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“Truth can never be confirmed enough,  
Though doubts did ever sleep.”

SHAKSPERE.

Wahrheitsliebe zeigt sich darin, daß man überall das Gute zu finden und zu schützen weiß.

GÖTTE.

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## THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS.

THE probable influence of Egyptian thought on the development of Christian dogma by the early Fathers of the Church, no less than its undoubted influence, in an earlier age, on the teaching of Moses, renders the subject of interest to all, though its importance is not yet generally recognised. It will therefore be admitted that we can no longer ignore, or esteem of no consequence to ourselves, the religious ideas which prevailed in the ancient civilisation of Egypt for millenniums before the Christian era.

When the facts are few it is comparatively easy to construct a religion of the remote past. It is not difficult to make a theory which shall take all the facts into account, and be contradicted by none of them.

But, if the material to be constructed into a theological system resembles the vast number of pieces which it is required to work up into an elaborate pattern in mosaic, the task is a much more difficult one; and so we find with the religious ideas of the ancient Egyptians, the mass of material is so great and our ways of thinking so different, that it is by no means easy for us to reconstruct their system of theology.

Specialists, however, have devoted themselves with such enthusiasm and perseverance to the study of those papyri, monumental and other inscriptions, which the time-defying climate of Egypt has preserved, that now it is interesting and profitable for us to enter upon the results of their labours, though any day discoveries may be made which will again modify the views which the ablest of Egyptologists have as yet been able to give us. Professor Petrie says:

“The discordances and contradictions in any religion are one of the most important evidences of its history. The ruling idea of most religious beliefs is the need of accounting for something and of explaining the mysteries of life. Hence, beliefs which explain the unseen in a totally different way and with different ideals will not be needlessly produced at a single source. Some new influence must be at work to cause diversity; and when two views live on side by side with partial fusion, it is (like instances of two mythologies) an evidence of a mixture of peoples who had held varying opinions.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt.* Prof. Petrie, p. 48.

To understand, then, the complexity and contradiction of religious thought in Egypt at the dawn of history,<sup>1</sup> it is necessary to look for the origin or origins of the earliest inhabitants of the country.<sup>2</sup> The earliest monumental evidence points to three distinct races; and a fourth, the negro race, is known to have mixed with the Egyptian. The negroes came from the south; those races indicated by the monuments are a Libyan people from the west, Mesopotamian from Asia, and a race of Punites<sup>3</sup> probably from Arabia and the African shore of the Red Sea. Whether we can adopt Professor Petrie's theory that the negroes were the earliest immigrants, and that in course of time they and the Libyans fought for supremacy, to be followed by the Mesopotamians, and lastly by the Punite race, to whom he attributes the founding of dynastic rule in Egypt; or whether we find the evidence insufficient to prove this, it is certain that all these elements *were* in the country in what to us are, as yet, prehistoric times, and it is likely, moreover, that in some districts one race would predominate over the others.

From remote antiquity the country has been known as the "two lands," or, as it is still called, "Upper and Lower Egypt." Since the earliest times its main characteristics have scarcely changed—Lower Egypt has been, and is, the country in and around the Delta of the Nile; Upper Egypt, the Nile Valley to the north of the First Cataract.<sup>4</sup> The whole country was divided into districts which the Greeks called nomes, of which there were forty-two in number. Though occasionally two districts might become one for a time, they were usually divided again, so that, on the whole, this number may be taken as constant. There is good reason to suppose that, before there were kings in Egypt, each district was ruled over by a nomarch; and, even after the kings arose, each nome had its little system of government, its chief god and the temple in the capital. The king was the supreme ruler, and, as in the time of our so-called heptarchy, the ruling dynasty sometimes came from one district, sometimes from another.

History shows that mixture of race inevitably results in fusion of religion, and that the religion of one age is the superstition of the next.

Even the Israelites, so remarkable for their monotheism, when they mixed with other races embraced their gods also; and polytheism was only finally arrested among the chosen people by the most rigid racial separation instituted by Ezra, since when the Jews have been the most distinct and exclusive race in the civilised world.

In our own country and at the present day we find superstitions—the fossilised religious beliefs of our ancestors—still powerful.

<sup>1</sup> The first historical king in Egypt was Mena, B.C. 4400.—Budge, *The Nile*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Petrie, *History of Egypt*, vol. i. chap. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The Phœnicians were another branch of the Punites.—Petrie, *Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt*, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> The Nile Valley in Upper Egypt is over 500 miles long and varies in width from 15 to 30 miles.

