

THE GOD OF EGYPT'S WISE MEN

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A RECURRENT phenomenon in the history of religions is the aggrandizement of one of the gods of a people at the expense of his compeers. Their individual titularies are transferred to him, while divine functions tend towards a concentration in him as in a factotum. In time, the mythology will be reedited, to make him appear as a first principle or, at least, as hero and protagonist in the divine adventures. In his own right, that is, in respect of the station he holds in the authentic religious tradition, he may be relatively unimportant. Marduk, for instance, was rather insignificant in comparison with the great gods of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley whom he was made to supplant.

Because men conceive the assembly of the gods on the analogy of family or court, or for some other reason, most polytheistic religions present the figure of a god who enjoys a certain transcendence over the rest. This transcendence, however, falls far short of the henotheistic exaltation just sketched, since the latter implies an usurpation of cult rights and a pushing into the background of the other members of the pantheon. Henotheism, in turn, falls far short of monotheism, for the god of monotheism has no compeers with whom to share the plenitude of divine nature and function.

Henotheism may be an early stage of decadence from a monotheistic cult. We might plausibly argue that in very early Persian religion Ahura Mazda stood alone and that only later on the awe of the people in presence of natural phenomena gave origin to the nature-gods of the Avestan pantheon. Whether a people will pass from an immoderate exaltation of one of their gods to the claim that he is the sole god, in other words, whether henotheism may be a stage of evolution towards monotheism, is a disputed question. In the present writer's judgment, the history of religions rather shows that thorough-going poly-

theism reasserted itself after the henotheistic interlude or else that the henotheistic shifted to some other god.¹

The henotheistic elements in ancient Egyptian religion, besides the interest which they hold for the comparative religionist, claim the attention of the Christian apologete. The initial premise of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* is that Akhnaton furnished Moses with the monotheism to which he converted the Hebrews. Competent Egyptologists, however, abhor so bald a statement, even though they be equally bent on proving a natural origin for Hebrew monotheism. They theorize rather that, over a period of centuries, highly cultured Egypt was the natural pedagog of her neighbor Israel, transmitting to the latter nation the arts and crafts of the Nile valley, indoctrinating her with the thought of Egyptian priests and sages. Says Breasted: "In morals, in religion, and in social thinking in general with which we are chiefly concerned in this book, the Hebrews built up their life on Egyptian foundations."² Jahve of the Old Testament must be acknowledged as an allotrope of the sun-god who also advanced to a position of transcendence and was acclaimed as "sole god."³ Righteousness was attributed to Jahve because Maat (righteousness) was early associated with Re.⁴ Goodness and tenderness towards all creatures were borrowed for Jahve from Akhnaton's Hymn to Aton.⁵ God as the support of the just man in his tribulation was a sublime thought of Amenemope which both Isaias and the author of the Book of Proverbs appropriated for Jahve.⁶

The present discussion, being conceived as a study in Egyptian religion, does not purpose an explicit refutation of facile assertions such as the above, though the refutation should be rather obvious in the light of the texts and facts which will be adduced.⁷ Our purpose is threefold. An analysis will be

¹The question is discussed by J. Touzard in *Dict. Apol. de la Foi Cath.*, Vol. 2, coll. 1566.

²The *Dawn of Conscience*, p. 384.

³Op. cit., pp. 360, 361. ⁴Op. cit., p. 145. ⁵Op. cit., p. 368. ⁶Op. cit., pp. 370-383.

⁷Catholic answers to alleged dependence of Hebrew on Egyptian religion may be found in *D.A.F.C.*, I, coll. 1327-1330 (A. Mallon); II, coll. 1609-1610 (J. Touzard): in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. II, pp. 10-14.

attempted of the henotheistic utterances of the Egyptian *Instructions in Wisdom*. Then, as examples of henotheism, will be studied Re in the Old Kingdom, Amon-Re in the Empire. Finally, incidental notice will be taken of the accommodation of the dogma, "the king is a god" to the position occupied successively by Re and Amon-Re.

To avoid a longer inquiry than is now feasible, Osiris and Aton must be reserved for future treatment. With regard to Re and Amon-Re, it is inevitable to draw evidence chiefly from royal and noble tombs. The official religion therein reflected cannot be taken as adequately representative of popular devotion. The people's favorites, if analogy may be drawn from other ancient religions, would have been gods and spirits thought of as close to daily life, such as those potent in healing and magic or in determining human destiny beyond the grave.

