On the contrary, even the mortuary inscriptions and bas-reliefs show a singularly happy and light-hearted people.

Those who find in ancient Egypt nothing more than another barbaric African religion are carried away by the mistaken idea that because there are primitive African religions of barbarism to-day, all African religion must have been, and must be, barbaric. Because they know something about modern barbaric religions in Africa, they assume that their knowledge must be read back into ancient Egyptian literature, and become the only key capable of unlocking its mysteries. But anyone who reflects on the astounding material civilization built up in ancient Egypt, the language, architecture, art, and literature, not to speak of the highest and purest of moral conceptions, cannot doubt for one moment the capacity of the ancient Egyptians for high religious

thought. And when we go to their literature and art to seek light on this impression, we are rewarded with a wealth of religious conceptions which, in spite of their limitations, were not surpassed in the ancient world, and are quite comparable in some respects with anything the world has ever witnessed since. The religious precepts of Egypt have interwoven themselves into the moral fibre of civilization, her moral teaching has echoed from the mountain tops and through the valleys of human experience, and her gospel of righteousness still lives and breathes and operates.

Some of the Greeks were inclined to ridicule the civilization of Egypt. But they may be forgiven, for their ignorance was their guide. Since their times, nay, since the beginning of the nineteenth Christian century, the mighty scroll of Egyptian history has been unrolled for us. And though there are some periods that are yet difficult to interpret, we can trace with comparative ease and comfort the march of Egyptian civilization from about 4500 B. C. down to the time of the Christian Justinian. Through all that period this indigenous African people, after assimilating two or three distinct pre-dynastic racial types, and one or two waves of Semitic immigration and invasion, still persisted and persevered, developing those traits and customs which are so characteristic of them. Their retentive human memory ever kept them young; their vivid religious imagination kept them pious; and their social sympathy developed a moral consciousness never before equalled, and rarely since surpassed.

The religion of Egypt with all probability was indigenous. Of course, it was influenced, affected, and changed to some extent by neighbouring religious thought, but it always remained and continued essentially Egyptian. It never became a unit, because of the retention of past ideas, which it had not the faculty to outgrow or to forget. The nearest approach to systematization was effected by the priests of the solar and Osirian cults, and the attempt to unify them during the Empire period. But the attempt was never successful. The official and popular religions always remained separate and distinct, official belief and practice being crystallized in Rā theology and popular religious conceptions and uses in Osirian theology.

Egyptian religious thinkers had their visions. They were high and noble; they comprised the human and the divine; they aimed at bringing God to man and man to God. And they succeeded to a remarkable degree in translating these visions into realities. But in much they failed. They failed to harmonize their religious thinking, rendering it powerless to endure; and they failed to break the bonds of conservatism, which made their systems unwieldy. But they possessed a creativeness and a practical power of symbolism, a depth of moral penetration and a sense of the divine, which have entered into the very vitals of the highest of all human religious systems, and left its imperishable impress. Christian thinkers cannot contemplate the problems of soul and spirit, of the resurrection of a material body, of heaven as a glorified counterpart to earth, of the judgment to

come and the future world, without using the materials of thought created and enriched by Egypt, and presented to the Christian world as her contribution to the "fulness of time" and the progress of modern religious and moral thought. Such were her visions and tasks, and such is her share in all that man holds dear.

### III

## THE IDEA OF GOD IN EGYPT

Mankind is incurably religious, and all religion is a sweep of the soul toward God. The soul is always athirst for God. This is true of practically all ages and of all races, early as well as modern, primitive as well as cultured. Early Egypt and the early Egyptians were no exceptions. Their religious conceptions were very different from ours. We call them crude and undeveloped. Their gods were made in their own image and likeness, very naïve and exceedingly anthropomorphic. They had not made much progress in the analysis of spiritual conceptions and soul-experiences. But they were typically human in that their soul gave them no rest in its persistent search for God. And we shall find that they really succeeded in learning a great deal about God as well as about themselves and about their own soul.

Primitive man was ever conscious of that something not himself, beyond himself, of which he longed to know more. And though it seemed to hide itself from him, his faith in his ability to know it, and more about it, ever lured him on to deeper and keener investigations in the affairs of the mysterious world

about him, every atom and fibre of which he believed to beat with meaning and purpose.

The human soul is endowed with certain faculties which are found at all stages of the soul's development. Such faculties are trust, reverence, loyalty, idealism. It desires that which is trustworthy, that which it can reverence and obey in love, and that in which it can find all that it considers good and true and just. It expects love, sympathy, tenderness, pity, helpfulness in return. The soul has always desired and searched for these things. But they are attributes of personality, which explains the fact that the soul has always tried to think of that power not ourselves, with which we have to do, as a personal power.

One of the greatest and most powerful arguments about the mystery of God was put forth by St. Paul in one of his letters to the Corinthians. He said, "For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." His argument was that none but God can thoroughly know God, but just as man may learn to know his fellow man by studying his personality, that is, his spirit, so man may learn to know God by acquiring more and more of God's spirit. This is applicable to the way in which man has always learned to know God. The ancient Egyptians knew that power not themselves only in so far as they gradually understood its spirit and purpose.

The search for God has always been experimental. It is true that God revealed himself in his universe

which he called into being at the beginning of time, and which, since that time, has been expressing more and more completely the personality and the ways of God. But mankind has been obliged to discover God—has been obliged to set up hypotheses and tear them down again, to formulate theories about God and discard them again; in short, to do in the realm of religion what he has learned to do in all other spheres of human endeavour, to experiment. Let us, with the aid of the science of Egyptology, follow in outline the way in which, and the extent to which, ancient Egypt experimentally learned to know those powers that make for righteousness, that mysterious mind stuff, that infinite and external energy from which all things proceed, that power which the Egyptians called *neteru* (gods) and which we call God.

The early Egyptians were not sceptics. No primitive people ever is. Scepticism arose much later, but only after the Egyptians had developed a ripe civilization. The early Egyptian saw the gods manifested in all natural phenomena which were incomprehensible to him. His world was peopled with gods, because it was full of mystery and wonder. He sometimes identified a god directly with some remarkable phenomenon, and called the god by its name. Thus the sky (*nut*) became the goddess Nut, the earth (*geb*) became the God Geb, the sun was Rā, and the Nile was Hapi. Sometimes he identified a god indirectly with some natural phenomenon. This was done usually by identifying a god with some animal which was directly or indirectly associated

with some natural phenomenon. Thus at the Fayum a god was identified with the crocodile, and called Sebek; at the cataract a god was identified with the ram, and called Khnum; and in the Delta the hippopotamus became Rert.

The simpler phenomena in nature were the earliest to be identified with superhuman power and so were personified and deified. Cosmic personification was comparatively late, but still can be traced to prehistoric times. But as soon as the cosmic phenomena were recognized, they immediately took their place among the greatest of all superhuman powers, because of their deep mysteriousness. But the power of observation grew very slowly, and therefore the earliest gods were the spirits in the nearest objects that made for comfort; and those that made for discomfort were demons. Both were worshipped, the good spirits for help, and the evil spirits in propitiation.

There was no limit to the process of deification. Stones were identified with gods, as at Heliopolis; springs and rivers, as was the spring at Heliopolis, and the river Nile; plants and trees, as the sycamore and the palm; and hills and mountains, as the sandhill at Heliopolis and the mountains in the peninsula of Sinai. But the medium of personification most common in ancient Egypt was the animal. It was perhaps not only because in some indefinite way animals were associated with certain places and natural phenomena, but also because men associated certain animals with certain human traits and characteristics. That has always been so. Thus, the

lion was connected with power, the bull with strength, the ibis with wisdom, and the cat with maternity.

Originally every town or settlement had at least one local spirit. Thus there were many gods. Most of them received names, such as Uast of Thebes; others were nameless, such as "He of Edfu" or "She of Nekheb"; but the "unknown gods" were unknown only so far as their towns and communities had gained little reputation. When towns were amalgamated into larger communities, their gods were amalgamated also, and the resultant deity assumed the characteristics and attributes of all those whom he had absorbed. In this way the god of a small but progressive and growing town may develop into a great god, just as Min of Koptos became Amon of Thebes. The power of a god depended upon the power of his clients. Similarly, according as people migrated from one place to another, so the same god differentiated into different personalities bearing the same name. Thus, there were three Horuses in Upper and two in Lower Egypt, just as there were five Hathors in Upper and one in Lower Egypt. But on the other hand, the same god may appear in different forms and at different places and be considered different gods. Such was the case of Amon-Rā, who absorbed many local gods, but was always called Amon-Rā. Thutmose III worshipped ten of these all at once.

When Egypt was organized into districts or nomes, each nome assumed a deity. There were Set of Ombos, Horus of Hieraconopolis, Thoth of Hermopolis, and thirty-nine other nome gods. Sometimes a

nome extended its influence beyond the borders of its province, in which case its deity's influence was correspondingly increased, such as Ap-uat of Siut. But sometimes also the god of the nome was overcome by another god. Such was the fate of Anher of Thinis who was replaced by Osiris of Abydos.

In early Egypt, as among all primitive peoples, the fruitful source of the multiplication of gods many and lords many was the idea that every phenomenon that was at all difficult to understand was the abode of a god. Hence the endless number of gods. There were, however, some deities who obtained a more permanent place in the economy of religious thought than others. They did so because of the importance, prominence, or usefulness of the object with which they were identified. Or, better, the more important, more prominent, and more useful objects manifested gods who became permanent.

The most common agency of divine manifestation was an animal. This was due primarily to the mysteriousness of animals. We think we know the commonest animals very well. We see the lizard on the fence, the bird on the tree, and the dog in his kennel, but of their real character and inner life we know very little. Nothing was more mysterious to the primitive mind than animal life. It was, therefore, the abode of a god. The more thinking primitive man did not worship the animal as such. It was the deity abiding in the animal which was worshipped. But this distinction was not always clearly made, and often the ram or the bull or the hawk was worshipped as such. But the compound forms—

animal-headed deities—show that it was the person behind the animal form that was worshipped.

There is nothing greater than a personality, and according as the Egyptian progressed in self-consciousness, the deeper his conception of personality became. He ascribed to his god a personality equal to the best which he could possibly conceive, for he associated the best he knew with the idea of god. It is therefore clear that what the Egyptian worshipped in the external form of an animal or animal-headed being was the person of a god. Now the composite form is found earlier than the Pyramid age, which indicates that the distinction between the agency of manifestation and the personality manifested existed at a very early period.

The most prominent of the god-manifesting animals were: the Apis bull of Memphis, which manifested a god who was identified with the sun; the Mnevis bull at Heliopolis, which manifested the same god; the Ram of Mendes, which represented Osiris; the Phoenix of Heliopolis, which manifested the sun-god; the lion of Heliopolis, which represented Atum; the cow at Denderah, which manifested Hathor; and many others, such as the ram (Amon) of Thebes, the cat (Bastet) of Bubastis, the goat (Khnum) at Elephantine, the hawk (Khons) at Thebes, the vulture (Mut) at Thebes, the ass (Set) at Ombos, the ibis (Thoth) at Hermopolis, etc. Fish were recognized as media for divine manifestation at a later time; so were some fabulous beings, such as the chimera and the griffin. Goddesses usually appeared in the form of snakes.

The chief animal-headed deities were Khnum (ram), Sekhmet (lioness), Bastet (cat), Anubis (jackal), Sebek (crocodile), Thoth (ibis), and Horus (hawk). This does not in any way exhaust the almost endless list of creatures which were thought to be abodes of divine beings. Some animals represented hostile powers and were abhorred, such as the dragon-serpent, Apop, which became later the personification of the darkness of night and of all that is evil.

Those natural phenomena which were always most prominent and useful and which called forth the most wonder and awe were usually represented by human forms. Such were the Nile, the earth, the sea, and the heavenly bodies. At a later period, however, animals were often explained as incarnations of cosmic powers, such as the Apis bull of Memphis, which was considered the incarnation of the sun.

The Nile was early deified. It was the source of all vegetation, the continual patron of the people, the life of the land. It was personified as a man with female breasts symbolical of fertility. His wondrous deeds were always the admiration of the people. The ocean was personified as Nun, but was never very popular because of his distance. But the earth-god, Geb, was more popular as the source of food, although the sky-god appealed more effectively to the imagination of the Egyptians. In fact, the great blue has always had a fascination all its own. Seen through the clear atmosphere of Egypt, it must have been doubly enchanting. It was personified as Nut the self-created mother, and the husband of Geb.

It was originally depicted as a black bull, but it soon assumed feminine form and was pictured as a woman or as a cow. The atmosphere which separates the earth from the sky was personified as Shu. The moon was probably the first cosmic force to be personified and deified. It represented the god Khonsu, the sailor, who traversed the sky in a boat; and was later identified with Thoth as a god of wisdom, because of its associations with chronology. Already in the Pyramid texts there are echoes of astral theology. Orion was Sahu, the mighty hunter; Sirius, the dog star, was Sopd; and the Great Bear was identified with Set. But astral theology never appealed very strongly to the Egyptians.

The vast gulf separating animals from man naturally gave rise to a certain awe in man's mind when contemplating the various species of inexplicable animals. This, as we have seen, resulted in the belief that the gods manifested themselves in animal forms. This does not, however, exclude the fact that man was very often inexplicable to man. For just as there is a separating something between the very atoms that compose all physical objects, so there is a veil of mystery which separates man from man. There is no man who absolutely knows his friend, no matter how close that friend may be to him. Let the two stand in the presence of some great phenomenon, such as Niagara, or a beautiful work of art, and after a moment's reflection, let them both express their impressions—and how different the impressions will be! Or let the normal individual read about the self-sacrifice of a martyr or missionary, or about the

depravity of a criminal who for a few dollars would blow up a whole shipload of fellow-beings. It would be impossible for him to appreciate either the lofty idealism of the one or the degraded bestiality of the other. So man is often inexplicable and mysterious to man. Hence it was that the Egyptians often saw the gods manifested in the figures of men. Thus Ptah, Osiris, Muth, Neith, and many others were represented in human form.

Conversely, because man makes his god in his own image and likeness, creating man-like gods—deities that are merely enlarged human beings, with human bodies, parts, and passions—so some human beings were considered gods. In attempting to construct genealogies, or trace ancestry back as far as possible, the Egyptian arrived at the place where no further human step backward could be made. He was obliged to predicate a divine father for his earliest ancestor. In fact, he would reason, the gods once lived upon earth and reigned here as kings. The earliest kings, then, were gods. But the time came when the gods retired from the earth, and left as rulers their off-spring. These latter were the earliest human kings, who were also divine. It thus came about that from the earliest times, the Egyptians considered their kings to be gods, and worshipped them as such. The kings were usually called the “good god”, and sometimes the “great god”. They were revered as gods both before and after their death. In later times, in the Eighteenth Dynasty, stories were told, and scenes were depicted in sculpture, which indicated the pharaoh as son of a human

woman, but procreated by a god. But, whether as divine or semi-divine, the pharaoh was always a god.