Some very intelligent people are unhappy if the sun does not shine on a bride; others think that rain falling at a funeral somehow adds to the happiness of the dead, and to how many more is it not much more disturbing to their equanimity to sit down thirteen at dinner, than is a breach of the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount to a tender conscience?

The races that came into Egypt brought their religion with them. The origin of a few of the deities known at the beginning of history can be traced to one or other of these races, but of the source of many of them we are at present ignorant.

We find in Egypt traces of tree-worship<sup>1</sup> and stone-worship, both said to be very primitive forms of religion and found in many parts of the world. Whether this was the survival of the religious beliefs of the aboriginal inhabitants which remained to be more or less incorporated into the religions of the immigrants, or whether the survivals of this earlier form of worship were already found in some or all of the religions brought into Egypt, we cannot tell. We must remember that the Egyptians were the most conservative of peoples, and that for fear of losing any truth, they embodied in their religion doctrines which to a logical mind would exclude one another—doctrines which even in the state of knowledge of that time must have appeared contradictory to a thoughtful Egyptian; but his mystic tendencies enabled him to get over the difficulties and to rest in the hope that all would be made clear and brought into harmony in the future world, to which every pious Egyptian looked forward as the sequence of the life on earth.

We must remember, too, that there were at *least* four systems of religion brought into the country and more or less amalgamated even before history begins,<sup>2</sup> so that we shall be more inclined to have patience with the manifest contradictions in their religious ideas, and not expect to fully understand what the Egyptians *themselves* could not have comprehended in any real meaning of the word.

We find each nome has its chief god, whom the people of that district designate the Creator, and to whom they owe chief allegiance, although they are quite willing to associate with him, as lesser deities, the gods of the neighbouring districts: so that the chief god of one district may reappear as an inferior god of another.

Attached to the temple of the god in the capital was the college of priests appointed to minister in it. It might number only five, or, as in the case of the larger colleges, many hundreds. Priestesses were also sometimes associated with priests in the sacred office. If a wealthy man settled in a new nome he might build a temple to his god, and in time, owing to the wealth and power of

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 155-9; Mrs. Isabel Philpot, *The Sacred Tree*, pp. 9, 10, 25, 45; Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, Second Series, pp. 63, 83.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* Before B.C. 4400, shown by pyramid inscriptions of 3rd and 4th dynasties.

its adherents, the new cult might supersede the old, or exist beside it.

Or in the case of war, as all wars were looked upon as religious and under the direct influence of the gods, the gods of the conquering people would have proved themselves the stronger, therefore the better gods, and worthy of supreme worship: so that the chief gods might be changed, the deposed deities being still retained as lesser gods.

This would explain the widespread influence of some of the cults and the almost local influence of others.

"The Egyptian Temple was dedicated, as a rule, to a single deity, who inhabited the sanctuary in corporate form; to him the chief offerings were made, and in his honour the great local festivals were celebrated."<sup>1</sup>

This is shown by inscriptions on the walls of the temples, and from them also we learn that the chief god was not generally regarded as standing alone. Generally there were three, standing in the relation to one another of the chief god, his wife and son.

According to the Egyptians, though the gods lived longer than men, death was ultimately their destiny, and when in old age he died, the god was succeeded by his son, who in his turn became the "husband of his mother" (a phrase often met with on the monuments), and the father of the new divine son who should one day in his turn replace him. Thus, to quote Professor Wiedemann,

"the son became the father, and the Egyptian texts could speak of the gods as eternal; for so soon as the elder god vanished he would be succeeded by a divine personality precisely similar. In this sense also the god was self-begotten, being father to the son who was as himself."<sup>2</sup>

To carry out the idea properly the goddess should in turn have become old and died; but she is so evidently introduced only for the purpose of being the wife of the existing and the mother of the coming god that the Egyptians did not seem to think it necessary to account further for her.