As Breasted remarks, the ripe, worldly wisdom of the *Instructions in Wisdom* so appealed that they were copied and recopied, set by schoolmasters as exercises for boys learning to write, borrowed in part for the embellishment of later works.⁸ Corruption of the text resulted, but despite interpolations and despite the execrable schoolboys' copies on which scholars must often depend, the substantial thought of the originals is admitted by critics to be intact. For common theme the *Instructions* have the education of the young in regard to the prudent conduct of life. The *Instructions* are seven in number, namely the *Instruction*:⁹

- 1) *Of Kagemne*, son of the vizier of King Huni and himself a vizier. (Written about 2700 B.C.)
- 2) *Of Ptah-hotep*, vizier of King Dedkere-Isesi. (Written about 2460 B.C.)
- 3) *Of the Scribe Khety* for his son Pepi. (Written at an uncertain date, perhaps as early as 2275, perhaps later than 2000 B.C. Authorship, too, is

⁸Breasted: *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 237.

⁹The chronology here followed is that of Breasted as modified slightly by Professor John A. Wilson, Breasted's successor as Director of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The two savants agree closely on dates after 2000; for earlier dates Professor Wilson is inclined to subtract about two hundred years from the computations of Breasted.

ascribed variously to Khety (by Gardiner) and to Duauf (by Budge.)

- 4) *Of King Khati* for his son Merikere. (Written about 2100 B.C.)
- 5) *Of King Amenemhet I* for his son Sesostris I. (Written about 1980 B.C.)
- 6) *Of Shetepibre*, an official under Amenemhet III, for his children. (Written about the close of the 19th century B.C.)
- 7) *Of Antef*, an official of King Sesostris I. (Written about 1950 B.C.)
- 8) *Of Ani the Scribe* for his son Khensu-hetep. (Written at an uncertain date, but probably not much earlier nor later than 2000 B.C.)
- 9) *Of Amenemope*, son of Ka-nekht. (Written probably in the latter half of the 16th century B.C.)

Of these, Shetepibre and Antef offer nothing to our purpose and are catalogued merely to complete the list of *Instructions*. Kagemne, Khety and Amenemhet I each afford one henotheistic text, which must be noted briefly before we go on to the more abundant evidence from the other four wise men.¹⁰

Kagemne is warned: "One knoweth not what may chance, what God doth when He punisheth."¹¹ The warning occurs in a context of counsels on the discretion in speech and manners to be observed by a young noble. Court etiquette thus being the theme, it would seem that the favor or displeasure of the king is the sanction here invoked. The word "God," as appears

¹⁰The interpretation of texts and facts in this article has been guided chiefly by the following scholars: (confer current footnotes for the particular books.) Breasted, Flinders Petrie and Max Müller have been carefully compared in their explanations of the gradual concentration of Egypt's religion around the figures of Re and Amon-Re. In default of first-hand knowledge of Egyptian, the writer has depended for the precise meanings of texts upon the translations and philological notes of Erman, Blackman and Budge; upon Budge's excellent discussion of the terms "God" and "the god" in his *Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol. I, ch. 4, and in his *Teaching of Amen-em-apt*, pp. 103-105; especially upon the gracious help of Professor John A. Wilson of the Chicago Oriental Institute, who suggested inquiry into the present subject and censored the first draft of this article. Finally, P. Alexis Mallon's *Egypte* in D.P.A.C. and *his Religion of Ancient Egypt* in *Studies in Comparative Religion* have served as sober and erudite guides throughout.

¹¹Blackman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, (Methuen, London, 1927), p. 67.

below, was used to designate Egypt's ruler, and this usage seems indicated in the present case.

Khety, in the course of his encomium on the scribal vocation, pays his respects to various well-known gods and goddesses. Only at the end occurs the following: "Mesekhent (a goddess of birth) hath vouchsafed success to the scribe: at the head of the officials is he set, and his father and mother thank God for it."¹² Sir Wallis Budge on philological grounds interprets "God" as Re, the Sun-god, in this text.¹³

Amenemhet I, exhorting Sesostris I to hold tight the reins of authority, says: "Thou hast appeared as God."¹⁴ Now, in 1980 Sesostris I had been elevated to the coregency, so that here his father refers to the official doctrine of divine kingship which held Egypt's ruler to be the Son of Re and hence a god.