This tendency to deify whatever was inexplicable resulted later in the belief that any man duly buried became a divine being, and this was especially true if he had been drowned. The dead became identified with the god Osiris. And in still later times, in the Ptolemaic period, two men who were famous in ancient times were deified and worshipped as gods; namely, Imhotep, who was an architect of the Third Dynasty, and Amenhotep, a wise man of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

The Egyptians never became abstract thinkers. Their script is sufficient evidence for that. They always felt the need of expressing themselves in concrete terms. Even in expressing abstract ideas they used concrete symbols. Truth was pictured by means of a feather, writing by an ink-well and pen, and walking by a pair of legs. It thus came about that when it was desired to venerate the ideas of joy, knowledge, destiny, fate, and truth, personifications were created. The Egyptians, therefore, worshipped abstract gods, such as Ptah, the power of creation, who was venerated especially at Memphis, and who was later fused with Apis, Sokar, and Osiris; Min, the abstract father-god, the earliest form of Amon, and a desert god, worshipped at Hammamat; Hathor, the abstract mother-god, who was later fused with Isis; Maât, goddess of truth and justice, and associated with Râ, Thoth, and Ptah; Nefertum, god of vegetation and growth, son of Ptah and Sekhmet; Safekht, goddess of writing; Hu, the god of taste;

Sa, the god of perception; and the Eight Khmunu or elemental deities. Most of these deities do not occur till comparatively later times. No great festivals were connected with them and no celebrations. But some of them were very powerful, such as Maât, Min, and Hathor.

When Egypt became a world-empire, and came into contact with other peoples, she sometimes recognized their deities. The most important deities recognized were: Astarte of Byblus, identified with Hathor; Baal, Anat, and Resheph of Syria, the first of whom was a war-god and identified with Set, the second a war-goddess, and the third a war-god; Sutekh, national god of Kheta, and identified with Set; Sati, a cataract goddess, and identified with Hathor; Dedun, an African god of Nubia, fused with Ptah, because he was a creator-god; and Bes, who was in the earliest and latest times considered a female, but usually as a male-dwarf of Sudanese type. None of these deities, however, played any important part in Egyptian affairs, except the war-gods, during the Hyksos period. It was her struggle with the Hyksos which made Egypt for the time being a war-like people, when war-gods became popular.

It has been thought that sun-worship came from Babylonia. But proof of this is still wanting. The chances are that sun-worship was indigenous to almost all early races. At any rate, at a very early period in Egypt, the greatest gods were manifested in the two greatest and most influential of natural phenomena, the sun and the Nile. The sun was personified as Rā, and very soon became so powerful as

to dominate all Egypt. At first the sun-god was believed to have been born of Nun, the primeval, watery chaos, and appeared as Atum. According to other beliefs Ptah, the creator-god, shaped an egg out of which Rā appeared; according to another theory the sun-god arose out of a lotus flower; according to a fourth story Rā appeared for the first time on the pyramidal Ben-stone in Heliopolis, the symbol of the sun; and according to still another account he was self-produced.

The sun-god appeared in different forms. At Edfu he was seen as a falcon and bore the name Horus or Harakhte; at Heliopolis he was believed to be an aged man tottering down the western sky; and at other places he was represented as a winged-beetle, Khepri, rising in the east. Then later, Horus became the son of Rā, and Rā was pictured in two sky-barques, one for the morning and the other for the evening, which sailed across the sky.

Rā was revered chiefly because he was considered the source of all life and increase, upon whom all people and things depended. He had his enemies, through whom he lost his eye, which was called the "Horus-eye", but it was restored by the friendly moon-god, Thoth. When the kingdoms of the North and South were united, Rā became the great king-god, and, when, in the minds of his people, he was transferred to heaven, his representative was the deified king, who was called after the god, such as Khafre. The kings of the Fourth Dynasty were so thoroughly committed to the recognition of the supremacy of Rā among all the gods that they assumed

the title, "Son of Rā", and those of the Fifth Dynasty were so devoted to him that they built great sanctuaries for his worship at which was always stationed an obelisk, surmounted by a pyramid, his symbol. A later legend connected the kings of the Fifth Dynasty with Rā as their father, telling how the three sons of Rā should succeed king Khufu. The pharaohs thus became the physical sons of the sun-god.

The other highly important god-bearing phenomenon in early Egypt was the Nile, and while Hapi was the Nile-god, Osiris, as early as the Pyramid age, was identified with the Nile. And since water was the source of fertility and a life-giving agency, Osiris embodied within himself the attributes of a life-giving and fertilizing god. As a fertilizing god he was closely connected with the soil and all vegetable life. He is sometimes depicted as a prostrate figure with grain sprouting from his body. He is also associated with wine. But as the nature-god he became prominent as the embodiment of the idea of ever-dying and ever-reviving, characteristic of nature, and especially of the rising and falling of the Nile.

Osiris was, according to Egyptian belief, an ancient king, who succeeded his father, Geb, the earth-god, as king of Egypt. His wife-sister and protector was Isis. He was located at Busiris (Dedu) in the Delta, but before 3400 B. C. found a home in the South at Siut, and later at Abydos where he absorbed an old god, by name, Khenti-Amentiu. Plutarch has left a story about the death of Osiris by the hand of his enemy Set, but Egyptian sources have not confirmed it, further than indications in the Pyramid Texts

that he was assassinated; or that he was drowned, according to a stela of the Pyramid age.

Plutarch's story, in brief, is that Set obtained by craft the measure of the body of Osiris, and then caused a chest of the same size to be made, which he introduced into the banquet-hall of Osiris. He proposed by way of jest that the chest should belong to whomsoever it would fit. As soon as Osiris laid himself down in the chest, the followers of Set rushed forward and clapped on the cover. Osiris was carried to the Tanaitic mouth of the Nile and cast into it. The chest was borne on the waves to the coast of Byblos, where it was found by Isis. After some delay at the court of the king of Byblos, Isis succeeded in bringing it back to Egypt. But Set discovered it, and tearing it open and dividing the body into fourteen parts, he scattered the fragments throughout Egypt. Isis eventually recovered all the missing parts but one, over each of which she erected a temple. Soon afterwards Osiris returned from the other world and induced his son Horus to give battle to Set, whom he finally defeated.

Such in outline is the story as presented by Plutarch. But it is not very ancient. The solar feud of Horus and Set is not originally Osirian. The earliest stories about Osiris must have pictured him as symbolizing the cycle of nature, dying and rising again, the life-giver, even in death. In later times when the story of the feud of Horus and Set became associated with Osiris, Horus became the symbol of filial piety, who, in his fight with Set, lost his eye, the eye becoming thenceforth the type of all sacrifice.

The Pyramid Texts give the story of the resurrection of Osiris in some detail. He then sat upon the throne of a subterranean Egyptian kingdom of the dead, where he became the champion and friend of the departed. His right to this position was guaranteed at a trial by the gods, when Osiris was "justified" and Set was condemned. Henceforth, all souls in the future had to undergo the same judgment and be "justified" before they could become one with Osiris.

From the first, Osiris was very popular and rivalled Rā, developing into the great father deity, and absorbing into himself all the best elements of Egyptian thought. The fatherly character of Osiris, the wifely fidelity of Isis, the filial love of Horus, the ideal family relationship of the three gods, the generosity and eternal solicitude of Osiris, made him and his family the ideal divine circle. His conquest of the love and faith of the people, however, was very gradual. At first he was a hostile god, but began to be known for his friendliness, even at the dawn of history. Very soon he became connected with the king, and made such an impress upon the royal government of the land that the oldest religious festival was permeated with his personality. In the Sed-Feast the king assumed the costume of Osiris and impersonated the life of the resurrected god. The king then became identified with Osiris, and was assured of a like resurrection and similar privileges in the future world.

At Heliopolis the priests combined the solar theology of the struggle between Horus and Set with the Osiris theology. In the early solar theology Set

and Horus divided Egypt between themselves, but when Horus was attached to Osiris, Set became hostile, and Horus was rewarded by being made king of the whole land. After this, Osiris was said to sit upon the throne of Rā, when the latter ascended into heaven. Osiris then ushered in a new age of civilization. He became in succession the Nile, earth, vegetable, and sun-god in the mind of a vast number of people.

Thus the two great rival systems of theology in Egypt centred in the personalities of the gods Rā and Osiris. Rā was the more aristocratic and autocratic of the two. He dominated the higher ruling classes, and controlled the greater political affairs of the country. But Osiris got closer to the heart of the people. He was their life-giver, their saviour, and their friend in this world, and in the next he would take them all unto himself. The warmer religious tones clustered around Osiris and his circle, the sterner and more masterly around Rā.

The Old Kingdom in Egypt which lasted until 2475 B. C. was the period of nature worship in religion and of absolutism in politics. This was succeeded by a period of disruption and feudalism. Then followed the brilliant Middle Kingdom, the period of the culmination of Egyptian civilization, the epoch of individualism, of the growing sense of moral obligations, and of the development of social forces. Rā became the great national god, the self-originated, the author and ruler of the world. A step towards a real henotheism had been made; the other gods, except Osiris, being reduced to helpers of Rā.

Not even feudalism, which naturally tended to enhance the power of local gods, could stem the tide of Rā's importance. The various nome gods were for the time being amalgamated into the great sun-god. Thus the crocodile-god of the Fayum became Sebek-Rā, the ram of Thebes became Amon-Rā; the only gods escaping the hyphenization being Osiris, Ptah, and Thoth.

Rā's great rival was Osiris, and while the former was dominating the great official priesthood, the doctrine of the latter was permeating more and more the masses of the people. Individual consciousness was awakening, and very early in the Middle Kingdom we find the individual assured of union with Osiris in the next world. All classes were made familiar with the way Osiris was raised from the dead, and applied it personally. His faith became very popular, he was loved by the people, and the greatest blessing was to be buried near Osiris at Abydos. The Osiris religion became a great power for righteousness among the masses. The conditions for association with Osiris in the hereafter became more and more moral, and the conception of a formal judgment of the dead became well established. The ideal to which every man looked forward was to be pronounced "justified", after his ordeal before the forty-two divine judges. The splendid moral literature of this period, which will be discussed more fully in a subsequent chapter, reveals the height to which the example of Osiris had led his people.

Although for a long time the theologies of Rā and Osiris proceeded side by side, it was inevitable that

attempts would be made towards amalgamation. This we see in the Mortuary or Coffin texts, with the result that Rā is somewhat closely connected with the underworld. Thus Osiris not only succeeded in having himself lifted heavenward (Pyramid Texts), but also in bringing it about that Rā was forced earthward (Mortuary Texts).

After the period of decline following the Middle Kingdom, the world state was founded under the Empire. In the past Rā's domain was confined to Egypt, but the successes of the Egyptian pharaohs, especially Thutmose III, resulted in the creation of a world empire extending from Asia Minor in the north to the Fourth Cataract in the south. As a result, the idea of the great national god, Rā, correspondingly expanded, and we have the first step towards a practical monotheism. But the final step in that direction was not to be taken, for at the rise of Thebes, her god, Amon, wished to become the great national deity. The outcome of this conflict with Rā was that the old local god of Thebes became solarized and united with Rā. Thutmose III consolidated the rival priesthoods under the high priest of Amon, who now became the national high priest of Amon-Rā.

All went well with Amon-Rā till Amenhotep IV came to the throne about 1375 B. C. Amenhotep was a man of great individuality. He was a lover of piety, and resolved to leave a religious impress upon his people and time. The amalgamation of Amon and Rā had not been brought about without some controversy. The king was pained at the evident

humiliation of the old national god Rā, and determined to set things right. But he was original, and was not satisfied to go back to the old state of affairs under Rā. He opposed Amon, but introduced a new conception of the way in which the sun-god manifests himself. He declared that the physical sun was not god's manifestation, but the "heat" of the sun was, and consequently his symbol was a sun-disk with protruding rays, at the end of each ray being a hand holding the sign of life. He called this new conception of god, Aton, and expunged the name of Amon and those of other gods from public places, changing his own name from Amenhotep to Ikhnaton ("Spirit of Aton").

It was perhaps Ikhnaton's original intention to depart as little as possible from the old forms of Rā worship. But there is evidence that he pleased neither the Amon nor the Rā adherents. He was thus forced to be more radical than he had anticipated. He accordingly discarded much of the ritual of the old sun-god Rā, and transferred his capital from Thebes, three hundred miles north to a place which he called Akhetaton ("Horizon of Aton"). There at the modern Tell el-Amarna he built a temple, where he developed a true devotional and personal religious spirit. For the image of his god no place was provided, nor was it needed.

Carried on by his enthusiasm for more spiritual things, Ikhnaton declared his god to have called himself forth out of eternity and to have created the whole world. Aton was ever present and never dies. The king encouraged personal communion with god,

and a consciousness of divine relationships. He himself was called "living in truth", and tried to make that sentiment a reality. He swept away the old traditional conservatism, and promulgated a new "teaching". His radical reforms can be seen nowhere more fully than in the art of his reign, which burst the bonds of conservatism and expressed a love of the beautiful in a natural way. His reform may be compared with that of Josiah in Israel, only it was far more thoroughgoing and radical.

The theology of the Ikhnaton reform may be best seen in the magnificent poem which the king is supposed to have composed in honour of his god. It reads:

"Thy dawning is beautiful in the horizon of the sky,  
O living Aton, Beginning of life!  
When thou risest in the eastern horizon,  
Thou fillest every land with thy beauty.  
Thou art beautiful, great, glittering, high above every land,  
Thy rays, they encompass the lands, even all that thou  
hast made.  
Thou art Rā, and thou carriest them all away captive;  
Thou bindest them by thy love.  
Though thou art far away, thy rays are upon the earth;  
Though thou art on high, thy footprints are the day.

"When thou settest in the western horizon of the sky,  
The earth is in darkness like the dead;  
They sleep in their chambers,  
Their heads are wrapped up,  
Their nostrils are stopped,  
And none seeth the other,  
While all their things are stolen  
Which are under their heads,  
And they know it not.

Every lion cometh forth from his den,  
All serpents, they sting.  
Darkness . . .  
The world is in silence,  
He that made them resteth in his horizon.