With this chief cycle or triad of deities were generally associated eneads of lesser gods; though supposed to number nine or multiples of nine, the actual number did not always correspond to that ideal. At the Cataract the triad consisted of two goddesses associated with the chief deity, they were goddesses worshipped in the neighbourhood, and for this reason probably brought into the triad. For the sake of simplicity, it is perhaps best to consider only the two most important cults at any length—the sun-gods and the Osirian cycle. The first, Professor Petrie attributes to the Asiatic immigrants, and the Osirian gods to the Libyan peoples. Besides these, he attributes animal-worship to the negro race, which worship became modified in

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Wiedemann, *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 104.

course of time when the gods were supposed to become incarnate in their favourite animals. Professor Wiedemann, on the other hand, holds that animals were held sacred and worshipped *only* on account of their being the living habitation of the god; and though the god would only reside in one animal at a time, others of the like kind were still held sacred, in case the animal should be killed at a time when it was pleasing the god to dwell in it.

The Egyptian mind was intensely realistic. The Egyptians could not conceive of the existence of an immaterial soul or spirit; they thought it could only live by means of a body, so that it was quite in accord with their ideas that the god could only come and dwell with and hold communion with men by becoming incarnate in some animal; and Professor Wiedemann points out that it was this animal in whom the deity was supposed to dwell who occupied the sanctuary in the temple dedicated to the god, and who by his movements answered the questions put to it by the king or priests. The god in his corporeal form could, of course, only exist at one place; if there were other temples dedicated to him, the place in the sanctuary would be occupied by his statue.

Professor Petrie also points out that gods and goddesses whose sole motive of existence would seem to be the embodiment of abstract ideas, and who have no family history, are due to the latest prehistoric immigration—the Punite race; of these, Maat, the goddess of truth, law, and order, is a very good example.

Of the sun-gods, RA is the chief. He was the self-begotten, self-existent one—the creator. Thus he was regarded at Heliopolis, the great centre of his worship; though another legend states that he was begotten of NU, the primeval waters. (Some texts associate a goddess with NU, and others associate a goddess with RA, but in both cases the name is merely a feminine form of the god's name, NU-T RA-T.) According to the Heliopolis legend, RA first existed alone, then he became the father of the twins, SHU and TEFNUT, who were somehow identified with the constellation, “the twins” in the Zodiac. SHU married his twin sister and they became the parents of SET, the earth, and NÜT, the sky.<sup>1</sup>

The earth and sky were at first united. SHU, or space, is in some texts represented as forcibly separating SEB and NÜT to make a path for the sun, and in the pictures which graphically illustrate this event he is seen lifting up NÜT, who is represented as a woman, her body studded with stars forming the heavens, with her hands and feet extended to the earth to support her and form the four pillars of the sky. The idea of the four pillars of the sky runs through many legends, of several of which M. Maspero gives an account in his *Dawn of Civilisation*.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Greek idea that Time (Kronos) was the child of Earth and Heaven, they themselves being the children of Chaos.

SEB is seen lying on the ground in ineffectual protest at this separation, and the inequalities of the earth's surface have been ascribed to his writhings and contortions.

Except for their co-operation in the work of creation, these deities, with the exception of RA, are comparatively insignificant; though in the legend which makes SEB and NŪT the parents of OSIRIS, ISIS, NEPHTHYS, and SET, we see an attempt to blend the two religious cults. Of the various legends relating to the creation of man, perhaps the most interesting is that of KHNUM, the chief god of the cataracts, who is represented with a potter's wheel, modelling man out of clay.<sup>1</sup>

He, too, in some texts is set forth as "he who created all that is, who formed that which is existent, the father of fathers, the mother of mothers;" . . . "he who constructed men, who made the gods, who was father in the beginning"; . . . "the creator of the heaven, the earth, the underworld, the water, the hills"; . . . "he who formed fowl, fish, wild animals, and all creeping things, in pairs, male and female."

Sun-worship existed in Egypt from prehistoric times, and it held its place in popular favour until the latest period of Egyptian history. The obelisks which stood at the entrance to the temples were dedicated to the sun.

It was believed the god RA, in his boat, sailed round the world, appearing in the east in the morning, and that in the evening he sailed behind the western hills, through the underworld, emerging again in the east. That would seem to have been the reason why, with two exceptions, the great burial-grounds of ancient Egypt are on the western side of the Nile, for they hoped that the dead might go with RA into the other world.

At Heliopolis two embodiments of the sun-god were worshipped: the obelisk, which may be traced to Asiatic influence; and the phoenix, which was a purely Egyptian idea. The phoenix was the symbol of resurrection, and the sun may be held to have died daily at evening, the resurrection taking place every morning.