Mention of the divine kingship introduces naturally the Ptah-hotep texts, for the old vizier is deeply indoctrinated with this politico-religious fiction. He cautions: "Thou canst obtain nothing by bluster: what comes to pass, is the command of God."¹⁵ And to the same purpose: "It is God who assigneth the foremost place, but one attaineth nothing by the elbow."¹⁶ The first text stands alone without any proximate context to help an interpretation. The second is one of the rules Ptah-hotep lays down for suppliants who wait in the ante-room of a noble. The marked similarity of the two aphorisms inclines one to judge that the word "God" has the same meaning in both. The context of the second selection seems to show that the noble in question is spoken of as "God," for it is hard to think that Ptah-hotep attributes the determination of the order of precedence in a waiting-room to God properly so called.

In the following aphorisms it is clear either from text or context that Dedkere-Isesi's vizier speaks of his divinized royal master. "If thou art an humble person and art in the train of a man of repute, one that standeth well with the God." There follow counsels on modestly keeping one's place in the social order at the pinnacle of which stood the divine king.¹⁷

¹²Op. cit., p. 72.

¹³Budge, *The Teaching of Amen-em-ahpt*, (Hopkinson, London, 1924), pp. 14, 75.

¹⁴*The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 72.

Again: "Satisfy thy intimates with that which hath accrued to thee, as one favored of God." The reason given for being liberal is that the day of royal disfavor is not far distant, and that then the friends whom you have treated well will support you. The sense of the whole passage, then, shows that here "God" means the reigning king.¹⁸

In the same mine of thought as these maxims of canny courtliness is found a vein of moral and religious reflection. Really fine is the laudation of truth contained in the proemium: "Truth is good and its worth is lasting and it has not been disturbed since the day of its creator."¹⁹

Of piety and unselfishness Ptah-hotep says: "Bread is eaten by the decree of God."²⁰ And: "If thou plowest and there is growth in the field and God giveth it thee liberally, satisfy not thy mouth beside thy kindred."²¹ Are we to understand these two texts as referring to God's kindness to men? Perhaps, but such an interpretation is not necessitated. The first text, occurring at the close of a disquisition on table manners to be observed by an humble person who is feasted by a great man, may signify by the term "God" only some great man at whose pleasure the guest receives more or less. The second text, standing alone and without context, possibly means that the owner gives generously of the produce to the plowman.

Most precious of God's gifts is a good and docile son. "If thou art held in esteem and hast a household and begetteth a son that pleaseth God, if he doth right . . . search out for him everything that is good."²² And: "Behold, this is a good son, one that God giveth, one that did more than was told him by his lord."²³ The henotheistic interpretation fits these texts.

Ptah-hotep mentions by name only one member of Egypt's teeming pantheon. "A son that hath heard, is a follower of Horus."²⁴ Official records of the Fifth Dynasty enumerate at least thirty-eight individual gods and goddesses, refer to various

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 57. ¹⁶Op. cit., p. 59. ¹⁷Op. cit., p. 58. ¹⁸Op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 57. Erman: "Der Re, der Wahrheit in die Welt einfuhrte." The whole phrase "since the day of its creator" seems to be a synonym for "since the time of the God" (*Song of the Harper*) and "since the god" (*Installation Instruction for the Vizier*).

²⁰Op. cit., p. 58. ²¹Op. cit., p. 58. ²²Op. cit., p. 59. ²³Op. cit., p. 64. ²⁴Op. cit., p. 64.

enneads and other groups of gods.²⁵ This reticence of the old vizier is significant. As a child of his age, he doubtless made his offerings at all the temples and did not question the existence of Egypt's gods. But in sapiential thought, when pondering on origins and on the sanctions behind the rules of right conduct, he sensed an inadequacy in Re, Hathor and the rest. In no one of these could he perceive the perfect god-nature postulated by the physical and moral orders; hence his intuition of his "god," a personification of power and beneficent activity. Though Ptah-hotep personified his "god," he gave him no personal name such as Re or Horus, and indeed would have felt himself confronted by an impasse had he tried to assign his "god" a place in the council of Egypt's gods. His polytheistic faith forbids characterizing Ptah-hotep as a monotheist, so perhaps we may say that his theology is an amorphous henotheism insofar as it magnifies an unnamed divine power while halting at a break with "the old-time religion" of many gods.