“Bright is the earth when thou risest in the horizon.  
When thou shinest as Aton by day  
Thou drivest away the darkness.  
When thou sendest forth thy rays,  
The Two Lands (Egypt) are in daily festivity,  
Awake and standing upon their feet  
When thou hast raised them up.  
Their limbs bathed, they take their clothing.  
Their arms uplifted in adoration to thy dawning.  
(Then) in all the world they do their work.

“All cattle rest upon their pasturage,  
The trees and the plants flourish,  
The birds flutter in their marshes,  
Their wings uplifted in adoration to thee.  
All the sheep dance upon their feet,  
All winged things fly,  
They live when thou hast shone upon them.

“The barques sail up-stream and down-stream alike.  
Every highway is open because thou dawnest.  
The fish in the river leap up before thee.  
Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.

“Creator of the germ in woman,  
Maker of seed in man,  
Giving life to the son in the body of his mother,  
Soothing him that he may not weep,  
Nurse (even) in the womb,  
Giver of breath to animate every one that he maketh!  
When he cometh forth from the body . . . on the day of  
his birth,  
Thou openest his mouth in speech,  
Thou suppliest his necessities.

"When the fledgling in the egg chirps in the shell,  
Thou givest him breath therein to preserve him alive.  
When thou hast brought him together,  
To (the point of) bursting it in the egg,  
He cometh forth from the egg  
To chirp with all his might.  
He goeth about upon his two feet  
When he hath come forth therefrom.

"How manifold are thy works!  
They are hidden from before (us),  
O sole God, whose powers no other possesseth.  
Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart  
While thou wast alone:  
Men, all cattle large and small.  
All that are upon the earth,  
That go about upon their feet;  
All that are on high,  
That fly with their wings.  
The foreign countries, Syria and Kush,  
The land of Egypt;  
Thou settest every man into his place,  
Thou suppliest their necessities.  
Every one has his possessions,  
And his days are reckoned.  
The tongues are divers in speech,  
Their forms likewise and their skins are distinguished.  
(For) thou makest different the strangers.

"Thou makest the Nile in the Nether World,  
Thou bringest it as thou desirest,  
To preserve alive the people.  
For thou hast made them for thyself,  
The lord of them all, resting among them;  
Thou lord of every land, who risest for them,  
Thou Sun of day, great in majesty.  
All the distant countries,  
Thou makest (also) their life,  
Thou hast set a Nile in the sky;

When it falleth for them,  
It maketh waves upon the mountains,  
Like the great green sea.  
Watering their fields in their towns.

"How excellent are thy designs, O lord of eternity!  
There is a Nile in the sky for the strangers  
And for the cattle of every country that go upon their feet.  
(But) the Nile, it cometh from the Nether World for Egypt.

"Thy rays nourish every garden;  
When thou risest they live,  
They grow by thee.  
Thou makest the seasons  
In order to create all thy work:  
Winter to bring them coolness,  
And heat that they may taste thee.  
Thou didst make the distant sky to rise therein,  
In order to behold all that thou hast made,  
Thou alone, shining in thy form as living Aton,  
Dawning, glittering, going afar and returning.  
Thou makest millions of forms  
Through thyself alone;  
Cities, towns, and tribes, highways and rivers.  
All eyes see thee before them,  
For thou art Aton of the day over the earth.

. . . . .

"Thou art in my heart,  
There is no other that knoweth thee  
Save thy son Ikhnaton.  
Thou hast made him wise  
In thy designs and in thy might.  
The world is in thy hand,  
Even as thou hast made them.  
When thou hast risen they live,  
When thou settest they die;  
For thou art length of life of thyself,  
Men live through thee,

While (their) eyes are upon thy beauty  
Until thou settest.  
All labor is put away  
When thou settest in the west.

“Thou didst establish the world,  
And raise them up for thy son,  
Who came forth from thy limbs,  
The king of Upper and Lower Egypt,  
Living in Truth, Lord of the Two Lands,  
Nefer-khepru-Rā, Wan-Rā (Ikhnaton),  
Son of Rā, living in Truth, lord of diadems,  
Ikhnaton, whose life is long;  
(And for) the chief royal wife, his beloved,  
Mistress of the Two Lands, Nefer-nefru-Aton, Nofretete,  
Living and flourishing for ever and ever.” \*

Ikhnaton was a religious genius, and was far in advance of his time. His vision of a practical monotheism, if it can be so called, for it is not at all certain that he did not recognize other gods, especially foreign ones, was far beyond the mental reach of his contemporaries. And so it came about that soon after his death, a reaction set in, and he very soon was branded with the title “that criminal of Akhetaton”. All that Ikhnaton had done was soon undone. His successors transferred the capital back to Thebes, and two reigns after his death, Harmheb whole-heartedly supported Amon and was proclaimed king. The reaction was so thorough that many old superstitions were revived and new ones invented. Many foreign deities were introduced and the growth of personal piety was considerably checked. The royal residence

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\* Breasted's translation is followed.

was now removed from Thebes to Tanis in the Delta, although without neglecting the needs of Amon at the old capital, for it was during the reign of Rameses II that the great Hall of Karnak was built.

Up till now two great series of mortuary texts had been in the making, the one grouping itself around the personality of the god Rā and the other around that of the god Osiris. The latter has been called the Book of the Dead, a collection of magical texts for the guidance of the dead, which became authoritative or canonical only at a later period. The former has been called the "Book of that which is in the Underworld" (*Amdewat*), consisting of an account of the nocturnal voyage of the sun through twelve regions in the underworld. Another book which belonged to the Rā cult was called the "Book of Portals", describing the twelve great fortifications or gates through which the soul must pass in the underworld.

The collapse of the empire under the Twenty-first Dynasty was followed by three centuries under Libyan and Nubian dynasties, at the close of which came the Assyrian conquest of Lower Egypt. Meanwhile, after the high priest Herihor of the Twenty-first Dynasty had seized the throne, the sacerdotal power was on the increase for some time. But Osiris gained instead of lost in popularity. This was then followed by a vigorous line of Saite kings, when a strenuous endeavour was made to revive the traditions of antiquity. The ancient cults and rites of the Old Kingdom were revived, and complete catalogues of gods were made and inscribed on the walls of temples.

Great emphasis was placed upon the recognition of gods in the form of animals. At Memphis, the Apis bull was regarded as the body of Ptah; at Heliopolis, Mnevis embodied Rā; at Hermonthis, Rā was manifested in Bacis; the ram was venerated at Mendes, the cat at Bubastis, and the crocodile at Lake Moeris and at Memphis. Official religion sank deeper and deeper into spiritual decay. There was plenty of ceremonial, but little true religion. However, Osiris soon became supreme, as Osiris-Apis or Serapis, in state as well as in popular religion.

In 525 the Persians conquered Egypt, but were thoroughly hated because of their disrespect for the religion of their subjects. Cambyses is reported to have killed the Apis bull with his own hand, and a similar story is told of Artaxerxes Ochus. The Greek kings of Egypt were more considerate; the great Alexander even went to the oracle of Amon to have himself recognized as son of the god, and accredited successor of the Egyptian pharaohs. His successors gave their support to the old religion of the land as the religion of the state. Nor did Greek religious ideas affect Egypt to any extent. On the contrary, instead of Serapis, the Greeks adopted Osiris-Apis, whose worship together with that of Isis continued far down into the Roman age, until the edict of Theodosius the Great, in 391 A. D., closed the temples, razed the Serapeum of Alexandria, and put an end to the old Egyptian religion.

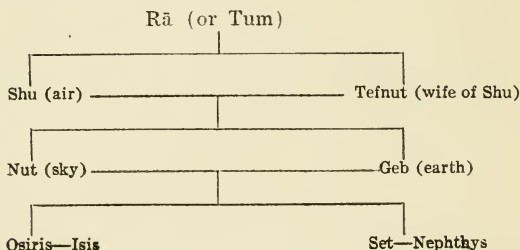
Although the Egyptians never succeeded in bringing about the establishment of any one system of theological thought in the whole of Egypt, there is

evidence to show that they were active in attempting classifications, and did succeed to some extent. That there were different systems of theology and that they lived on side by side is evinced by the confusion about such deities as Horus and Osiris. Horus was a sun-god, but he was variously considered son of Isis, son of Hathor, son of Rā, son of Geb and Nut, and son of Osiris; and Osiris was variously considered father, brother, and husband of Isis, and father and son of Horus.

At an early period, however, two great systems of theology became fairly well established. One had its home in the Delta, and the other in the South. The old sun-god, in the South was Tum (or Atum), who absorbed a primitive myth about Khepri, the beetle god. When Rā became prominent, a combination took place, making the deity Rā-Tum, and still later a triad was formed, declaring Rā to be the noonday sun, Tum, the evening sun; and Khepri, the sun at dawn. In time there developed a regular Rā cycle and solar theology. Besides Tum and Khepri, there were absorbed in this solar system the following deities: Anher of Thinis, Sopdu in Goshen, Nut, Geb, Shu, Tefnut, Hapi, and Aten.

In the Delta, the great primeval deity was the earth-god, Osiris, who was variously identified with Hapi, with the ram of Mendes, and with a tree at Busiris. With him were associated Isis, the mother goddess, Nephthys, sister of Osiris and Isis, and Horus, who was variously represented as brother and son of Osiris, and son of Hathor. Horus was also associated with Rā.

When the North and South were united into one kingdom, Rā and Osiris became one. But the personalities of the two great gods were too well defined to remain united. Rā was the god of the aristocracy and of the official classes; but Osiris was the god of the masses. But the national priests of Heliopolis, wishing to subordinate Osiris, created a theology at the head of which they placed Rā, and sometimes the old god Tum (or Atum):



At Memphis a similar attempt was made to subordinate the other gods to Ptah, putting Ptah in the place of Rā (or Tum). Ptah was called the creator-god in whose thought all things existed before his work of creation. He was without father and without mother, the first and greatest of the gods. But, of course, there were other gods, whom he brought into existence.

At Thebes there arose an Amon cycle of deities. Amon the local god of Karnak, associated with the old god Min, became prominent with the rise of the Eleventh Dynasty. Associated with him were the goddess of Thebes, Mut, Khonsu, son of Amon and

Mut, and Neit, a Libyan goddess. Beginning with the Eighteenth Dynasty, Amon was united with Rā, as Amon-Rā.

Other theological systems arose, but never became as influential as those already mentioned. There was an Ogdoad of Hermopolis; and many triads, the most important of which were those of Abydos, Osiris-Isis-Horus; of Memphis, Ptah-Sekhet-Imhotep; of Thebes, Amon-Mut-Khonsu. These triads were based upon the family idea. A god would associate himself with two neighbouring deities, forming a family.

To speak of an "Egyptian Theology" would be unscientific. No one system was ever accepted in all parts of Egypt. But it is quite legitimate to speak of an "Egyptian Religion" in the sense that the Egyptians were always religious, although they never were unanimous in just what constituted their religion. There were always varieties and differences of ideas within the same general faith, just as there are various phases and religious conceptions in Christianity.

In our review of the Egyptian deities, we have followed the development of certain great gods who made themselves indispensable to their worshippers. Besides many other deities in the Delta, Rā, the sun-god, made himself felt at a very early period. This was inevitable. In the South, Osiris appeared as the champion of the people in general. He was, therefore, soon recognized in the North, where he came into contact with another sun-god, Horus, whose counterpart in the South was Set. Very soon

Horus and Set separated, the former becoming the son of Osiris, and the latter an enemy of both. The priests of Rā were great theologians, and influential at court, and their theology soon gained acceptance by those in authority. This solar theology became the state religion. But this only served to emphasize the fundamental characteristic of Osiris and his cult. There consequently developed two phases of religion side by side: the state religion, which was solar; and the popular religion, which was Osirian. There then followed an attempt to coördinate the two phases, when the priests of Heliopolis attempted to absorb Osiris into their system, but the result was fruitless. The two phases lived on side by side through the period of the Old Kingdom, when the religion of Egypt assumed a form which was never very much changed afterwards; through the succeeding feudal age; through the individualism of the Middle Kingdom, when there arose a very discriminating sense of moral values and social justice; through the great period of the world state, when Amon of Thebes became supreme, but only by amalgamation with Rā and by absorbing the essentials of the Osirian faith. Only for a very short period, the reign of Ikhnaton, did these two great phases of Egyptian religious thought suffer an eclipse—and even then not completely, for it was a species of Rā worship which the heretic king emphasized. It was, however, a forward step, for Ikhnaton left an impress upon the religion of his country which was never lost. His great personality, his originality and insight into religious values, gave birth to the idea of a personal

god such as the race had never before experienced. Unchained from national conservatism, endowed with a highly artistic and religious temperament, Ikhnaton got the first true glimpse of a personal god ever vouchsafed to the ancient world. He came nearer a pure understanding of the spirit of God than any other man of his time. But his work was doomed to failure. He was ahead of his time, and was misunderstood. His successors re-instated Amon-Rā side by side with the popular Osirian religion which had never ceased to influence the masses. A period of literalism then set in, when the religion of the distant past was considered the ideal. Amon-Rā was still the state god, but many deities, domestic and foreign, were added to his train. The gods became so numerous, ceremonies became so burdensome, and the state became so impotent, that Amon-Rā receded into the background. This was inevitable. Rā and Amon were created and sustained by a state idea. They were the gods of rulers and aristocrats. With the coming of the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, Egyptian royal power passed away. But the god who remained to the last, and who "carried on" even after the fall of the Egyptian monarchy, was Osiris. He had gained a place in the hearts of the people from which he never was displaced. And even after the introduction of Christianity, the ideas and ideals that had clustered around the eternal and immortal judge and god persisted and interwove themselves into the very fibre of the new religion.

In order to arrive at any adequate conception of the Egyptian idea of god, we must divest ourselves

as much as possible of our own modern conceptions. The idea of god must be simplified, for god was to the Egyptians just what the Egyptians could imagine about a divine being. But he was also everything that they could possibly imagine in the way of perfection.

The Egyptians ascribed the best they knew to their gods. Their idea of the universe, of its extent and nature, was limited. The gulf between the human and super-human was very narrow. Man's greatness and god's greatness were not far apart. The gods had the same attributes and characteristics as men, only in the superlative. A god was an enlarged human being, not capable of being seen at all times, but still visible. He was clothed with man's most sublime ideals. According to our idea of perfection, he was not perfect, but he was all that the Egyptian could imagine as appropriate to the greatest and most important of all classes of beings.

From a modern point of view, the Egyptian gods were anthropomorphic. They possessed man's characteristics, because the Egyptians could not conceive of anything better or higher. The gods in this world, at any rate, were mortal. Rā grew old and Osiris was slain. Orion enjoyed hunting, slaying, and eating the gods. The gods suffered, and took revenge. They were not omniscient, but were obliged to investigate in order to be informed. They were controlled by magic, and were obliged to use human agencies in the accomplishment of their tasks. In short, they were constituted as men, only endowed with superlative powers; for example, some of the gods had as many as seventy-seven ears and seventy-seven eyes.