Professor Wiedemann points out that the fact that two embodiments of the sun were worshipped at Heliopolis

"shows that this deity was not considered as one and indivisible, but could be resolved into separate parts, to each of which an independent existence might be ascribed. Originally each form of the deity would have its own separate sphere of activity, but gradually one encroached upon the domain of the other to such an extent that, though the ideal significance of each was still radically different, in other respects their natures and functions were almost identical."<sup>2</sup>

The more important of these forms are: RA himself, who is generally represented as a man with a hawk's head, over which is the solar disk, enclosed in the coil of the uræus, that serpent being

<sup>1</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 25.

symbolic of power over life and death. All hawk-headed deities are solar deities.

HORUS, next in importance, is the name by which originally two entirely distinct deities were signified, HORUS the sun-god, and HORUS the son of OSIRIS and ISIS; "the attempted blending of the two deities was a subsequent development." HORUS, the sun-god, the Greeks identified with their APOLLO; the son of OSIRIS and ISIS is the HARPOCRATES of the Greeks.

HORUS was worshipped in different forms in different cities or nomes; but, in course of time, these forms were worshipped as distinct divinities. There was "HORUS the elder," worshipped at Letopolis; "HORUS of the two eyes"—*i.e.*, the sun and moon; in later times he was changed from a solar to a lunar deity; HORUS, lord of not seeing, he was supposed to be blind and to symbolise solar eclipse.

HORUS of the two horizons (*i.e.*, of the east and of the west) is the HARMACHIS of the Greeks; he was easily and frequently blended with RA, and was then entitled "The great God, the Lord of Heaven, RA HARMACHIS."

Then there was the golden HORUS, primarily the god of the morning sun, showing himself in the glorious dawn, so that, in some sense, he may be considered the counterpart of the Golden HATHÔR,

"the goddess of the western sky, which received the dying sun in the glow of sunset, and hence was supposed likewise to receive the dead on their decease. In the latter capacity she was usually represented as emerging from the mountain of the west."

"HORUS, the bull, is the planet Saturn; the Red HORUS is the planet Mars; HORUS, the opener of that which is secret, is the planet Jupiter." . . . "Hence it would seem that the three planets were regarded as emanations of the sun."<sup>1</sup>

Besides these there were some other forms of HORUS.

There was also KHEPERA, he who is (in process of) becoming, strictly speaking, god of the rising sun; the scarabæus beetle was his symbol and usually formed his head (the beetle was also the hieroglyphic ideogram for the word kheper—to become).

TUM, the TOMOS of the Greeks, was, properly speaking, the evening sun. The ATEN or sun's disk worship found favour for a short period, but more generally it was associated with the worship of RA, RA in his ATEN. Khuenaten, one of the Egyptian kings, attempted, and for a time succeeded in a measure, in establishing the worship of the sun's disk as the religion of the State, but later its adherents were persecuted and it was regarded as a heresy.<sup>2</sup>

The winged sun disk was supposed to protect from harm, and especially from destruction; hence it may be seen carved over the doorways of the temples, sometimes also over entrances to tombs and

<sup>1</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 28 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 77.



on various stelæ; one of the latter has three winged sun disks placed one beneath the other, as if to be trebly sure of safety.

The legend of the winged sun disk states that one of the gods took this form, and fought with and conquered the enemies of RA.

The Sphinx is also supposed to have the same protecting power. The god who acted as guardian to RA during the hours of the night and who is represented as going forth against the enemies of RA, is generally shown as a sphinx with the body of a lion; hence the avenues of sphinxes or the single sphinx set before to guard the temple and the god from the approach of any enemy. In tombs sphinxes were placed in the capacity of guardians, especially in later times. The sphinx was one of those imaginary animals the Egyptian dearly loved to picture as inhabiting the desert, and in whose real existence either in this world or the next he devoutly believed. It had the body of a quadruped with a human head, and was supposed to be a favourite incarnation of RA when he wanted to protect his friends. This is the idea embodied in the gigantic sphinx at Gizeh, one of the oldest monuments in Egypt, having been repaired by the builders of the second Pyramid; and there it still stands as guardian to the Pyramid necropolis. It faces the east or rising sun, and was itself supposed to be the incarnation of the rising sun, indicated by its name—RA HARMACHIS; also it bears the name KHEPERA. The avenue of the so-called ram-headed sphinxes at Karnak are not true sphinxes. The ram was the animal in whom the god AMEN RA of Karnak was supposed to incarnate himself, and the avenue is really a series of rams' statues of the god, who would possibly perform the same protective office for the temple as the true sphinxes.<sup>1</sup>