Where Ptah-hotep seemingly desires to mute the discords of Egypt's polytheism, King Khati in his advice to Merikere has no such intention. Idols, temples, offerings, processions, magic, mythology, the afterworld of the Tuat, all figure in the few pages of this sapiential writing which has been saved to us from a period prior to the Middle Kingdom. The association in the very same passage of all the paraphernalia of polytheism with gems of henotheistic thought lends special interest to the document. "God attacketh him that is hostile to the temple," says the king.²⁶ And again: "Reverence thou God upon his road (sc. the idol being carried in a procession), even him that is fashioned of precious stones and formed of copper, even as water is replaced by water. There is no river that suffereth itself to be concealed: it destroyeth the dam with which it was hidden."²⁷ And a few lines further on: "More acceptable is the virtue of one that is just of heart than the ox of him that doth iniquity. Do something for God that he may do the like

²⁵Cf. Breasted's *Ancient Records of Egypt*. Vol. I, nn. 153-167, 213-281.

²⁶*The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 81.

²⁷Op. cit., p. 82.

²⁸Op. cit., p. 82.

for thee with an offering that replenishes the offering-table and with an inscription, one that perpetuates thy name. God is cognizant of him that doth something for him."²⁸

The irresistibility of divine might is hinted at in the above metaphor of the river. An incidental reference in the last quotation to Egyptian mortuary and eschatological beliefs is supplemented by a reference to "being justified before the god,"²⁹ (Osiris, according to Erman) and by a longer passage which depicts the judgment in the Tuat.³⁰

In still other passages King Khati speaks of God as being thanked for the beneficent life of a good king, as requiting the sins of the forward in blood. All cannot be quoted, but one section is so striking a document of henotheistic intuition that it offers its own apology for quotation in full. "Well tended are men, the cattle of God. He made heaven and earth according to their desires. He allayed their thirst for water. He made air that their nostrils might breathe. He made for them plenty, and cattle, and fowls, and fishes, in order to nourish them. He slew his enemies and punished his children because of that which they desired when they were hostile. He maketh the light according to their desire, but he also suffereth them to sleep. And when they weep, he heareth. He made for them rulers from the womb, a supporter to support the back of the weak. He made for them magic as weapons to ward off events, and dreams in the night as in the day. He hath slain the forward of heart in them, even as a man smiteth his son."³¹

Echoes here of Egypt's polytheism are the myth of Re's sending Hathor to punish men's rebellion; the magic divinely given men for their protection; the divine kingship (perhaps) in the phrase "rulers from the womb." For the rest, the passage in its henotheistic laudation of a divine providence ranks with the classics of ancient religious thought, touches a height not again attained in Egypt till the age of the hymns to Amon-Re.

The schoolboy who, towards the end of the second millennium, B.C., copied on papyrus the *Instruction of the Scribe*

²⁹Op. cit., p. 75.

³¹Op. cit., p. 83.

³⁰Op. cit., p. 77.

³²Op. cit., p. 238.

Ani must have been soundly beaten or else was sitting under a master as ignorant as himself. But for all his clumsiness and negligence, he did not quite succeed in obliterating all the beauty of a high-minded exhortation to moral conduct. Our special interest is the ancient scribe's appeal to God as guardian of the moral order. To God he who is falsely accused may commit his cause and confidently await vindication.³² Against an ungrateful son the mother raises her hands in prayer to God and is heard.³³ Ani is insistent on God getting his due, and warns his son Khensu-hetep: "Celebrate the feast of thy god. . . . God is wroth with him that disregards it. . . . Singing, dancing, and frankincense appertain to his maintenance."³⁴ This might appear to savor of crass idol-worship, but hear what follows: "The dwelling of God, it abhorreth clamor. Pray with a loving heart, all the words of which are hidden. Then he will hear what thou sayest and do what thou needest."³⁵ "Let thine eye mark how he is wroth and have respect for his name. It is he that giveth power to millions of forms, and only he is great whom he maketh great. The god of this land is the sun which is in the horizon, but his images are on earth."³⁶ The last sentence (if it be not a gloss from the hand of our schoolboy copyist) is a rather distressing anticlimax after the heights to which Ani's thought has soared.