But of course this conception was due to the need of explaining how the gods could hear and see all men at all times.

Some gods were greater than others; but they became so because of the power and influence of their clients. Each community believed that its god was creator, sustainer, and preserver, all in one. But when the official priesthood tried to systematize theological thinking, the greatest god of the system became the creator. Thus at Heliopolis, Rā was creator; at Thebes, it was Amon; and at Memphis, it was Ptah.

For prehistoric Egypt, the term polytheism, or better henotheism, describes the nature of the theology. Every village, town, or community had its god. Such a god was usually considered the greatest of all gods. That was henotheism. But when people worshipped a god whom they did not consider the greatest of all, they were polytheists. As a matter of fact, most primitive races are henotheistic. With the amalgamation of several smaller centres of population into a larger centre, the gods were either amalgamated into the personality of the strongest and most influential god of the whole group, or there was formed a family or community of gods. But whatever happened, henotheism remained.

The older students of Egyptian religion used to declare that the earliest Egyptians were monotheists. They based their conclusions upon such circumstances as the use of the term "god" or "my god" unaccompanied by any proper name. But a moment's reflection will show that any individual may refer to any

single god in such a way without implying in the least that that particular god was the only one who existed. Further study of the Egyptian texts themselves abundantly substantiates this reflection. It perhaps cannot even be asserted beyond doubt that Ikhnaton had conceived of the existence of only one god. It is true that he referred to Aton as filling "every land" with his beauty, of being great and "high above every land"; and that he declared that when Aton sets, "the world is in silence"; but this may conceivably have been said by a man who believed that for his own country there was no other god; but would he have thereby denied the existence of the gods of the Asiatics, Nubians, and Hittites?

There is, however, one passage in the shorter hymns of Ikhnaton which would seem to prove a clear case of monotheistic faith. It reads:

"How manifold are thy works!  
They are hidden from before (us),  
O sole god, beside whom there is no other."

But the longer poem reads for the third line:

"O sole god, whose powers no other possesseth."

Moreover, although Ikhnaton ruthlessly caused the name of Amon to be erased and hammered out of all inscriptions, he allowed Rā's name to remain. It would seem that his object was to restore a purer form of the religion of Rā. If so, he may have considered Rā and Aton one and the same god. In fact, in one of his hymns he addresses Aton thus:

"Thou art Rā, and thou takest them all captive."

In an inscription dated in his sixth year, he causes himself to be referred to as, "Favorite of the two

goddesses," but this may have been merely a stereotyped title, which was emptied of all theological colour.

Whatever may be the final verdict\* as to the nature of Ikhnaton's theology, his contribution to religious thought furnishes a highwater mark for Egypt. His conception of a god who created all things, and upon whom all things depend, who swayed Syria and Kush equally with Egypt, comes not far short, if at all, of a true monotheistic faith. Nor were the moral elements lacking, as we shall see in another place, in order to make it an ethical monotheism.

Other high theological conceptions have been credited to the Egyptians by students of Egyptology, such as the oneness and eternity of god. Maspero has said: "The Egyptian adored a being who was unique, perfect, endowed with absolute knowledge and intelligence, and incomprehensible to such an extent that it passes man's powers to state in what he is incomprehensible."† This is partly true, for the Egyptians believed all gods to be perfect, and endowed with all knowledge and intelligence. They ascribed the best they know to their gods. So did the Babylonians, Assyrians, Hindus, and Chinese. But they did not believe any god to be unique in the sense of being the only divine being in existence. With the possible exception of Ikhnaton, such an idea

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\* See an article by the author, "Was Ikhnaton a Monotheist", in the *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research*, Oct., 1919.

† G. Maspero. *Études de Mythologie et d'Archeologie égyptiennes*, II, 446.

was absolutely foreign to the thought of ancient Egypt.

The Egyptians developed very high conceptions of the gods. The two chief causes of this were their high regard of divine law and their belief in divine kingship. The power of the gods was ever with them, and operative in their daily thought. But while their conceptions of divine justice became highly developed, they never arrived at any adequate idea of the omnipotence, omniscience, love, or holiness of god. Even Ikhnaton has nothing to say about the love and holiness of god, nor of his transcendence. In fact, the closer one examines Ikhnaton's theology, the more one feels that what he had in mind was the material sun, which is the source and sustainer of everything in the world—not a transcendent, spiritual personality, but an universal force which pervades the whole world. In other words, Ikhnaton's religion was perhaps nothing more than a physical pantheism whose power was concentrated in the physical sun.

The Egyptian idea of god had gradually developed from a primitive and crude anthropomorphism to a spiritual and ethical henotheism, and perhaps to a practical monotheism. This took place over six hundred years before the Hebrew prophets declared the oneness and uniqueness of Jehovah the God of Israel. And it can be said without any exaggeration that Egypt gave to the world its first lessons in the art of thinking in terms of spiritual and ethical divinity. She was thus the first and one of the greatest of schoolmasters to lead men to Christ.

## IV

### THE IDEA OF MAN IN EGYPT

A Hebrew psalmist once sang of the dignity and greatness of man, who was made only a little lower than the sons of God, and another Hebrew writer told about how man was made in the image and likeness of God. All such ideas as these were obvious to the Egyptians; more obvious to them than to the Hebrews. The late Hebrews had transferred their god entirely to the heavens. They had transcendentized and spiritualized him. They had made him an august being, whom no human eyes could behold, who was a pure spirit, and such as no man could approach unto. The Egyptians, on the contrary, always were conscious of the humanness of their gods. The gulf between gods and men was very narrow. Mankind was directly linked to gods by the god-manifesting king. Man was the highest of the god's human creatures, and was, moreover, the very offspring of the gods.

The creation of the world, of which man was a part, was variously understood by the early Egyptians. The sun-worshippers of Heliopolis believed that Nu, the primeval watery chaos, existed at the beginning

of time. Out of it sprang Rā, who was Khepri at dawn, Rā at high noon, and Tum (or Atum) at eventide. But Rā was greater than Nu, inasmuch as Rā was a great divine personality, while Nu was primarily that primeval watery substance whose only function was to produce Rā. Mankind was then brought forth from the eye of Rā, and Rā then became the first king upon earth, and the succeeding pharaohs were sons of Rā. Other worshippers of Rā believed that the god was produced in the form of an egg by Geb, the great cackler; and still others believed that he was the son of the celestial cow. At Elephantine, Khnum was believed to have created the world and mankind; at Memphis, the creator was Ptah, who brought things and men into being by the power of *maāt*; at Thebes, Amon-Rā was the great creator of all the world and man; and at Hermopolis, Thoth, by the word of his mouth, called all creation into being. And the worshippers of Osiris believed him to be the creator-god.

There was a generally believed theory of creation to the effect that at the beginning of things Nut, the sky-goddess, and Geb, the earth-god, existed in close embrace. Shu, the atmosphere god, intervened between the two deities, and lifted Nut on high.

The methods of creation are varied. According to some accounts there was a series of births, which produced the gods, who, in turn, created mankind out of blood, tears or saliva, and earth; according to others, things were created in an artificial way, by an artisan, such as Ptah or Khnum; according to still others,

the method was the spoken word, which when uttered produced existence.

The human individual presented many problems to the mind of the early Egyptian. Beside the body (*khat*), the Egyptian felt sure that many other elements went to make up the individual. There was the *ba* or soul, which could be seen at death when it left the body in the form of a human-headed bird. During life it was an intangible essence, associated with the breath, like the Greek  $\psi\chi\acute{\eta}$ . Besides that there was the *ka*, a kind of ghostly double or genius or power, which was given to each person at birth. A man and his *ka* had definite relationships. So long as he was master of his *ka* he lived, but as soon as he died the *ka* began a separate existence, resembling the body to which it had been attached, and requiring food for its subsistence. Then there was the *ran* or name, which had a separate existence, and seemed to have been the underlying and permanent substance of all things. Besides these there were the *khu* or intelligence, the *ab* or heart (will and intention), the *sakhem* or ruling power of man, the *khaybet* or shadow, the *ikh* or glorified being, and the *sahu* or mummy.

The most important of all these elements was the *ka*, which became the centre of the cult of the dead, for to a man's *ka* all offerings were made, and those persons endowed to carry on offerings to the dead were called "servants of the *Ka*". Even the gods had their *ka*'s as well as their *ba*'s.

This complicated psychology of the Egyptians,

together with their emphasis upon death and the hereafter, has led many students to describe the Egyptians as a most sanguine and nervous people, exceedingly pessimistic and gloomy. But nothing could be further from truth. The Egyptians could be serious and gloomy on occasions, but their literary remains and especially their monuments show them to have been a very buoyant, happy, and even gay people. And in spite of the fact that a large part of our information is derived from a study of tombs and mortuary temples, the picture given even there is one of an exceedingly happy and light-hearted people, who too often, perhaps, followed the ancient advice to "eat, drink, and be merry". In all periods, Egyptian literature bubbles over with advice to be merry while life lasts. Imhotep recommends as much happiness as possible in this life; a poet of the twentieth century before Christ says: "Walk after thy heart's desire so long as thou livest. Put myrrh on thy head, clothe thyself in fine linen, anoint thyself with the true marvels of God—with smiling face, let thy days be happy"; a priest of the fourteenth century said: "Come, songs and music are before thee. Set behind thee all cares; think only upon gladness"; and a Ptolemaic writer said: "Follow thy desire by night and by day. Put not care within thy heart".

Happiness and light-heartedness penetrated all walks of life. Sowing and reaping, threshing and garnering were all done to the accompaniment of song and music. Love songs were common—full of joy and happiness. Among all classes, rich and poor,

high and low, official and peasant, the imagination was given full rein. So long as they were able to transcend the drudgery of daily toil, and to transport themselves, in the midst of stern realities, to happier scenes beyond the power of official or task-master, the Egyptians were happy. And this they were well able to do by the exercise of their good memories and vivid imaginations. So long as they used these natural gifts, not any task-master or oppressive pharaoh but idealism was their guide. Priests were an exceedingly merry lot; tombs and temples were painted with joyous scenes; flowers played a large part in all decorations; bright colours were universal; gaudy garments suited happy dispositions; folk-tales were full of mirth and laughter; comic pictures and caricatures were tastefully satisfying; music, singing, and dancing were always a delight; and buffoonery was highly enjoyed. Even the names they gave their children show their joyous temperament. Such names were: "Eyes-of-love", "Cool-breeze", "Beautiful-morning". And in all kinds of religious services, singing and dancing and drinking were necessary features. In fact, there is so much evidence of their light-heartedness, that they have been called a depraved people. But taking all things into consideration they were, as we shall have occasion to see, a pious and god-fearing people. They were not puritanical. Their religious philosophy was not of that type. Their conception of god would not tolerate it. But whether at their feasts, in their daily occupations, in their sports, or in their devotions to their dead and to their gods, they were not only

serious and earnest, but also happy and gay, light-hearted and joyous.

In spite of their devotion to the good things of this life, there was a good deal of the visionary about the Egyptians. They had sufficient insight into the world of spirit around them to allow themselves to be guided to a considerable extent by what they considered unseen and unknown forces. The true visionary is the man who can see above and beyond himself and his own times. He can reach out beyond human possibilities. This the Egyptian had learned to do well. At a very early period in his development he became aware of a world of spiritual forces about him which he called gods. With them he made covenants—agreements that were sometimes considerably material and self-centred, like the Hebrew Jacob, who bargained with his god, saying, "If god will keep me in the way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Jehovah be my god". It was a shrewd and crafty bargain, but it shows that Jacob was convinced that gods had to be reckoned with. In a similar way the Egyptian allied himself closely with his god, worshipped, praised, and sacrificed to him. His alliance was a permanent one and a heart-felt one. His god was ever with him, and never far from him. There were innumerable demons ready to punish and afflict with disease and calamity, but with the aid of his god he was always sure of protection.

And if need arose he could, by the aid of magic force, compel the gods to help him. Not because he

thought that magic was a human force superior to the gods, but because he thought it was a divine force which was capable of being used against divine beings. He believed the gods to be supreme in power, and only divine power could operate against divine power. Like the Hebrew Job, he believed that only god could help him against god, only god could be surety to god.

This control of divine power often rendered a human being very powerful, hence kingly and priestly power. Human possibilities were almost limitless. In fact, man was not only created little lower than the sons of the gods, but on occasion he could become divine. The kings were gods, and exercised divine power; so were such men as Amenhotep and Imhotep; and any dead person may become a god with all divine powers and attributes.

Already in the age when the Pyramid Texts were written, men looked back to a golden era, "before death came forth", and when "strife", "voice", "blasphemy", and "conflict" were unknown. These and other passages in the Pyramid Texts and other literature show the consciousness of sin and a dislike and fear of it. Sin was a transgression of the law of the gods. It brought forth pain and suffering.

There is no evidence that the Egyptians considered suffering in any sense desirable. They strove for the blessing of their gods, but they did not seem to have understood that blessings often come in the form of hereditary disabilities, whether mental, moral, or physical; and that they are often to be derived from what we sometimes consider hard lot, failure, or dis-

couragement. They apparently had not yet learned that border ruffians may be turned into border guards, that we may use our difficulties as instruments to carve out our destiny, and that our failures may become stepping-stones to higher things if we see that they do not convert themselves into stumbling blocks. They evidently had not learned the lesson taught in the story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, that wrestling is always the condition of blessing, and that every difficulty is a blessing in disguise. These things they had not yet learned, but they were on the road, for they believed that all such affliction came from a superhuman source, and they tried to fight it with divine weapons.

Egyptian consciousness of sin was keen enough—sin as a transgression of the will of the gods, but there is no evidence that the Egyptian considered it necessary to atone for it or to be forgiven. He knew that the gods disapproved of certain conduct, and that what the gods disapproved of was sinful, but once a sin or wrong was committed he did not seem to think that anything could be done until he appeared before the forty-two judges in the after-world, and then it seems that he thought his good deeds would be so numerous as to be capable of outweighing his wrongs. He trusted to his positive goodness to satisfy his examiners. Hence, in Egyptian literature there is no trace of sacrifice or expiation for sin, and no evidence that any rite was performed with that end in view.