RA, besides being the sun-god, was regarded by the Egyptians as having been the first king of Egypt, but in times so remote that the phrase "the like has not happened since the time of RA" was used to denote anything not known in the memory of man. The kings of Egypt traced their descent to the divine RA, and always designate themselves "Son of the Sun." The *people* held with such tenacity to the real existence of RA as the first king, that the priests were unable to eradicate the belief, though in later times the favour given to OSIRIS, as the archetype of kings, caused the honour to be shared, for "though OSIRIS was supposed to have ruled as a man over men only, the dominion of RA was relegated to a time when gods still sojourned among men and RA bore rule over both."<sup>2</sup>

The fullest account of the Osirian legend is given by Plutarch in his *Isis and Osiris*.

Put briefly, the story is that RA fancied the sky (NÛT) was his wife, and when he found she had married the earth (SET) without

<sup>1</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

his consent, he was very angry, and punished her by refusing to allow her to give birth to her children on any day in the year.

The year then consisted of twelve months of thirty days—*i.e.*, 360 days. THOTH, the moon-god and measurer of time, took pity on NÛT, and playing draughts with the goddess SELENE: he won from her one-seventieth of every day in the year, with which he made five new days, over which RA had no power, and on these five days OSIRIS, ISIS, NEPHTHYS, SET, and HORUS were born, thus accounting simultaneously for the origin of these deities, and the readjustment of the nominal to the actual year, so important in an agricultural country.<sup>1</sup>

OSIRIS and SET were enemies and had frequent quarrels. At last SET vanquished his foe by trickery. Having caused the measurements of OSIRIS to be taken exactly, he had a very beautiful coffin made according to these measurements, and at a great banquet which he gave, and at which OSIRIS was an invited guest, he offered the coffin as a prize to the one whom it would fit. When OSIRIS stepped in, SET quickly fastened down the lid and cast the coffin into the Nile, whence it was borne to the sea.

Some time after the coffin was washed up on the shore, and, after various adventures too long to relate here, it was found by ISIS, who opened it; SET, in his hunting, then came upon it, tore the body into fourteen pieces and scattered them over the country; this accounts for the many shrines erected to OSIRIS, each one of which is supposed to denote the burial-place of one of these parts, but at least two of these shrines profess to mark the burial-place of the head, and there are legs enough to supply several men.<sup>2</sup> ISIS, with the aid of HORUS, collected the parts, and OSIRIS eventually became the god of the Dead.

We see here an allegory of the warfare between good and evil, OSIRIS representing good, his name being UNNEFER—the good being—and SET symbolising evil; evil constantly triumphs, but good wins in the long run. Here we see too a blending of two myths, for HORUS, the sun-god, is light, eventually triumphing over SET, darkness, though the warfare involves a daily conquest of light by darkness and *vice versa*.<sup>3</sup> The quarrel between OSIRIS and SET has also been held to symbolise the encroachment of the desert upon the fertility of the Nile, and here again the good god is eventually successful in holding his country against the desert.

Professor Petrie<sup>4</sup> suggests that these deities were the gods of different tribes of Libyans, who fought against each other. Is it not likely, then, that in still *earlier* times, before they became gods, they really lived; that OSIRIS was originally a king, or ruler

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Norman Lockyer, *Dawn of Astronomy*, chap. 24.

<sup>2</sup> There were thirty-six shrines dedicated to the remains of OSIRIS.

<sup>3</sup> Again we see a fusion of myths in the legend to account for an eclipse, *i.e.*, that SET tore out and swallowed the eye of HORUS, but was ultimately compelled by RA to give it up again.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion and Conscience of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 57, 77.

of a tribe, and that SET, possibly the chief of another tribe, was his enemy?

The Libyans were a white race, and the followers of SET were especially indicated by the possession of red hair, which was obnoxious to the Egyptians.

The name of OSIRIS—the good being—indicated his character and the benefits conferred by him on his country.

The real existence of OSIRIS is also indicated by Professor Wiedemann. He says: "The original OSIRIS was the ideal man, or rather king, whose life was the pattern life, whose death showed how all, even the best, must die, and whose life beyond death showed, too, how by the exercise of virtue all might attain to a like continuance of a personal identity.

"Although of divine descent, OSIRIS was not supposed to have been a god while he lived,"<sup>1</sup> though in an inscription of the eighteenth dynasty he is called the creator; here probably is an evidence of his having been merged with the god RA.