Amenemope was the son of Ka-Nekht, a royal minister whose portfolio empowered him to supervise important details of the state-cult, and of Ta-Usrit, priestess of the old solar gods of Heliopolis. By his own account he held high positions under the early Empire, but he gloried chiefly in being a "Ger Maa." The term is rather obscure, but on the authority of the learned Egyptologist, Budge, we may take it to mean "a man who is truly resigned to God's guiding hand and is prepared to obey Him."³⁷ The God conjured up by the earnest thought of Amenemope is One "Whose love is more precious and estimable than the reverence of the nobleman," "Who

³²Op. cit., p. 239.

³⁴Op. cit., p. 235.

³⁵Op. cit., p. 236.

³⁶Op. cit., p. 239.

³⁷Sir Wallis Budge interestingly discusses the term in his *The Teaching of Amen-em-apt*, pp. 97, 98. From this work we take the translations of Amenemope.

hates the man that utters frivolous, lying speech; whose greatest abomination is the man that nourisheth enmity."³⁸ "God is the builder, even if it be man who mixes the mud and the straw;" "His plans man assuredly knoweth not."³⁹ Complete resignation is counseled: "Seat thou thyself on the two arms of the God. To thy silent meditation add prostrations on the ground."⁴⁰ "A man lives his hour of life: rejoice, be glad. It is God who makes man arrive in Ament (the regions of bliss); man is safe in the hand of God."⁴¹

Sir Wallace Budge frankly equates Amenemope's use of "God" to the Moslem's Allah.⁴² The comparison may stand only if we take sentences such as above quoted apart from the whole context of *The Teaching*. Amenemope was no monotheist, but an ardent defender of the solar religion of Heliopolis. Rejecting Osiris and ignoring Amon, the gods who in his age were challenging Heliopolitan Re, he preaches up the rights of the sun-god; bizarre mythology, too, finds a place in his writing. The shackles of traditional belief bound his mind too closely for it to proceed very far on the monotheistic path which was pointed out by his moral intuitions. Logically, the concept of his "God" excludes the possibility of the Heliopolitan nature-gods, but that Amenemope ever suspected this, does not appear. With serene inconsistency he exhorts his readers to place all their trust in a God who has no temple in Egypt and at the same time to bring their offerings to the temples that the nature-gods who have charge of Egypt's prosperity may not withhold their beneficent hands.⁴³

Further bits of evidence on the henotheistic tendency of higher Egyptian thought are noted in the *Song of the Harper*, the *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, in still other surviving fragments of the country's literature.⁴⁴ Such lofty thought no doubt prepared the ground and laid the foundation for the

³⁸Budge, op. cit., p. 159; p. 177.

³⁹Budge, op. cit., p. 174; p. 171.

⁴⁰Budge, op. cit., p. 173.

⁴¹Budge, op. cit., p. 175.

⁴²Op. cit., pp. 103-104.

⁴³What is said in this paragraph, is substantially the view of A. Mallon in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. II, pp. 12-14.

⁴⁴Breasted's *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 185; pp. 242-243.

dogma of Re's and Amon-Re's henotheistic supremacy. Other forces of a political nature, at work in the late Fourth and in the Fifth Dynasties, determined that Re was to be set squarely in the henotheistic focus. He was a sun-god in function, the local god of Heliopolis, ancient On, situated on the right bank of the lower Nile. When in the Second Predynastic Period the First Union was effected at Heliopolis, the city and its god gained prestige which was to survive the collapse of this Union.⁴⁵ Re did not supplant the great god Horus during Heliopolis' early ascendancy, but it seems likely that the close association of the two in cult and myth dates from First Union.

The Thinites who reunited Egypt under the First of the historical Dynasties had other gods and goddesses than Re as guarantors of their kingship. The jejune annals of the First and Second Dynasties, preserved on the Palermo Stone, mention Horus, Apis, Sokar and others, but not Re. Similarly, save for Re-neb of the Second Dynasty, neither royal names nor official royal titularies for these two Dynasties pay reverence to Heliopolis' god.

In the Third and Fourth Dynasties an intrusion of Heliopolitan influence is indicated in the composition of about one-fourth of all royal names with the god-name Re. A like indication is given in the folk-story of the prophecy to King Khufu that the royal succession would pass to a child conceived through the visit of Re to an Heliopolitan priestess.⁴⁶ By the time of the Fifth Dynasty control over Egypt is divided between Memphis and Heliopolis. How this happened is obscure; probably the last queen of the Fourth Dynasty married an Heliopolitan prince or priest and founded the new Dynasty.