One of the best arguments for the depth of Egyptian culture is the impression which nature always

made upon the mind of the people. Their great works of art abundantly show how keenly they appreciated the birds and beasts, the trees and flowers, the rivers and streams, the valleys and hills. Nature covenanted with the people and the people with nature. The very sands of the desert and boulders of the hills responded to the spiritual and cultural life of the people. Just after the Israelites had crossed the Jordan, Joshua assembled them together to render thanks to Jehovah for his deliverance of them. He then took a large stone, which he set up in the presence of the assembled throng, and declared that it would witness to future generations the covenant relationship between Jehovah and his people. The great Hebrew leader said: "Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of Jehovah which he spake unto us". In like manner that which has fascinated the world from the time of the Greek and Roman tourists and travellers to our own day is the witness which the very stones of Egypt bear to the greatness of her mighty past. For just as Moriah is Moriah because of Abraham, and the Mount of Olives is Olivet because of Christ, and Flanders Field is Flanders Field because of the immortal challenge to "take up our quarrel with the foe" and because of the noble dead which lie there "between the crosses row on row", so Egypt is Egypt because of the impression which her great people, from the time before Menes to that of Alexander the Great, made upon her hills and dales, her rivers and streams, her cities and villages. Who can pass through her sacred temples and storied halls and not feel the touch

of her mighty past, the magic of her matchless memory?

Nor were the ancient Egyptians forgetful of that which makes any civilization worth while—the sense of the brotherhood of citizenship and mutual association and help. The man on the other side of the street was not neglected. The precepts of Ptah-Hotep show how solicitous the Egyptian was of the well-being and happiness of his neighbour. Experience had taught him that he *was* his brother's keeper, that he was responsible for the way in which the old world wags, and that this responsibility constituted a duty. Of course, there were many individuals here and there who so inadequately considered the subject of duty as to be unaware of its true nature, but the social teachers of the Middle Kingdom were fully alive to the necessity of making the subject of neighbourly responsibility well known. They realized that the "Shadow of Peter passing by" may blight as well as bless, and the "Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage" as well as the "Precepts of Ptah-Hotep" are full of warning and advice. The Egyptian also knew that in a dispute about right and justice, he could count upon his superiors to defend his cause. The "Complaint of the Peasant" is crowded with eloquent boldness which would never have been dared if he did not feel sure of the effect its plea for justice would have upon the Grand Steward himself, and the response which he knew would be found in the heart of the administrators of justice. It was his consciousness of the justice of his cause, and more especially his belief in his superiors' sense of justice, which gave

him the courage to speak with such frankness and boldness. He was not reckless, nor even daring, but courageous in the sense of his own right and in the faith of his judge's integrity.

It must always be borne in mind that previous to the Middle Kingdom, when Egyptian civilization was about at its height, a long period of at least two thousand years of slow development had elapsed. There were then all the elements present to guarantee a development. There was the pressure from without and the contest from within, the competition and rivalry which always spell progress. And although the Egyptians had never developed that sense of equality in a common task which characterized the peoples of the West, they, nevertheless, were conscious of the equal right of every man everywhere to progress, which perhaps is, after all, the only fundamentally true equality. That that consciousness existed among them is undoubted, as the "Complaint of the Peasant" and other early writings abundantly show. The peasant did not consider himself equal to the pharaoh, nor the petty official to the great baron, but each man demanded the right to make as much progress as possible—as much as his particular talents, gifts, and circumstances would warrant.

## V

### THE IDEA OF MEDIATION IN EGYPT

The most fundamental idea of mediation in ancient Egypt connected itself with the person of the god-manifesting pharaoh. When Rā receded to heaven a human king reigned as his son and heir. He represented the people before the gods and the gods to the people. The king remained in Egypt the only representative between gods and men. The so-called messianic passage in the "Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage" and the *si-na-sa* ("son of man") of the Hermitage papyrus throw very little light upon the mediation idea. These passages point forward to a time when there would be an ideal king, when ideal conditions would prevail, but, be it noted that the ideal person is to be a king. The king was always the mediator.

Even when the priesthood developed, and offerings were continually made to the gods on behalf of mankind, the priests were not the mediators, for they merely represented the king. Their offerings were made in the name of the king. And this was so universally and consistently true in Egypt that the phrase, "an offering which the king makes", came to

mean any and every offering. The priests offered sacrifices, approached the gods, mediated between man and god solely in the name of the king. This was inevitable. For while in the earliest and smallest communities the head of the tribe or family was naturally the mediator and was the only one who ever acted in that capacity, in later times when the families became clans, and clans developed into national states, the king could no more offer all sacrifices and appear personally in all cases of mediation. The result was that others were made priests, that an order of priests arose. But, in Egypt, the priesthood never absorbed the function of mediation as its own. It always merely represented the king. The priests were the king's substitute. Even when the priesthood seized the throne in the Twenty-first Dynasty, sacrifice remained the peculiar function of the pharaoh through his representatives the priests.

Nor did the deification of Amenhotep and Imhotep furnish mediators. The idea of mediation which prevailed later in Christianity found no place in Egyptian thought. Nor did the Jewish idea of mediatorial angels and semi-divine agencies, such as Memra and Metatron, find any favour with the Egyptians. This was due to the divine or semi-divine character of the pharaoh. There was thus in Egypt no need of a special incarnate god. That every pharaoh was. Nor was there any need of angels, who would mediate between god and man; nor of deified agencies. The necessity felt for all these by other peoples found its satisfaction in the mediatorial func-

tion of the "son of Rā", the "good god", the god-manifesting pharaoh.

Prophecy as distinguished from the priesthood never developed. The term *hn-ntr* means priest and not prophet, or "prophet" only in so far as it entirely corresponds to "priest". In later times the Egyptians attempted to gain oracles from the gods. Among the Hebrews the official mediation in such cases was made by the prophet or the seer. But in Egypt, the priest was the mediating official, that is, the priest as representative of the king. Thus the oracles communicated in the temples by nods or other signs, or by dreams, were manipulated by the priests of Amon-Rā. Such oracles, however, never became popular. Whenever they were invoked it was for political purposes.

In Egypt, the official or state religion must always be carefully differentiated from the popular religion. The type of the former was the religion of Rā, and that of the latter was the religion of Osiris, although Rā was to an extent popular, just as Osiris was to a certain degree official.

In the earliest times every town had a temple ("house of the god") of the local god. The temple was served by priests. Associated with the local god were usually a mother-goddess and a son. The order of divine service was about the same everywhere. The priests began with acts of purification, purifying themselves as well as the statues of the gods. Then offerings were made, which were followed by a procession of the gods. Music and dancing accompanied the various ceremonies, and the singing of hymns was a common feature.

Offerings consisted chiefly of animals and of vegetable material. On solemn occasions the eating of a specimen of the sacred animal at stated intervals took place, such as the bull at Memphis and the ram at Thebes. In early times the animals most frequently sacrificed were the gazelle, the antelope, and the wild goat. And the burnt offering of animals continued down to the fifth century before Christ. Burning of incense was commoner in early than in later times. The animal sacrifice largely took its place after the Middle Kingdom. In early times human sacrifice was practised, but it was discontinued under the Ramesids.

As we have already seen, the priest *par excellence* was the pharaoh. But according as the duties of the priesthood multiplied, they had to be delegated to others. These were always merely representatives of the king. After the Middle Kingdom, however, the priesthood became a regular order, of several divisions. One was called the *kherheb*, consisting of priests who recited the sacred text; another was called the *wab*, consisting of those who offered sacrifice. This latter was divided into classes, each one of which served for a quarter of a year. At the head of the different classes stood chief-priests ("servants of the god"), there being usually one for each temple. Besides all these were sub-priests, "openers" of the shrines, who also made offerings of incense and libations. The priests were often referred to as "divine fathers", and in time were granted semi-hereditary privileges and duties. They were very attentive to cleanliness, wore white linen, shaved their heads, ab-

stained from fish and beans, and were probably circumcised. Many of them were pluralists, but received their living from temple revenues, stipends being paid in kind.

From time to time the priests became very powerful, being famed as chieftains, and powerful physicians. Thutmose III merged all the priesthoods of the country into one sacerdotal body, headed by the priests of Amon-Rā. In the Twenty-first Dynasty they became powerful enough to usurp royal power, Herihor having himself crowned king. It seems that women could hold some kind of priestly rank, there being priestesses of Hathor. But they were never important.

The Egyptian temple at a very early period was modelled upon a common type. It was shut off from the street by lofty walls, adorned with religious and secular scenes. It was entered by a small gateway between two pylons, and this led into a forecourt which was open to the sky. Then came the hypostyle with pylons, which was used for processions. Beyond that was the dark cella, or holy of holies, the dwelling place of the god, to which none but priests were admitted. Here was the image of the god. All around the cella were storehouses and sacristies. There was a shrine for the image of the god, provided with double doors of metal. Every morning the shrine was opened by a priest, who offered incense, purified the statue of the god, and presented food and flowers. Temple revenues were derived from endowments, offerings, and fees, and the temples were also subsidised by the state. In later times the temples became very rich.

Amon-Rā's temples were supplied with numerous captives and tribute. The Harris papyrus shows that nearly one-seventh of all the lands of Egypt was temple property, belonging to Amon of Thebes, Ptah of Memphis, and Rā of Heliopolis. The greatest era of temple building began in the early Ptolemaic period and continued down into Roman times. The temple of Rā at Abusir was unique in that it was open to the sky, and supplied with a solar barque and obelisk.

Besides the official religion, there was a popular cult, mainly dominated by Osirian ideas, and hence associated with the dead. The masses were devoted to it. Tombs were erected in the Western Desert, some of which were very elaborate. In the sepulchral chamber were furniture for the use of the dead, rooms for the cult, and walls adorned with pictures. The innermost chamber was a chapel, on the west side of which was an imitation door, through which the dead passed to receive their offerings. In addition to the form of the cult of the dead, there was a form of domestic worship. Shrines were erected in the homes of the people, and ceremonies were performed in connection with birth and marriage as well as with death. There were also wayside shrines, and although the laity had no recognized part in the service of the gods in the official temples, they were permitted to bring their offerings to the great altar on all occasions.

Feasts and festivals were quite common. There were the festivals of fertility and harvest in October and April, and the great temple feasts, such as the Great Theban Feast of Amon. Each god had his

own calendar of days on which there were great processions, and when elaborate offerings were made. The *Sed*-festival was one of the most important. It was celebrated every thirty years, commemorating the deification of the king as Osiris. Sometimes as in the case of Rameses II this festival was repeated every three years after the thirtieth year. The Feast of the New Year was also important. Gifts were exchanged, and given to the dead, and an illumination took place for the "glorification of the blessed". It was a kind of Feast of All Souls. The *Wag*-feast took place on the eighteenth of the First month, and on its eve. There were others, such as New Year's Eve; on the fifth of the five intercalary days, the Feast of the Five Days; and minor feasts on the first of every month; and at half moon. The "Passion Play" of Osiris lasted a number of days, consisted of eight elaborate scenes, and was very popular among the people.

Among a race who believed themselves so closely related to the gods as the Egyptians did, magic was inevitable, for magic was primarily the power of the gods. Thus, Thoth was called the master of sorcery, and Isis the mistress. By learning and understanding the power of the gods, they could be controlled. Even Rā himself was subject to the control of magic. At an early date magic attached itself primarily to the cure of disease. Sickness and disease came from the demons; the demons were inferior to the gods in power; if the power of the gods could be procured and operated, the demons would be forced to withdraw

their torments. Hence, the elaborate system of magic for medicinal purposes.

The method of magic was symbolic or imitative acts, verbal spells, and formulae from such literature as the Book of the Dead. It was a perfectly legitimate practice within certain limitations, and was recognized officially. It is often difficult to know where magic ends and religion begins in Egyptian custom; even the gods were thought to rule the world by magic. But certain magical acts were illegal (such as making wax figures of a man to hurt him), and were strenuously forbidden. It was totally forbidden by Ikhnaton.

The Egyptians loved symbolic acts, but not for themselves, rather for their value in practical and religious life. The purpose behind the practice was what they valued. They desired to avoid pain and suffering and to attain happiness. Acts and words as symbols not merely expressed but also increased and nourished the feeling to which they corresponded. Laughter is the symbol of joy, but as one laughs, one's laughter reacts upon the joy and heightens it. Acts and words not only expressed what was desired but they also were believed to produce what was desired. They were therefore not only a symbol, but also a means of procuring what was symbolized.

Prayer was considered a most common mode of communicating with the gods. But instead of being considered the putting into practice by the individual or the community of a want, it was thought of as a means of inducing the particular god to respond favourably. The essence of polytheism produces un-

scientific prayer. The average modern conception of prayer, as a means of bringing about a change in the purpose of God, is a remnant of polytheism. The Egyptians were through and through a polytheistic people, and as such could never develop the higher forms of prayer. Their prayers were sincere, fervent, full of hope and faith, but their fundamental idea was selfish. The aim was to gain the ear of a god, as powerful a one as possible. It was not that "thy will" be done, but that mine may prevail. Monotheism forces the suppliant to question his own unselfishness and surrender himself to the higher will, knowledge, and purpose of God, but polytheism offers no standard of will, knowledge, and purpose. One god may thwart the decision of another, and the suppliant could gamble on his favourite god's will and power to help.

But whatever the limitations of polytheism were there was practically no scepticism. The gods existed, and it was man's duty to worship them. A duty is something which is owed or ought to be done as soon and as thoroughly as possible. All that a man has and all that he is he owes to the gods. He may have a keen intellect; he may be able to make fine moral distinctions; he may be able to see a business situation in a moment and control it; he may have a fine, strong body; but they are all gifts to him from the gods. He has received all that he has and all that he is from them, and he owes them his best. The best he can possibly do is to obey, revere, and worship the gods by offering them sacrifice, rendering them religious service, and obeying their behests. The gulf

between men and the gods was bridged over by worship; the mediatory power between them consisted in filial love and divine worship.

## VI

### THE IDEA OF THE FUTURE IN EGYPT

It is given to all men once to die; but after that, what? There was never an ancient people who insisted upon believing that "it is not death to die" with more emphasis than the Egyptians. The climate and atmosphere of Egypt both conspired to deepen this conviction, if they were not in reality the origin of the belief. Death came often, but although the body became inert, it did not dissolve. It persisted and, like all other natural phenomena, was the abode of that which possessed life. Death consisted in a changed relationship between man's vital being and his body. The same body remained, as also did the same vital forces, such as the *ka*, the *ba*, the *ran*, etc. But their mutual relationship was changed. The *ka* and the *ba* remained just as interested in the affairs of the body as before, but they assumed a new relationship to it. In fact, the chief duties of the *ka* began only with the death of the body. It was a kind of superior genius intended to guide the fortunes of the individual, to whom it was attached, in the future world. It controlled the person and received him in the sky. This guardian

angel was thus a separate entity, distinct from the person to whom it was attached. This latter's personality consisted in the visible body and an invisible intelligence (the *ab* or *hat*). At death the *ka* ascended to the sky to receive the soul of the individual, its client. The soul appeared as a human-headed bird, called a *ba*, which became prominent at the death of a man.