A most remarkable proof of the existence of OSIRIS in this world was brought to light on the first day of this year, when M. Amélineau discovered the tomb and mummy of "UNNEFER, the Good Being," at Abydos, one of the centres of the Osirian cult. I quote some extracts from the discoverer's own notes published in an American periodical.<sup>2</sup> He says:

"Everybody who has had a little education, or has read a little, knows, or at least has heard of, the legend of OSIRIS.

"The benevolent god, benignant and charming, to whom is generally attributed the progress of civilisation in the Nile Valley, who taught his contemporaries how to cultivate the earth, to enjoy their rural pleasures, to charm their leisures and to forget their fatigues with the help of simple and touching songs, has been considered up to the present time more as a creation of the imagination than as a real mortal being."

"The part which, in the succession of centuries, the religious traditions of humanity made him play some ten thousand years ago was not calculated to increase the belief in his reality. But hereafter it will be difficult to doubt that OSIRIS, ISIS, his sister-wife, and HORUS, their son, lived in reality, and played, at least partially, the parts with which legends and traditions have credited them."

"The Egyptian texts speak very often of OSIRIS' tomb, which is designated under the name of 'staircase of the great god.' They add that the high officials that lived a short time after that epoch desired greatly to be buried near OSIRIS, who had preceded them in life and death. I discovered, on the first of January of this year, this famous staircase, and the next day I struck a monument which cannot leave any doubt as to the destination of the tomb which my excavations brought to light. This unique monument was a granite monolith in the shape of a bed, decorated with the head and legs of a lion. On this bed was lying a mummy, bearing what is known as the white crown, holding in his hands, which came out of the case, a flagellum and a pastoral cane. Near the head were two hawks, and two more were at the feet. The dead was designated by

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of Ancient Egyptians*, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblia*, April 1898.

the inscription: 'OSIRIS, the Good Being.' The hawks were labelled: 'HORUS, avenger of his father,' and the goddess Isis is also designated by her name.

"This monument is 1·70 metres in length, and about one metre in width and height. The tomb itself has the shape of a dwelling, with a courtyard in front. It contained fourteen rooms and the staircase: five rooms to the north, five to the south, and four to the east. The western face was open. The two extremities, north and south, were closed by a wall on the east side.

"On the four sides of this were a series of tombs which would number about two hundred. Moreover the necropolis, known in the country under the name of Om-el-Gaab-el-Gharby, contained the sepulchres of persons of very high rank, among them kings;"

the stelæ of which M. Amélineau discovered two years ago.

Unfortunately much of the labour of the discoverer is rendered comparatively useless, for he found "indisputable proof of the work of spoliators," and evidences of fire were not wanting; and this fact of destruction by fire has rendered sterile a great part of his labour.

During the historic period the deities of some of the foreign conquerors or settlers in Egypt were magnanimously added to the Egyptian Pantheon, such as the Asiatic gods BAAL and ASTARTE.

The main worship of the Egyptians during the Roman and Greek occupations was that of ISIS and HORUS, the worship of the former being continued at Philæ as late as the middle of the fifth century A.D., though during the Roman period the Egyptians may be said to have been a HORUS-worshipping people, regarding ISIS with veneration chiefly on account of being the mother of HORUS; "and the influence that this had on the development of Christianity was profound. We may even say that but for her presence in Egypt we should never have seen a Madonna."<sup>1</sup>

There are several ancient Egyptian books which treat of different systems of belief about the life of man after death.

The *Book of the Dead* is the oldest and best known. Some papyri state that the 64th chapter was written in the time of a king who lived B.C. 4266, and the ideas contained in it were of course generally accepted much earlier than that.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Book of the Dead*, the text-book of the Osirian faith, we are continually beset by passages and allusions which, strictly speaking, have nothing to do with the fundamental cult, and are, indeed, often in direct contradiction to its dogmas; these are in many instances taken from texts relating to the passage of the sun through the underworld.

The two chief works which relate to this passage of the sun are (1) *The Book of Knowing Duat*—i.e., the underworld—and (2) *The Book of the Gates*.

<sup>1</sup> Petrie, *Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt*, p. 46. Cf. Norman Lockyer, *Dawn of Astronomy*, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 101.