To the king's titulary the sun-god's priests now added a fifth phrase, "Son of Re." Physical sonship, and hence full divinity, was meant, an advance on the vaguer claim to divinity contained in the earlier Dynastic title, "The Horus." Henceforth, too, down to the decay of the Old Kingdom the personal name of the king was a compound of Re. Though they continued to

⁴⁵Breasted's *Dawn of Conscience*, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶The *Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 43.

reside at Memphis, the kings symbolically transferred thither the holy city of Heliopolis by erecting near the palace sun-temples, probably modelled on the Heliopolitan sanctuary. These sun-temples they called by some such name as "Favorite Place of Re," and in them immediately behind the great altar they set up the sun-symbol of a tall obelisk.⁴⁷ Breasted shows in his *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* that functionally the obelisk is an impressive base for the pyramidion, the specifically sacred sun-symbol, which surmounts it.⁴⁸ In their annals, as written on the Palermo Stone, Fifth Dynasty kings are careful to do honor to Re, to his consort Hathor and to the Spirits of Heliopolis.

Royal burial was in a pyramid. Though national economics no longer permitted pyramids of the massive type, pyramids of the late Fifth and of the Sixth Dynasties speak more eloquently than by mere mass of Re's ascendancy. In the *Pyramid Texts*, a medley of prayers and charms carved on the interior walls of royal pyramids of the period just mentioned, unity of theme is found in the progress of the deceased king towards Re. Other divinities are legion, but they are rather a supporting cast for the sun-god and for his earthly counterpart who rises to seek assimilation with him. Already in these earliest written documents other local sun-gods have surrendered their identities to Heliopolis' darling. "The old local sun-gods had merged, and we find five solar divinities in a single list in the *Pyramid Texts* all addressed as Re. (P. T., *Utterances* 1444-1449). A distinct tendency towards solar henotheism, or even pantheism, is now discernible."⁴⁹ The *Texts* incorporate the earliest known sun-hymn, which pictures Egypt producing all its wealth for Re.

To make sure that the magically efficacious carving covered all contingencies, the scribe who set the copy for the workmen added to the king's various titles to Re's heaven that of his moral worth. He disclaimed for his royal master sins of various species, boasted of his virtues, asserted that the king

⁴⁷Breasted's *History of Egypt*, p. 124.

⁴⁸Breasted's *Development*, pp. 70, 71.

⁴⁹Op. cit., p. 43.

was on his way to establish "maat" or justice in the celestial world. Of the moral order here recognized, as well as of the physical order, Re is lord and sanctioner. "There can be no doubt," says Breasted, "that in the Old Kingdom the sovereignty of Re has resulted in attributing to him the moral requirements laid upon the dead in the hereafter, and that in the surviving literature of that age he is chiefly the righteous god rather than Osiris."⁵⁰

The kings of the Twelfth Dynasty were of course Thebans and traditionally worshippers of Amon. Why this god of the southland did not immediately challenge Re's suzerainty is an interesting question, but one whose answer can be merely sketched in the present paper. The political goal of the Middle Kingdom was to reconstitute Egypt as she was under the Old Kingdom. Hence neither diminution of Re's dignity nor orientation of the king's deity towards a new divine fatherhood was on the schedule of agenda. Secondly, Middle Kingdom feudalism, which guaranteed a considerable degree of state's rights to the nomes and of independence to trusted monarchs, discountenanced domination of Theban Amon over the favorite gods of the nomes. It is true, as Breasted shows in Lecture VIII of his *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, that during this Feudal Age Osiris surged ahead "to a triumph which not even the court and the nobles were able to resist." (p. 285). His reputed tomb at Abydos (really the tomb of King Zer) was a national shrine. However, Osirism was a mortuary and eschatological religion and offered little challenge to the present-worldly sway of either Re or Amon.