In order further to insure the persistence of the body as a centre of individual soul or spirit-manifestation, the greatest care was taken to preserve it. It was carefully embalmed and mummified and laid in a coffin, on its side, like a sleeper. There were several coffins, one inside the other. In the tomb were placed all utensils that a living person could possibly need, together with vessels for food and water, weapons and toilet articles. The tomb was usually a large burial chamber, or a series of chambers, simple at first but more elaborate in later times. In fact, some contained as many as thirty-one chambers, in many of which were statues of the dead. The tomb, for royalty, reached its highest development in the great pyramids of the Old Kingdom.

In order to insure proper attention in the future world, as in this, it became customary to bury with the body of the deceased a number of little figures, called *Shawabti*, whose chief duty was to answer for their client during the trial of judgment before the forty-two divine judges. Besides these, rolls of papyrus containing prayers were included in the tomb, as well as protective amulets to guard against malignant spirits.

The most important ceremony connected with burial was the opening of the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose of the deceased. This ceremony guaranteed life to the body, and made it possible as the home of the *ba*. After burial the greatest care was expended on the preservation of the body and on the needs of the soul-life. Not only were great tombs erected, but they were endowed, and priests were hired in perpetuity to offer the proper sacrifices, serving not only as food for the dead, but also as sacramental gifts, for the dead were divine and demanded such attentions as were bestowed upon the greater deities.

Two great systems of thought as to the life after death grew up and developed side by side in Egypt. They were in the main distinct, but in much detail they became one. It is not always possible to say with certainty what is characteristic of one and what of the other. The two systems correspond to what we have in solar religion and Osirian religion, or official worship and popular worship. We shall deal with the solar conception of life after death first.

In the earliest times, the dead was believed to inhabit the cemetery, where it prowled about and was more or less malignant. Comparatively later the idea arose that the soul of the dead departs to a distant and blessed realm, and that the body must be preserved with all its physical faculties as a home for the soul. With this in view, food and drink were necessary, besides all other material necessities. It was the duty of relatives left behind, and especially of the son, to see that these needs were supplied. Endowed tombs were erected and statues were set up to aid the de-

ceased in his soul life. The soul itself, according to the Pyramid Texts, either took up his abode in a star, whence he came occasionally to visit the body, or associated himself with the sun-god, even being absorbed into that great deity. This latter idea underlay the conception of a pyramid, as the abode of the body of the deceased, for the pyramid was the symbol of the sun-god.

The realm of the dead according to the solar religion was situated in the east of the sky, where there was a great lake called the Lily-lake. The means of approach was by a ladder, which symbolized the rays of the sun. We have a very good picture, in the case of pharaoh Uni of the Old Kingdom, of the way in which the deceased enters heaven. Uni becomes associated with Rā, serves as a priest before him, voyages across the sky with him in his barques, and actually becomes identified with that mighty god. In heaven there is abundance of all that man may need—food and clothing—and the tree of life. The solar hereafter is also depicted by the mortuary texts of the Feudal age.

The oldest Osirian view of life after death was exceedingly forbidding. It was associated with the idea of a subterranean kingdom of the dead, connected with Osiris at Abydos. After his murder by Set, Osiris, whose parts were assembled by Horus, became king of the Dewat, that is, the underworld, a place originally identified with the lower heaven. This kingdom was in the West, and was at first presided over by the old mortuary god Khenti-Amentiu, with whom Osiris was identified. At first it was believed

that each king became one with Osiris at death, later this was the privilege of every man.

At death the king either, as Horus, marched forth from Buto and entered the Dewat, the way being prepared by Upwawet; or, identified with Osiris, he proceeded to the Dewat, where he occupied the divine throne, becoming king of the dead, and receiving the filial duties of Horus, just like Osiris. In this latter case he became a mighty god, often confused with Rā in the minds of the worshippers. This is where the two systems of theology came into contact with each other and were often confused.

The Dewat, or underworld, was divided into twelve great dark divisions, where was the abode of many and dangerous demons. Each division was traversed by the dead in an hour. Great gates separated one division from another, at which were stationed watchers and fiery serpents. Innumerable dangers and ordeals, mostly of a physical or intellectual nature, were to be encountered, against which magic was the chief weapon. In order to be assured of a safe journey through this strange intermediate place, on the way to the abode of Osiris, a chart was made and recorded in the "Book of Two Ways" (in reference to land and water). Other works were composed as guides, the contents of which, with the light of the presence of the gods, gave assurance of a safe journey. When, later, solar and Osirian theology became fused, the soul was represented as joining the boat of Rā and sailing through the hours of day and night.

With the confusion of the solar and Osirian ideas of the future, Osiris was transferred to heaven (as

early as the Pyramid Texts), where he became lord of the sky. With this change of view, the king is represented as being announced and introduced to Osiris in the sky just as he was to Rā, and joined the "imperishable stars" in the celestial heaven.

This solarization of Osiris was the work of the priests, who in turn were influenced by popular theology, which suffered a great deal of Osirianization. Thus the Pyramid Texts, the Ladder of the Sky, the Four Horses, the Solar Ferryman, and the Two Floats of Reeds became Osirianized. The Imperishable Stars became the "followers of Osiris", and the pyramids, the symbols of the sun, were identified with Osiris. But all this was easy of accomplishment, because of the great amount of similarity of representation, and especially because the old mortuary god of Abydos, Khenti-Amentiu, with whom Osiris was identified, as lord of the dead, was at first a solar deity. Thus Rā was to a large extent Osirianized and Osiris was greatly solarized. This process naturally led to much confusion, the king being often represented as Rā and often as Osiris.

There were many attempts at harmonizing the two great theologies. As a result, Osiris was often transferred to the sky, while Rā received the dead and presented them to Osiris. But there were insuperable difficulties, for the two theologies did not exhaust all the theories about the future. There was the Plain of Aalu, at first in the Delta, later in the West, towards which the different souls of a man, each taking his own path, set out to seek Osiris, where they were all united. To reach that place they were

obliged to negotiate, according to one idea, fifteen or twenty-one gates, and, according to another, eight great nets spread for their discomfort.

The result of these different theories about the future was the creation of much confusion and contradiction. The Egyptians were exceedingly conservative without being systematic. They were unable to forget, and according as new ideas arose, they were preserved side by side with old ones without modification and without any attempt at systematization and still without much consciousness of incongruity.

In spite of all this uncertainty as to just what was going to happen in the future, and as to just what the future would be like, the Egyptians possessed and cultivated the attribute common to all races, which is the salvation of humanity—hope. It is one of the great endowments of the human soul that it is always too large for its position, that it never finds its adequate repose and satisfaction here in this world, but is empowered to anticipate and appropriate a better future. A better time coming is the ideal which the most miserable cannot be denied, and which the most favoured needs. Youth looks forward to success, but when this hope fades away, another succeeds it. We are accustomed to say, “as long as there is life there is hope”, but the reverse is just as true, “as long as there is hope there is life”. We can let the sun go down in darkness as long as we can turn and wait for its rising again in the east. In this the Egyptian was an expert. He could bear disappointment, adversity, suffering, because he had an undying hope for

better things. His eyes were ever turned on the future. There were his gods, there were those whom he had loved in the past, there were the fulfilments of all his ideals and aspirations, his hopes and desires. No individual ever thought and dreamed and lived in the future as did the ancient Egyptian. It was his great ideal. Nor did it render him unduly visionary and impractical. On the contrary it served as a stimulus to better living and higher thinking in this life. The condition of future bliss was present integrity; the rewards of the hereafter were contingent upon the accomplishments of the present; and present human helpfulness and divine piety were the best guarantee of the eternal favour of the gods.

After death came the judgment. The character of the judgment and the judgment scene is so closely allied to Osirian ideas that its origin must be ascribed to the popular religion, although it was in some ways influenced by Rā theology.

Judgment took place in the presence of Osiris, sitting upon his throne. The deceased was led in by Anubis, with Isis and Nephthys following. There were there forty-two judges or assessors, in the presence of whom the deceased denied forty-two misdeeds. A large pair of balances was there with the heart of the deceased and the feather of the goddess of Truth, Maāt, one in each of the pans. Thoth stood ready to read the balances, and carried a book in which to record the findings. A large female hippopotamus was there also, prepared to devour the deceased should he be found wanting. In case of justification the deceased was permitted to proceed to

the Fields of Aalu, or he was received into the bark of Rā.

The one hundred and twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of the Dead in which is preserved the commonly called "Confession", but which is not a "confession" at all, enumerates a series of crimes of which the deceased declares himself guiltless. They were sins of violence, deceit, sexual immorality, and made up a declaration of innocence. The deceased then goes on to declare his moral worthiness, which indicates a keen and penetrating sense of moral distinctions. The judgment was believed to be a real test of a man's moral worth, and only by successful acquittal could a man hope for the best. The test is eloquent of the conscientiousness of the average Egyptian, and shows how intimately the future was believed to be bound up with the present, and how present conduct, in its consequences, reached forward into the future.

A good deal of nonsense has been said and written about transmigration in Egyptian religious thought, all of which is based upon Herodotus' mistaken idea. Spells were believed to be capable of enabling a man to assume the form of a lotus, or of an ibis, or a heron, or serpent, or of the god Ptah, or of "anything that he wished". Of this we read a good deal in the Book of the Dead and in the Mortuary texts. But there is no evidence here of transmigration, for the change is wrought by magic, and is not permanent. In the "Tale of Two Brothers", Bata's soul passes into a bull, but that is not transmigration, for the purpose is for hiding and escaping, and is not meant to be permanent. Herodotus bases his argument upon the story

that the souls of Rā, Ptah, and Khnum existed in the chaos egg, but that proves nothing about transmigration of souls. There is absolutely nothing to prove the theory in Egyptian literature.

There was no doubt in the mind of the early Egyptian about the resurrection of the dead. Osiris had died, or was killed, and rose again, so each and every Egyptian would do likewise. He would arise not as a shadowy ghost, but in physical reality. For just as the limbs of Osiris were collected together by the gods, so each individual Egyptian would arise in full possession of his mind and body, for it is said of the dead in the Pyramid Texts, "they possess their heart, they possess their mind, they possess their feet, they possess their mouth, they possess their arms, they possess all their limbs." This belief persisted from the earliest to the latest times.

Nor was there less faith in the certainty of a real immortality. The dead was assured of a future life to which there is no indication of any limit. "Even as Osiris lives, he also will live; even as Osiris is not dead, he will not die; even as Osiris is not destroyed, he also will not be destroyed." So reads a passage in the Pyramid Texts. The dead will arise to a joyous and apparently endless life, into which they will enter "not as dead", but "as living".

The Egyptian idea of immortality was that of a real personal persistence beyond the grave: no mere absorption into the infinite as a river loses itself in the sea; no mere living in posterity as an indefinite influence, without individuality and consciousness; but an immortality of the personal soul, conscious of

its past and hopeful of its future. The Egyptians' conviction of a personal immortality grew up as a part of their very life, and was interwoven with all of their loftiest aims and motives, and became to them a glad and triumphant certainty. They believed in it not because they were able or desirous of proving it, but because it was to them the natural continuation of the present, the reward which their gods held in keeping for them. Death was to them not as much a separation as a release from unreality to reality. The great real, desirable world was where the gods lived, and as gods and men were so closely related, the natural outcome of things would be their eternal association and companionship. It was not conceit or presumption, but a belief in the natural fitness of things. Immortality was fraught with neither doubt nor questioning for the Egyptian; it was a certainty, which needed no demonstration.

## VII

### THE IDEA OF MORALITY IN EGYPT

The morals of an ancient people can be discovered only by a study of their extant literature. This is especially true of the early Egyptians, who have left us no system of morals.

In studying the morals of any people of the past, care must be taken not to read into their language the content of our modern moral phraseology. The moral ideas of any people are to be defined by their conception of goodness, purity, faithfulness, truth, justice, and righteousness, on the one hand; and on the other, by that of evil, impurity, faithlessness, falsehood, injustice, and wickedness. But what did the Egyptians understand by all these things? We must determine what those acts were which the Egyptian called "good", and those which he called "bad". We shall find that his conscience, or inherited and self-developed power of moral distinctions, classified things as "right" or "wrong". But things were "right" and "wrong" according as they were agreeable or contrary to accepted custom or law. Thus, a knowledge of the customs and laws of Egypt will reveal to us its state of morals.

We must also be careful to distinguish between the ideal and the real. It is helpful to know the ideals of a people; but a people is commended or condemned, as a rule, according as their actual practices are comparatively high or low. Nor must individual responsibility be confused with national responsibility. In estimating national morals, our criterion must be our own modern Western civilization; but in estimating individual morals, our criterion must be the laws and customs of the time and place under consideration. The individual Egyptian must be condemned or commended in the light of his own civilization. The moral determinants of the time must also be kept clearly in mind, such as the ideas of heredity, environment, and social tradition.

In Egypt the family was the social unit. It had its prototype in the divine family of Osiris, the normal family consisting in the marriage of one man with one woman, and possessed of many children. There were apparently no degrees of consanguinity in marriage law; a king often married his sister. Although the normal marriage consisted of one man and one woman, polygamy and concubinage were very common, but polyandry is unknown. The family was patriarchal, but the father did not possess the same arbitrary powers as among early Semitic peoples. In fact, the wife seemed to equal the husband in many rights. The ideal relationship between the two can be seen in the story of Osiris and Isis. Women were comparatively free, could hold offices, become sovereign, and perhaps even priestesses. There was, however, a certain feeling that supreme rulership

belonged to the man, for when Hatshepsut was queen she did all in her power to disguise the fact that she was a woman, even going to the extent of wearing a false beard, and referring to herself in the third person masculine.

Filial love is no more characteristic of modern Japanese than it was of the Egyptian. There are many bas-reliefs which show the ideal relationship between parents and children, and numbers of inscriptions tell of the love of parents for children and of children for parents. A good son was considered "the gift of god", and a splendid thing was the "obedience of an obedient son". Daughters bore such names as "Beauty-comes", and sons often were named "Riches". Both son and daughter could inherit, though the son was the natural heir.

The marriage relationship could be interrupted, especially by divorce, but divorce was not very common.

Egyptian society consisted of three classes: (1) the king and nobility; (2) lower officials; (3) labourers, peasants, and slaves. But in the Middle Kingdom a Middle Class developed which remained down to the end of Egyptian national life. At the head of the social scale stood the king, who was the representative of the gods. He was always highly idealized, being the "benefactor" of the people, the "lord of truth", and the "utterer of justice". There is every reason to believe that the Egyptians had cause to believe in the integrity and righteousness of their kings, although the latter naturally did not always live up to their reputation.