In both it is supposed that Hades is divided into twelve parts, separated from each other by twelve doors or gates, which correspond to the twelve hours during which the sun is supposed to be occupied in going through the underworld. Both texts state that a river flows through the country, on it RA in his bark floats along, the demons to be combated being stationed on either bank, and becoming more terrible as the journey advances; and in the twelve divisions are fields, which are cultivated by the pious dead, who thus are able to supply themselves with food. In Duât they are also expected to assist RA in fighting the demons who oppose him in his passage through the division in which their fields lie.

In these two books we have two distinct superstructures on the same foundation.

The idea common to both is the twelve hours' solar passage in Hades, but the separation of the hours is in the one case merely by a simple door; in the other it is a veritable fortification, through which RA himself can only pass by means of a magic formula; the demons to be vanquished and the scenes through which the solar bark passes are different in the two books.

In both texts the dwellers in the underworld are represented as in darkness, except for the one hour during which the sun passes through their division. In Duât this darkness was "only lightened by fire-spitting serpents, or by the sea of flame in which the enemies of RA were consumed."

There seems to be an indication in *The Book of Knowing Duât* that those whose knowledge of magic words was very considerable might make the passage with RA in the sun bark, and so remain ever with him, inseparable from him, and yet without loss of individuality.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of immortality for all men was plainly taught, but as plainly it was shown that only the friend of RA could hope for fields in Duât.

There are allusions in both texts to the Osirian doctrine, and in the *Book of the Gates* we have the judgment of OSIRIS introduced between the fifth and sixth hours. It differs in many respects from that given in the *Book of the Dead*, which we shall speak of presently. Here the man himself is being weighed against his deeds in the presence of OSIRIS, attended by the nine gods of his cycle.

The accompanying text declares that the enemies of OSIRIS are overthrown, and this is pictorially illustrated by THOTH in the form of a dog-headed ape, armed with a whip, driving out from the company of the blessed a hog, which stands for SET, the enemy of OSIRIS.

In the sixth hour is represented what takes place after the judgment. The righteous are seen at work in their fields, while, bound to stakes, the wicked are awaiting a punishment by fire and water which follows partially in the eighth hour.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 96.

The Egyptians found it so difficult to choose between these two conceptions of the next world that both were sometimes represented in the same tomb,<sup>1</sup> though these "Books" were not so widely used as the *Book of the Dead*.

Of the *Book of the Dead* over two hundred chapters are known to exist, but no one manuscript contains them all. Certain chapters were chosen at the discretion of the man on whose tomb or on whose mummy they were to be inscribed.<sup>2</sup> Certain chapters, too, would be chosen for the papyrus roll which was to be laid beside his mummy, so that in the other world he might refresh his memory with the words of power to overthrow his foes, if he should be so unfortunate as to forget them, or if he had unwisely not duly prepared himself for the life to come by learning them in this world.

He also prepared for his amusement in the other world by having models of his favourite games, draughts and a kind of chess being among the number; and stories, such as delighted him in this life,<sup>3</sup> written on papyrus rolls, buried with him to beguile his leisure; models of furniture that he would be likely to require were also often placed with him, that he might be spared the trouble of making them; for the Egyptians seemed to think that whatever in material form was placed beside the mummy would go with the spiritualised mummy into the other world.

But perhaps the most interesting of all were the little Ushabti figures, who were supposed to till the fields of Aalu for the deceased, so that each little figure is represented with his hoe on his shoulder and his seed-basket slung across his back.

Probably in the earliest times, when a great or rich man died, his slaves were slain so that they might go with him and continue to work for him. As time went on more humane ideas prevailed, and the model of the servant was placed by the mummy instead. Later on it was evidently considered that in death all are equal, and that, though a slave in this life, a man might be equal with the rich in the world to come, so that even a poor man had these little figures buried with him. Many amulets and charms decorated the mummy, so that if one failed to avert evil others might succeed.

Unlike the Fields of Duât, the Elysian fields were flooded with light. At death the Egyptians held that the various parts of a man that make up his soul left the body, which it was the duty of the survivors to preserve as a mummy. The brain and various parts of the body were removed and placed in jars under the guardianship of the four children of HORUS, and the process of embalming began. There was an appointed ritual and prayers for every proceeding; also for bandaging and decorating the mummy and placing it in the coffin, after which it was solemnly carried across the river to the tomb, or, if

<sup>1</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, 1st and 2nd Series.

there was no river to cross, it was symbolised by the lake attached to the temples over which the boat containing the coffin was rowed. Further ritual was observed and prayers recited, the main idea being to restore to the mummy—which they seemed to believe in some way to be spiritualised in the other world—all the senses of which death had temporarily deprived the deceased.