With Egypt's cycle of empire expansion came Amon's exaltation. Immediately after his accession to independent sovereignty, the third Thutmose abandoned Queen Hatshepsut's peace policy. After preliminary work in Nubia to ensure the steady flow of her harvests and of her levies of fine fighters, he turned his attention to the north. His war galleys patrolled the eastern Mediterranean to guard his line of communica-

⁵⁰Op. cit., p. 174.

tions. He personally led the new Egyptian chariotry, the phalanxes of spearmen, the companies of bowmen in sieges and pitched battles methodically planned and daringly executed. The lands had rebelled, he says in his annals, and speaks of 330 princes who were joined to the King of Kadesh. Archeological evidence for this period indicates that the region of Kadesh was in Hyksos hands. The Kadesh king, then, was probably a Hyksos chief who had taken advantage of Queen Hatshepsut's non-aggression policy to organize a league of North Syrian chiefs against Egypt. This would mean that Thutmose III's early campaigns were directed towards shattering the power of Egypt's former lords along the great trade route of the north. This effected, he set garrisons at strategic points and enjoined on his now submissive Syrian dependents to bring supplies to the ports from which he planned to start his next yearly campaign. Seventeen of these campaigns figure in his annals, some marked by severe resistance, others apparently being parades of martial might calculated to impress his vassals as well as the now powerful Mitanni beyond the great northern bend of the Euphrates.⁶¹

The prestige of Egyptian arms assured a steady flow of tribute from subject nations as well as the deferential regard of other powerful rulers of the time. Thebes was supreme. Her princes had led the patriotic uprising which expelled the hated Hyksos, had founded an able dynasty, had won an empire extending from Nile's Third Cataract to the upper Euphrates. Thebes' god Amon was hailed as the one who had prospered all these splendid achievements. Of the personal gratitude of the Theban dynasts to their "father Amon" there can be no doubt. Hatshepsut's soaring obelisks testify to her zeal in building in his honor, while in her inscriptions she claims to be the physical son (sic) of Amon through the god's visit to her mother. Thutmose III was at such pains to prove his close association with Amon that he caused to be carved the highly interesting story of his miraculous election to the kingship. When an obscure priest, so the inscription runs, he was standing

⁶¹For the annals of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, c. Breasted's *Ancient Records*, Vol. II.

in the north hypostyle at Karnak while the sacred boat of the god with his image was carried abroad on occasion of a solemn feast. The god guided the procession on a course contrary to the established ritual, that he might seek out his chosen son, Thutmose. Having found him in the hypostyle, the God made him take the royal position right beside the holy boat. He then opened heaven for the child of destiny and with his own divine hand wrote out the royal titles he was to bear.⁵²

The alert priests of Amon were not minded to allow forgetfulness of Amon's grace to seize upon the king. They had an excellent model for their propaganda in the work done for Re by Heliopolitan priests of an earlier age. No mere tithes nor presents from the fruits of victory would suffice, but wide districts in the newly acquired regions must be permanently sequestered as cult endowments. The records of Rekhmire, vizer of Upper Egypt under Thutmose III, reveal how shamelessly the Theban priesthood importuned the aging hero in the name of his father Amon.⁵³ Karnak, the Theban suburb and cult-center, became during this and the three subsequent reigns a state within a state. Uncountable wealth in precious stones and metals was hoarded; thousands of slaves were assigned to the temple estates; docks and warehouses were filled with tribute of the Empire's choicest products. Only recently has archeology begun to realize the extent and splendor of the Karnak temple, the house built for Amon in these days of his aggrandizement. Before the portal of St. John Lateran in Rome stands the obelisk which the most illustrious of Egypt's rulers prepared to erect before the grandest of her temples. The still legible inscription reads in translation:

"Thutmose III, rich in monuments in the house of Amon; making his monuments greater than those which the ancestors made, who were before; exceeding that which ever was, not resembling the likeness of anything that was made in the house of his father Amon, that the son of Re, Thutmose of Heliopolis, may be given life."⁵⁴

The original attributes of Amon were probably those of a god of procreation. At the debouchement of the Wadi Ham-

⁵²Breasted's *A.R.E.*, nn. 138-148, Vol. II. ⁵³*Ibidem*, nn. 748-752. ⁵⁴*Ibidem*, n. 628.

mamat into the Nile, in the town of Koptos, was anciently worshipped ithyphallic Min, a god who seems to have traveled to Egypt by the water-caravan route of the Red Sea and the dry wadi from the land of Punt, a region near the southern end of the Red Sea. Amon of Thebes, a town but a little to the south of Koptos, was a form of this Min. However, into the full composition of Amon other elements entered, notably the attributes of a bull-god Montu and of an air-god. From the last named, as being the god of an invisible element, the name Amon (which means "hidden") is perhaps derived.⁵⁵ In representation Amon was human or human with a frog head or a serpent head. Though the ape, the lion and the goose were used as animal symbols of him, the commonest of these symbols is the ram. For female counterpart he had Mut (the mother), a mother-goddess who conceived and brought forth all that exists. The Theban triad was completed by Khonsu (the traveler), son of Amon and Mut. Probably a moon-god, Khonsu was assigned a role of influence in effecting generation. He was hawk-headed, winged, and bore the lunar crescent and the "scourge," if the instrument represented be such in fact.