The state's relation to the king may be summed up in the term "Emperor-worship". The pharaoh was the son of the gods, was a great and good god himself, and as such was worshipped as any other god. It seemed to be the highest ambition in the life of an Egyptian to serve his sovereign in a worthy manner. Nor was the matter a one-sided affair, for the king protected his subjects. Royal decrees were issued from time to time, responding to demands by the people, which show a marked tendency towards democracy.

Individual to individual was usually fair and just, and superior to inferior was most considerate. The duty of superior to inferior could not be better illustrated than by quoting a part of the inscription on the tomb of a nobleman of the Fifth Dynasty: "I gave bread to all the hungry of the Cerastes-mountain; I clothed him who was naked therein. I filled its shores with large cattle, and its lowlands with small cattle. . . . I never oppressed one in possession of his property so that he complained of me because of it to the god of my city; (but) I spake, and told that which was good; never was there one fearing because of one stronger than he, so that he complained because of it to the god". Henku thus considered it his first duty to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, defend the people's rights, and to do that which was good. In short, his rôle was that of protector and defender to those dependent upon him. Nor is this an isolated example. There were many other nobles in all periods of Egyptian history who boasted of the same good deeds. This may indicate a great deal of

self-praise and boasting, but it is also an indication of what the ideal relationship was.

The subordinate was respectful, submissive, and obedient to his superior, but the nobleman's ideal was to conduct himself in such a manner as to elicit his inferior's love. Nezemib caused to be inscribed upon his tomb the assertion that he "was one beloved of the people", that he had "never taken the property of any man by violence", and that he "was a doer of that which pleased all men".

To the Egyptian the "Law of the Lord is perfect", and the king as the representative of the gods was the source of all law and justice. A guarantee of justice was called "the king's writings", and decrees issued by the king were law, not to be forgotten. The king's representative in the administration of law was the judge, whose patron deity was Maât, goddess of truth. Royal charters and legal contracts were very common, and the law was continually appealed to. Legal trials were given all men, and a legal hearing was always guaranteed. Justice was widely recognized, and to be just was the source of much pride. The great judges of Egypt never tired of the boast: "Never did I judge two brothers in such a way that a son was deprived of his paternal possessions." The law applied to all, great as well as small, official as well as peasant. Violence was condemned, and disobedience punished. The punishment, however, was often extraordinarily severe. In one case, the violator of a royal decree was to be sacrificed upon a block.

Property rights could be held by anyone, the monarchs boasting that they "never oppressed one in

possession of his property", or that they "never took the property of any man by violence". Property could be acquired in various ways, but especially by inheritance, women having as much rights as men in this respect. It was subject to taxation, but certain exemptions were made, especially in the case of religious estates.

The Egyptians were not a great commercial people. Their national boundaries were such as to shut them off from free access to foreign countries. But in domestic relations their commerce was highly organized on a legal foundation. Legal contracts were common in business matters, which were drawn up in a methodical way, and were sealed and signed.

Labourers were of two classes, free and enslaved. All men were servants of the king, but there were those whose part it was to do menial work, but who were free agents. But over against the freeman was the slave. His condition of slavery may have been captivity or purchase. Captives were often taken and used as slaves. They are represented on many inscriptions from the earliest to the latest times. In the transfer of property, slaves were included as well as cattle. They were thus acquired by purchase.

In social life there is always a certain difference between the morals of the ruling classes and that of the masses. In Ptah-Hotep we have the former, and in the "Complaint of the Peasant" we have the latter. But the distinction cannot always be drawn with certainty.

Beginning with the Middle Kingdom a great advance was made in the conception of social morality.

Men began to realize that the welfare of the state depends upon just social conditions, and serious efforts were made to set right certain social wrongs. We have echoes of this movement in the "Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage", the "Eloquent Peasant", "Ptah-Hotep", the "Life of Rekhmara", and other similar writings. But there is no evidence that social conditions were hopeless. In fact, it is a hopeful sign that men were not satisfied with the present, but always striving for better things. The Egyptian Sage, a priest of Heliopolis, calls for a reform of society, and pictures an ideal future with an ideal ruler; the Eloquent Peasant shows that the norm of just treatment lies in the hands of the official, and makes an appeal to the Grand Steward and to the pharaoh himself as the source of all justice; Ptah-Hotep inculcates gentleness, moderation, and discretion; and Rekhmara shows that the greatest source of royal stability and authority is social justice, his teaching being distinctly religious in tone. These men all preached a gospel of righteousness and social justice. They appealed not only to the present, but also to the future. And the appeal was made especially to the individual.

It is hard to find in any ancient literature so much evidence of a moral consciousness as in these writings of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt. Moral thought was thoroughly individualized, and the eyes of men were turned in upon themselves. Nor did this tendency to self-contemplation and self-examination end with the Middle Kingdom. As the Book of the Dead shows, in its one hundred and twenty-fifth

chapter, the Egyptians of later centuries as well were a people much given to moral musings, and had developed a sensitiveness in moral matters that was quite remarkable.

The Egyptians were a peace-loving people, a fact to which Strabo bears witness. In a series of hymns addressed to the Diadem of the pharaoh, and which has been assigned to the period previous to the Middle Kingdom, the ideal of the country is represented as decidedly peaceful. The idea of peace is repeated again and again, and seems to mean not merely domestic tranquility but peace in the widest and most general sense.

The Egyptians as well as other peoples, however, had their wars. The ideal divine king of Egypt, Horus, was known as the "Smiter of the Barbarians". At the end of the Middle Kingdom, the Egyptians were forced by a cruel experience to devote themselves very assiduously to the arts of war. The Hyksos with their horses had subjugated Egypt and remained in control until the time of Ahmose I. War became, after this time, much more popular, and was for some men a profession. But at all periods it was considered a sacred and holy undertaking, for it was conducted for the gods, in whose names all wars were waged. On palettes and monuments which depict warfare, the symbols of the gods always find a place. The enemies of Egypt were the enemies of Egypt's gods, and against them war was a work of piety, and their death a consummation devoutly to be wished.

There was never any tendency on the part of the Egyptians to confuse the rights of the gods with

those of the king. They rendered to the pharaoh his dues, but they never forgot their gods. The gods were ever with them. They loved to think of their gods as the source of all truth, righteousness, and justice. Horus was the "lord of truth"; Rā was the "great god of truth"; Osiris was the "lord of truth"; one god was called the "expeller of deceit", and a queen was named "Truth is of Apis"; the daughter of Rā was the goddess of truth and righteousness; and truth was personified as the goddess Maāt. The gods were the protectors of nobles and peasants, of rich and poor, great and small. They were the object of their people's worship, and although there was a great deal of magic mingled with religion, there was also a great deal of discriminating adoration.

The gods were many and varied in ability. They were anthropomorphically conceived, and were partakers of imperfections. A great deal of their worship was ceremonial and ritualistic, but the purely moral elements were not lacking. Human sacrifices may have been offered in early days, but in later times there is no evidence of it. The cakes in form of men offered to the gods are no proof of this custom, nor is it certain that the burning of human beings as reported by Plutarch is to be taken as sacrifices.

The piety of the Egyptians cannot be questioned. They were pious by nature, and never till comparatively later times developed a sceptic spirit. However, in the feudal age, the "Song of the Harper" shows that the sceptical spirit was beginning to make itself felt. But it was rather a scepticism about the future than about the gods. The vanity of riches

is spoken of, just as is the uselessness of worrying about the future. But the existence of the gods is never denied. The Misanthrope of the Middle Kingdom contains no thought of the gods, but it does not deny them. A new spirit arose in the Middle Kingdom, but it can hardly be called scepticism in the modern sense of the term. The gods were always taken for granted, and their sway in the world was unquestioned. The scepticism of these writers is rather that of the Old Testament Ecclesiastes, a doubting of the providence, or the interest, of the gods in the affairs of men.

Before the Middle Kingdom, the individual did not loom as large as at later times. Egyptian individualism may be said to have begun in the Middle Kingdom. Yet in the Old Kingdom the individual is known to have asserted his rights. A citizen of the Fifth Dynasty made the proud boast, "Never was I beaten in the presence of any official since my birth". This would lead us to believe that the average citizen of the earlier periods was as virile as the nobles, with whose sturdy-looking statues we are familiar.

But the individual of later times had developed a sense of personal right which is remarkable. The Misanthrope and the Eloquent Peasant assume an individualism and a sense of personal right which are eloquent of the independence of thought and action in ancient Egypt. The Eloquent Peasant, in his dispute with his antagonist, declared, "my ways are good", *i. e.* "I have a *right* to the way I take"; and the Misanthrope demanded that each man be responsible only for his own deeds—"sentence a man

only for the deeds that he has verily committed". The Egyptian's sense of truth and justice had moulded him into a stern critic of personal endeavour and responsibility. "Thy tongue is the spring of a balance, thy heart is the weight, and thy two lips are its arms", declared the Eloquent Peasant; and Ptah-Hotep said, "honour a man for what he has become, not for what he was". In keeping with this teaching, the Egyptian held himself to be upright, truthful, just, honest, frank, generous, the protector of widows and orphans, and defender of the weak; and he condemned all the opposite vices. He respected the rights of others, and accordingly condemned adultery, robbery, and violence, and encouraged the opposite virtues, and a recognition of the rights of his fellow men.

Of course, there were many exceptions to these acts of virtue, so much so that the Misanthrope could find no justice in the land, no satisfaction in the world, and nothing but evil holding sway. But where there are ideals there are good intentions, and though "hell be paved with good intentions", a good intention is all the difference between a mistake and a crime.

As time went on the individual's relation to the gods became more and more a matter of heart and conscience; social justice was demanded for the future as well as for the present; and ideals of all kinds became exceedingly pragmatic. The maxims of Ani especially emphasise the need of guarding one's reputation, of avoiding lusts, and of preferring the endurance of the future to the uncertainty of the present. There grew up a tendency to climb up into

the higher stories of human living, to realize that though the world must be met in its own worldly way, man's head may extend beyond the clouds, and see a vision of higher things.

The Egyptians ascribed the best they knew to their gods. Hence, if we know the character of the acts ascribed to the Egyptians' gods, we shall know what their moral ideals were.

We have learned that the Egyptian ascribed to the gods, primarily, the attributes of love, goodness, righteousness, truth, and justice. But what was his idea of "love", "goodness", etc.? Did these words connote to the Egyptians what they do to us? What was their moral content? So far as we can learn from a study of the original words, *maât* is the name of the most important of Egypt's goddesses, the daughter of Râ. Her symbol is the feather, which appears in judgment scenes weighed in the balance against the heart of the deceased. The goddess is represented sometimes with bandages over her eyes. It is evident from the part played by the feather in judgment scenes that it represents the standard of judgment. Hence, it has been rendered by the words "law", "order", "duty". The blindfolded goddess represents impartiality, and hence *maât* has been rendered by the words "truth", "justice". Moreover, the ideal of all Egyptian gods and kings was *ânkh n maât*, "living according to rule, or in justice". The hall of the kingdom of the dead was called "the hall of the two truths". The expression is a very old one, indicating that the Egyptian believed in the existence of two truths, whereby a matter was looked at from

both sides. The form of the original word is dual. The word *maāt* comes from the verb *maā*, "to be real", "genuine", "true". The same word appears in Coptic as ME:MHI. A common divine and royal title was *neb maāt*, "lord of truth". The word is used in conjunction with *hrw*, *maā-hrw*, meaning, "true of voice", the *φωνή ἀληθής* of Plutarch, or, "justified". The phrase referred to one, whether god or man, who had been found worthy, whether in this world or the next. It was sometimes used in a ceremonial way, but at the same time it connoted to the Egyptian about what the words "truth", "justice", etc., connote to us, *e. g.*, it would be considered unjust and cruel if a citizen were smitten beside his wife or a child smitten beside its mother; it was unjust to speak untruthfully. The early Egyptian believed that justice "was born before strife of voice, blasphemy, and conflict arose"; and that sky and earth were glad when justice was done. He believed his god to be nationally just, that is, impartial as far as his people were concerned. The pharaoh was the god's true representative, and each man's virtue was a reflection of the justice of the pharaoh.

The word *nfr*, written with a sign which resembles a small musical instrument, meant originally "that which is pleasing". But there is no reason to doubt that it had as well a moral connotation. For example, the monarch Henku of the Fifth Dynasty causes those who pass by his tomb to be addressed thus: "O all ye people of the Cerastes-Mountain; O ye great lords of other nomes, who will pass by this tomb, I, Henku, tell good things." Then he goes on

to relate the "good things". He says: "I give bread to all the hungry . . . I clothed him who was naked . . . I never oppressed one in possession of his property . . . I spake that which was good, never was there one fearing because of one stronger than he . . . I speak no lie, for I was one beloved of his father, praised of his mother, excellent in character to his brother, and amiable to his sister." The definition of "good" here is sufficient for any moralist.

A clear distinction was made between "good" and "evil". The word for evil, *dwt*, is written with the sign for a mountain, the probable idea being that "evil" is associated with a more or less mysterious and fearful place, the home of evil gods. "Evil" is that which a bad god does, and is that which a bad man does. The many protests against having said "aught evil" and their associations with deeds such as those described in the preceding paragraph are eloquent of the content of the Egyptian word *dwt*. Moreover, there is another word which is translated "bad", namely *wsf*, but which is usually used in a physical and ceremonial sense. The word *dwt* was sometimes used in a ceremonial way, but there is no doubt about its moral connotation.

The gods are the source not only of good and evil, but also of "that which is loved and that which is hated." The word *mry*, to love, is contrasted with *msdy*, to hate, in the same connection as the word *htp*, peace, is contrasted with *hbn*, guilt. The content of the Egyptian word *mry*, because of its association with "good" and its contrast with "hate", may truly be said to be a moral one.

Trusting to the accuracy of the above interpretation of these Egyptian words, we find that family love, in Egypt, being moral, and being, as we have seen above, the family ideal, was the moral ideal of Egyptian family life. The social ideal in Egypt is expressed by the words "good", "right", "just". Generosity, kindness, goodness, even to animals, and truthfulness, were the admiration of the Egyptian. Kheti II, an early nomarch, said: "When the land was in need I maintained the city . . . I allowed the citizen to carry away for himself grain; and his wife, the widow and her son. I remitted all imposts which I found counted by my fathers. . . . I was kind to the cow . . . " Justice, both legal and commercial, was demanded, and democratic ideas were beginning to develop. And the ideal was a moral one, as we have seen by our study of the connotation of "good", "right", and "just". The international ideal was peace, and, being the ideal of a peace-loving people, it was a moral ideal. The transcendental ideal was truth, justice, love, and obedience. The gods were the source and fountain of truth and justice, they were models of righteousness, and they were loved and obeyed. That they were feared, we may assume; that ceremony and pure magic played a great rôle in Egyptian life, there is no question; and that love and obedience often were the result of fear, we have no reason to doubt; but that the gods were the champions of justice and objects of love and obedience, we have much reason to believe. The ideal was unquestionably moral. The personal ideal was to be pleasing to one's family and friends, and its

moral quality is revealed by the association therewith of excellence of character.