As long as the man was alive the various parts of his soul were united in his body, but at death they separately flew away. There was his KA—*i. e.*, his personality or spiritual double; his AB, heart; his BA, or soul; his intelligence, his name, the personification of his strength, and so on, which might again become united after the acquittal of the deceased in the Judgment Hall of OSIRIS, when the united soul again took up its abode in the glorified body, which was thenceforward called *an* OSIRIS.

The ritual of the heart is very remarkable; though removed from the body and placed in one of the canopic jars, no remains have ever been found, and this is probably due to the fact that the heart was supposed to be restored to the deceased.<sup>1</sup>

The Egyptians, who apparently did not conceive of the existence of any animal without a heart, placed a scarab, made of stone or porcelain and duly inscribed, or a vase-shaped conventional heart, in the body to prevent annihilation; if after the judgment the deceased was acquitted, the natural heart was supposed to be given back to the mummy. In some texts there is a form of prayer in which the deceased is supposed to supplicate the god to take away the heart of stone and give him back his heart of flesh.

In the well-known judgment of OSIRIS it is shown that when a man died his heart was weighed in the Hall of Justice before many witnesses, and that according to the deeds of his life he would be condemned or acquitted. There is some doubt as to what happened if the heart was found wanting—too light; some have thought it was devoured by the monster Ammit, annihilation resulting.

But if the deceased was able in the so-called “negative confession” to satisfy the forty-two assessors of the dead<sup>2</sup> he was led into the presence of OSIRIS himself, and thenceforward lived a happy life in the fields of the blessed by the banks of the celestial Nile, his life in heaven being a glorified repetition of his earthly life, than which he could conceive nothing better.

The negative confession gives us a very good idea of the high standard of morality possessed by the Egyptians. Besides the sins forbidden in the Decalogue, we find that a deceased scribe of about the time of Moses denies that he has done any wrong, and further particularises that—

“He has never eaten his heart (*i. e.*, lied) nor spoken falsehood;

<sup>1</sup> To carry out this idea it is probable the priests made away with the heart.

<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested that the number 42 corresponds to the 42 nomes.

never filched from the measures of corn, never stolen food to eat, never caused terror, never made an attack upon any man.

“He has never thought, spoken, nor done evil, never committed fraud, never blasphemed God; he has never spoken in hot anger, nor caused any to weep tears of sadness, and he has never made his ear deaf to the words of truth.”<sup>1</sup>

In funerary inscriptions, too, the dead often plead their good deeds:

“‘I did that which was right,’ says one Egyptian. ‘I hated evil; I gave bread to the hungry and water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, succour to him that was in need. I harmed not a child; I injured not a widow; there was neither beggar nor needy in my time; none were an-hungered; widows were cared for as though their husbands were alive.’”<sup>2</sup>

In spite of their mixed and contradictory theological beliefs, one cannot help admiring the moral ideal of the Egyptians.

One of the maxims of PTAH-HETEP (B.C. 3366) found in the Prisse Papyrus reminds us of the fifth commandment—“The son who hearkens to the word of his father he shall grow old thereby”—and one cannot do better than conclude with some extracts from the good advice that ANI, an Egyptian scribe, gave to his son in the thirteenth century B.C., expressing sentiments that would do honour to any father of the nineteenth century of our era:

“If a man cometh to thee for counsel, let this drive thee to books for information.”

“Consider what hath been; set before thee a correct rule of life as an example to follow. The messenger of death will come to thee as to all others to carry thee away: yea, he standeth ready.”

“Take heed with all diligence that thou woundest no man with thy words.”

“The man who, having received much, giveth little is as one who committeth an injury.”

“Whosoever speaketh evil receiveth no good.”

“When thou hast arrived at years of maturity and art married and hast a house, forget never the pains which thou hast cost thy mother, nor the care which she hath bestowed upon thee. Never give her cause to complain of thee, lest she lift up her hands to God in heaven, and He listen to her complaint.”

“Be watchful to keep silence.”<sup>3</sup>

JOSEPHINE WILLIAMS.

<sup>1</sup> Budge, *The Nile*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Wiedemann, *op. cit.* p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Budge, *The Nile*, p. 191.