The ascendancy of Re of Heliopolis and of Osiris of Abydos was of course challenged by Thebes' favorite. To the theologians fell the task of working out formulas of reconciliation. For Osiris, who through the Middle Kingdom had been steadily growing in popular favor, the theological solution was restriction of his functions to the Afterworld where he had already triumphed over Re. The heavens and the earth thus remained for division between Amon and Re.

"Thutmose III," says Breasted, "seems to have merged the priesthoods of all the temples into one great sacerdotal organization at the head of which he placed the High Priest of Amon."⁵⁶ The Heliopolitan priesthood, thus reduced to a dependent position, still contrived to maintain Re's prestige. The means they employed were to syncretize the two gods into

⁵⁵A. Erman, *Die Aegyptische Religion* (1934, Berlin), pp. 35-37. Cf. also K. Sethe, *Amon und die Acht Urgötter von Hermopolis* (1929, Berlin).

⁵⁶Breasted's *Development*, p. 319.

one. "Amon, theologically, had long succumbed to the ancient tendency which identified the old local gods with the sun-God, and he had long been called Amon-Re. His old local characteristics, whatever they may have been, were supplanted by those of the sun-god, and the ancient local Amon had been completely solarized."⁵⁷ With the two gods thus possessing cognate attributes, the priests of Heliopolis without difficulty, though with what good grace we cannot say, subscribed to the formula: "Amon is Re; Re is Amon." The whole divine titulary of Re, as well as his Heliopolitan ritual, were surrendered to Amon. The syncretic name of Amon-Re was understood in the sense of unity and perfect identification. Heliopolis' profit from the submission was that the ancient seat of sun-worship in northern Egypt became now a center of Amon cult second in importance only to Karnak in the south.

To the cult of Amon-Re belongs a series of Egyptian Hymns to the Sun, which of all Egypt's documents speak most explicitly of the divine attributes. Various recensions of the hymns differ considerably in details, but the following may stand as a fair sample of the content. It is from a stela of Amenhotep III, now in the British Museum.

"Thou art a craftsman shaping thy own limbs;
Fashioner without being fashioned;
Unique in his qualities, traversing eternity;
Over ways with millions under his guidance.
When thou sailest over the sky, all men behold thee,
Though thy going is hidden from their sight.
Thou travelst a journey of leagues,
Even millions and hundred-thousands of times.
Every day is under thee.
When thy setting comes,
The hours of the night harken to thee also.
When thou hast traversed it, there comes no end to thy labors.
All men see by means of thee.
Thou art creator of all and giver of their substance,
A mother profitable to gods and men,
A craftsman of experience,

⁵⁷Ibidem, p. 318.

A valiant herdsman who drives his cattle,
 Their refuge and giver of their substance.
 Thou beholdest that which thou hast made,
 Sole lord taking captive all lands every day,
 Alone beholding them that walk therein;
 Shining in the sky as the sun.
 Thou makest the seasons by the months,
 Heat when thou desirest,
 Cold when thou desirest.
 Every land is rejoicing
 At thy rising in order to praise thee."⁵⁸

Though the concept of divinity here expressed is relatively high, it is not necessary to seek its explanation elsewhere than in the purer streams of Egypt's immemorial religious thought. Dominant, obviously, is the worship of the sun's might and beneficence. Self-production and "creation" of all things else are here predicated of Amon-Re, as they had been predicated from early times of several of the gods, notably of Ptah of Memphis. The depth and warmth of religious feeling in the phrases "a mother profitable to gods and men" and "a valiant herdsman, the refuge of his cattle" are indeed striking, but Egypt's wise men had spoken so of "God" or "the god" in previous centuries. There is a clearer apprehension of the universality of Amon-Re's dominion than in pre-Empire days when the horizon of thought was limited to the Nile valley, when Amon had not yet shown his invincibility in battles.

⁵⁸Breasted's *Dawn of Conscience*, p. 276.