The ideal became to the Egyptians an existence of moral worth, without flaw, clear, pure, shining, golden worth. Very few, of course, ever attained the ideal. Very few in any age attain it. But the goal is none the less noble; the aspiration none the less worthy. The actual accomplishment may have been an issue of useful work; for many men whose thoughts have not all been true, whose feelings have not all been noble, whose purposes have not all been high, have nevertheless been the great and good servants of their kind. The father of a wholesome family, the head of an honest business, the sowers and reapers, manufacturers, physicians, jurists, educators, and priests may be found here. There may be few absolutely perfect apples in a barrel, but a great many that are useful.

But comparatively few may have attained even this goal. Yet there would be a place left for those who aim at the highest, who mean well, who pursue with a sad sincerity a lofty ideal. The majority of ourselves as well as of the ancient Egyptians belongs to this class. The majority of those whom we respect and love belongs here. St. Paul places himself in this class, when he tells of the goal to which he aspires. And he has hallowed the whole order. Those who make no pretense to perfection, who are seekers after truth, faint yet persevering, baffled but not defeated, like a wave of the sea, ever renewing its onward march, these belong to this class. The weather is not always fine, the sun rises every day intend-

ing to shine; but the clouds gather and defeat him, the storms beset him, and nullify his intentions.

But in Egypt as well as elsewhere there were many who did not even intend to do better. There are many such in all ages and in all lands. Yet they must be considered, for they all have that indestructible capacity for worth, for usefulness, for pursuit, and for service which is characteristic of all human beings. Below that no man can sink. He always has the capacity. It is what differentiates him from the brute. Just as an eye is made to see with, so the soul is made for worth. It is the image of God in man.

The word for evil, discussed above, namely *dwt*, must be distinguished from another word which is usually translated "evil", namely *mr-t*, but which in reality means "sickness" or evil in the sense of physical suffering. The former word, like the word *bta* which means evil in the sense of crime, is used in a moral sense. In the Inscriptions of Siut, it is said: "the wicked saw it, . . . he put not eternity before him, he looked not to the future, he saw evil (*bta*)." This "evil" the early Egyptian opposed and hated. Again and again in the Pyramid Texts, one protests against the imputation of "evil" to him, and recommends the avoidance of "evil".

Another word for "evil" or "bad" is *byn*. Its determinative would rather indicate "meanness". The same is true of the word for "lie", namely *grg*, as well as for the general word for "sin", namely *ysf-t*. The fundamental idea being that sin in general, in-

cluding badness and lying, is small, little, mean. The determinative is a small bird, a sparrow.

The Egyptian considered moral evil, in general, to consist in the doing of wrong and in lying. In his family life these defects were barred as thoroughly as possible. In social life, injustice was considered the greatest moral evil. But harsh and needlessly severe punishments were tolerated. In international relations, war was undesirable although not reckoned evil. In transcendental affairs, impiety was the moral evil, although anthropomorphism, magic, and human sacrifice were customary and legal, and therefore not considered morally evil. In personal relations, impiety and cruelty were especially condemned.

The ancient Egyptians had no theory of the origin of evil other than that evil as well as everything else came from the gods, who created evil as well as good.

In early Egyptian literature there is no evidence that the Egyptians speculated about freewill and predestination. It would seem that their anthropomorphism and Emperor-worship were too real to allow room for any predestination ideas. The gods were not far-off beings, who, at the beginning of things, determined destinies, but they were ever present, super-human beings who lived and moved in the present. Man's destinies were in the hands of the gods, but they were being shaped in the present. It would seem, therefore, that the early Egyptians believed in the reality of a freedom of the will. Their many exhortations to avoid evil and to do good show that they believed in the power of making decisions, in changing courses of action, and in entering upon

new experiences. There was, therefore, probably no mental conflict about the question of the compatibility or incompatibility of freewill and predestination. They believed that the gods created evil as well as good, but they continually boasted of having themselves avoided the one and encompassed the other.

By the time of the Middle Kingdom, however, the idea of predestination had arisen, and it developed ever more and more afterwards. The word *shay*, meaning "destiny", now became common, and the idea is often found, especially in the story of Sinuhe, where there occur such expressions as "Is god ignorant of what is decreed with regard to him?"; "Oh! all ye gods who predestined that I should flee"; "The god who predestined me to this flight drew me". The term occurs in the inscription of the high-priest Merire of the reign of Ikhnaton, and in the inscriptions of Amasis. In late Egyptian times the idea was personified as the deity Shay, which appeared in the form of a serpent.

The Egyptian had progressed considerably in the art of "bringing into captivity every thought". His self-consciousness made him aware of his freedom to think, at least, just what he pleased. No one was capable of enslaving that faculty, and it was just that power which had more than anything else to do with the marvellous heights to which Egyptian moral thinking had attained; and not only thinking but action and accomplishment, for thought is truly "the rudder of human action", and the seed of human conduct.

Moral sanctions may be external or internal. Ex-

ternal moral sanctions are low, internal moral sanctions are high. In other words, external sanctions are not "moral", while internal ones are. An external sanction for an action is utilitarian only and has reference primarily to individual comfort and advantage. If a good deed is done because of public opinion, or in order to be the object of a corresponding good deed, or to avoid punishment, or to be revered by posterity, or to enjoy a good burial, or even to gain the assurance of prosperity in the next world, it is an external sanction and cannot be called "morally" good. The early Egyptian had an unshakable faith in the future. The resurrection and immortality of Osiris were looked upon as a kind of assurance of the resurrection and immortality of every individual. But his idea of the future was that of an existence in the sky (Pyramid Texts) where life would be somewhat as it was in this world. His desire was that it might go well with him in the presence of the great god, just as in this life. There he would live for ever.

On the other hand, an internal sanction for an action is moral. An internal sanction is the joy and pleasure of doing what is right; the doing of what was pleasing to the gods and to men. If this be so, the ancient Egyptian figured on "moral" sanctions in action. He loved to assert that he was a "doer of that which pleased all men"; he believed that he would be justified by his good deeds, and that his worthiness was deemed valuable in the sight of the gods; he was confident that the wicked would not stand the moral test which awaited those who passed

into the next world; and that even the gods must "be justified before Geb". In short, the Egyptian considered the triumph of the righteous cause of Horus over Set as typical of the triumph of right over wrong in individual life, and that the doing of good and justice was a joy forever. In his own way, he believed that life depended upon character here as well as in the future, where righteousness would be built. The ferryman to the great beyond would receive only those of whom it could be said "there is no evil which he has done".

To sum up, it will be well to review the main features of Egyptian morals, and to make an estimate of them. In making this estimate we must carefully distinguish between the nation and the individual. Our standard in judging the nation must be the morals of our own time, but the individual must be judged in the light of the customs and laws of ancient Egypt.

In our study of the customs and laws of the ancient Egyptians as a nation we have noticed certain defects. Their idea of God as a rule was a very anthropomorphic one. Their gods were created and died; they married and suffered, and they intrigued and were coerced, just like human beings. They accepted human sacrifices, and magic words could control them; they were local and national. The punishment for blasphemy was excessive. In family life, polygamy was permissible, and concubinage was common; in social life, punishments were very severe and slavery and forced labour were legal; and in international affairs, cruelty to captives was common.

On the other hand, we have learned how devoted the Egyptians were to their gods and how sure they were of the love, righteousness, truth, and justice of the gods. The fundamental principle in family life was equality and love; in social relationships, justice and kindness were always admired and encouraged, and the growth of a real spirit of democracy is noticeable; in international affairs, the ideal was peaceful trade; and in personal life, goodness was at a premium.

The moral ideals of the Egyptians were: love and equality in family affairs; truth, goodness, and justice in social relationship; peace in international affairs; reverence, love, and obedience in transcendental life; and goodness in personal relationship. These were ideals, which were, however, not always attained. Moral evil was considered to be the opposite of these ideals; and a man possessed the power of choosing good or bad without being predestined to either. Sanction for right conduct was really "moral", although external or utilitarian motives were not absent.

The individual Egyptian judged in the light of his own time and controlled by heredity, environment, and social tradition, has impressed us as a person singularly devoted to his gods and to his family within the limited sphere of his ideals; generous and just to his fellow men, although recognizing slavery and forced labour as legal institutions; peace-loving, and capable of being appealed to by lofty and unselfish ideals.

Finally, we have learned the Egyptians to have

been, as a people, devoted to goodness, truth, and justice, though labouring under the limitations of their time. Their civilization was remarkably high, though limited by imperfect customs, such as polygamy, slavery, forced labour, excessive cruelty, and unworthy ideas of divinity. But there is nothing to show that the Egyptian, as an individual, controlled by the customs and ideas of his time, was lacking in the conception of moral principles. On the contrary, considering the limitations of his time, he cannot be too highly praised.

The high moral plane upon which the Egyptians had raised themselves was the result of moral contest, the outcome of moral processes. Their long history of development, covering a period of nearly four thousand years, was not merely a "sea of glass", calm, clear, placid, the type of repose, rest, and peace; but it was "mingled with fire", with the power of searching, testing, and consuming. The result was a moral repose mingled with struggle; peace, rest, and achievement with the power of trial and suffering yet alive and working within it. This character would have perhaps continued until the present day had it not been for the overwhelmingly disintegrating forces of dead conservatism which had caught Egyptian civilization in its grip and never relinquished its hold until more progressive and virile peoples one by one destroyed the very foundations upon which Egyptian culture had been built. The conservatism of the Egyptians themselves, together with Assyrian arms, Persian conquest, Greek progressiveness, and Roman virility, was the virus

which rendered innocuous and powerless the most magnificent civilization of the ancient world.

Yet Egypt is not dead—it never will be. Her mighty culture has permeated the Western world; her literature, art, and architecture remain the wonder of the ages. She still retains a fascination which is irresistible; and year by year devoted pilgrims of religion, art, and culture are proud to do her reverence.

## VII

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## 104      *Religious and Moral Ideas in Egypt*

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# INDEX

## A

*Ab*, 49.  
*Amon*, 14.  
     *Amon cycl.*, 38f.  
*Anat*, 21.  
*Anher*, 15.  
 Animal-headed deities, 16f.  
*Anubis*, 75.  
*Apis bull*, 16.  
*Apop*, 17.  
*Ap-uat*, 15.  
*Astarte*, 20.

## B

*Ba*, 49.  
*Baal*, 21.  
*Bes*, 21.  
*Bta*, 95.  
*Byn*, 95.

## C

Chronology  
     Old Kingdom, 1.  
     Middle Kingdom, 2.  
     Empire, 2.  
     Tanite-Amonite Period, 3.  
     Libyan Period, 3.  
     Nubian Period, 3.  
     Restoration, 3.  
 Commerce, 84.

## D

*Dedun*, 21.  
 Deification, 13, 20.  
*Dewat*, 17f.  
 Divine Kings, 19.  
*Dwt*, 92, 95.

## E

Estimate of morals, 99ff.  
 Evil, origin of, 96.

## F

Family, 80f.  
 Feasts, 63f.  
 Filial love, 81.  
 Foreign deities, 21.  
 Freewill, 96f.

## G

*Geb*, 12.  
 God, idea of, 12, 42f.  
 Gods, in human form, 18f.  
     nature of, 87.  
     source of truth, 87.  
*Grg*, 95.

## H

Hapi, 12.  
 Hathors, 14.  
*Hbn*, 92.  
 Heliopolis, theology of, 38.  
 Henotheism, 43.  
 Herihor, 35.  
*Hn-ntr*, 60.  
 Homses, 14.  
*Htp*, 92.

## I

*Ikh*, 49.  
 Ikhnaton, 29, 41f.  
     Ikhnaton's theology, 30ff.  
 Immortality, 77f.  
 Individualism, 88f.  
 Isis, 37, 75.

## J

Judgment, 75f.  
 Justice, 83.

## K

*Ka*, 49.  
*Khat*, 49.  
*Khaybet*, 49.  
 Khenti-Amentiu, 23.  
 Khepri, 37.  
*Kherheb*, 61.  
 Khnum, 13.  
*Khu*, 49.  
 King, 81f.

## L

Labourers, 84.  
 Law, 83.  
 Life after death, Osirian.  
     71ff; Solar, 70f.

## M

*Maât*, 20, 90f.  
 Magic, 52f, 64f.  
 Marriage, 81.  
 Mediator, King as, 58ff.  
 Min, 14, 20.  
 Mnevis bull, 16.  
 Monotheism, 43ff; practical,  
     28.  
 Moral consciousness, 85f;  
     determinants, 80;  
     ideal, 93f; sanctions, 97f.  
*Mr-t*, 95.  
*Mry*, 92.  
*Msdy*, 92.

## N

Nephthys, 75.  
*Nfr*, 91f.  
 Nile, deified, 17; worship, 23.  
 Nut, 12.

## O

Offerings, 61.  
 Osiris, 15, 23, 27; as Nile, 23.

## P

Peace, 86.  
 Phoenix, 16.  
 Pity, 87f.  
 Plain of Aalu, 73f.  
 Plutarch's story of Osiris, 24.  
 Prayer, 66.  
 Predestination, 96f.  
 Priests, 61f.  
 Property, 83f.  
 Ptah, 20, 38.

**R**

Rā, 12, 26.  
 Ram, 16.  
*Ran*, 49.  
 Rert, 13.  
 Resheph, 21.  
 Resurrection, 77.

**S**

Sahu, 49.  
*Sakhem*, 49.  
 Sati, 21.  
 Scepticism, 66, 88.  
 Sebek, 13.  
*Sed*—festival, 64.  
 Serapis, 36.  
 Service, divine, 60f.  
 Shawabti, 69.  
*Shay*, 97.  
 Sin, 53f.

Slaves, 84.  
 Social morality, 84f.  
 Society, 81ff.  
 Suffering, 53f.  
 Sun-worship, 21f.  
 Sutekh, 21.

**T**

Temple, 62f.  
 Transmigration, 76f.  
 Triads, 39.

**Y**

*Ysf-t*, 95.

**W**

*Wab*, 61.  
*Wag*—feast, 64.  
 Wars, 86.  
*Wsf*, 92.





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