

Egypt Exploration Society

The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt

Author(s): Battiscombe Gunn

Source: *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Vol. 3, No. 2/3 (Apr. - Jul., 1916), pp. 81-94

Published by: [Egypt Exploration Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3853740>

Accessed: 17/07/2013 17:40

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Egypt Exploration Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE RELIGION OF THE POOR IN ANCIENT EGYPT

BY BATTISCOMBE GUNN.

IF any religion be regarded rather in its emotional than in its intellectual aspect, that is to say, more particularly as an outcome of man's hopes and fears for himself in regard to the Unknown than as a theory of the universal economy, the most essential consideration is undoubtedly the personal relation which its adherents feel to subsist between themselves and their god or gods. For in this, its most intimate depth, lies the real value of the religion as a comforter to men in their conflict with stronger powers within and without them, and as an enlargement of the life of the heart. Moreover, it will throw the strongest light on the moral qualities of its members, and the extent to which they feel themselves to be in harmony with their environment.

Now, the impression obtained by a general view of Egyptian religion in its classic and official documents is that this relation was, on the worshipper's side, one of extraordinary complacency and self-sufficiency. We may leave out of account the royal intercourse with the gods, since the king was considered to be one of these himself and the son of them, and therefore in the position of *ultimus inter pares*, to say the least. But if we turn to the remainder of the great mass of writings expressing religious or moral sentiment which have been preserved to us, whether the funerary inscriptions, or the sacred books, or manuscript copies of uncanonical hymns and prayers, we find almost everywhere the same feeling. The Egyptian, as reflected in these texts, was little disposed to humble himself before deity. A careful respect, with strict observance of the commerce of sacrifice and ceremony against accordant benefits, was at all times necessary to be maintained: but the attitude of the 'miserable sinner,' so characteristic of the Christian and other Semitic religions, is unknown to these writings. Consider the Declaration of Innocence¹, in which every candidate for the joys of the next world proclaims his freedom from every human frailty; the self-identification with this or that god, so essential a feature of Egyptian magic; the nobles' many descriptions of themselves as miracles of human perfection in their dealings with men and gods, and their claim to consequent admiration from both. These people, one would say, never took God into their confidence, nor would permit themselves to plead guilty at any divine tribunal, or to sue for mercy. Whether this attitude arose from the intense spiritual and material pride (probably unequalled

¹ Usually called the 'Negative Confession,' a term which might well be abandoned as being, in so far as it means anything, misleading: it is no 'confession' to persist through forty-two clauses that one has committed no conceivable sin.

elsewhere in the world) of the Egyptian aristocracy, which would not suffer them to admit the least fault—the middle classes imitating their betters in this; or whether it was a consequence of the profound belief in the creative power of the spoken word, the solemnly uttered affirmation magically translating itself into a colourable reality; or whether again much of it was plain lying with intent to ‘bluff’ gods or posterity: is a problem more easily posed than solved¹.

But a notable contrast to the tone of this, the main current of traditional Egyptian religious feeling, is afforded by a small and far less-known group of hymns and prayers, all of which fall within the limits of the century and a half occupied by the Nineteenth Dynasty (B.C. about 1350–1200), and which stand quite in a class by themselves. In these the change of orientation of the worshippers, the revolution in that personal relation to deity upon which I have laid stress, is truly remarkable. All the (in the popular sense of the word) Pharisaic complacency of the priestly and official texts, the boasting ‘in which there is no boasting,’ the facile formalities of veneration, cold descriptions of the qualities and energies of the gods, sanctioned by the use of ages, with which these works were so easily put together, are absent. In their place we find the very spirit of that self-abasing and sorrowful appeal, conscious of unworthiness, which Matthew Arnold, dealing with a similar contrast in its most eminent examples, called the Hebraic attitude as opposed to the Hellenic. Those who wrote these psalms (as we may fairly call some of them), or for whom they were written, were men conscious, as they confess, of their ‘many sins’; who approach the gods not as creditors who have fulfilled their side of a contract and calmly await their recompense, but as ‘humble men’ and ‘helpless ones,’ hoping for mercy; who proclaim, not that they are perfect, unspotted even by contact with the erring, but ‘ignorant’ and ‘foolish,’ ‘not knowing good from bad,’ deserving of punishment but saved by the grace of a god who prefers the silent before the eloquent, the distressed before the mighty, who cannot be bargained with, is a surer help than man, whose wrath is soon past, and who sends no earnest suppliant empty away.

Several of these documents, so significant in the history of religion, are in manuscript (many at the British Museum); almost all the rest are a group of memorial stones which were found nearly a century since at Dêr-el-Medîneh, in the Theban Necropolis, where they were set up in small temples by the humble draughtsmen, scribes and ‘attendants’ of that part of the great cemetery. It is to these memorials that I invite the attention of my readers. Scattered long ago among the museums of Turin (where lie by far the greatest number), London and Berlin, many of them were published by M. Maspero many years ago: the same *savant* dealt afterwards with some of them in an essay on popular beliefs of the Egyptians. They have been touched upon in the standard manual of Egyptian religion, the author of which, Prof. Erman, not very long ago republished the essential part of the texts in corrected form, with translations and brief commentary².

¹ In the case of the self-adulation put so often into the mouth of the deceased in tomb-inscriptions, it is possible that the composition of these is as a rule to be attributed not to their seeming authors but to the piety of surviving relatives, who would naturally, under the conventions of Egyptian style, cast them in the first rather than in the third person singular.

² ADOLF ERMAN, *Denksteine aus der thebanischen Gräberstadt* (Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1911, XLIX, pp. 1086—1110). For MASPERO's previous

The main purpose of this article is to present this body of texts to English readers: my translation of the Egyptian naturally follows very closely that of Prof. Erman, except at a few points where I have ventured to differ from him¹.

I.

The most interesting of these stones is a *stela* now in the Berlin Museum², found in one of a group of small brick temples of Amûn, which were doubtless built for the sole use of the workers on the Theban Necropolis, and from which, possibly, most of the other monuments of this group originally came. The *stela* is dedicated to Amûn by the draughtsman Nebrê and his son Kha'y in gratitude for the recovery from sickness of Nekhtamûn, another son of Nebrê.

At the top sits Amûn enthroned before a high pylon, with the superscription:

*Amen-Ré, Lord of Karnak;
The great God within Thebes;
The august God who hears prayer;
Who comes at the voice of the distressed humble one³;
Who gives breath to him that is wretched.*

Before Amûn, and in front of a small altar, kneels Nebrê in adoration; over him is written:

*Giving praise to Amûn, Lord of Karnak,
Him that is within Thebes:
Homage to Amûn of the City, the great God,
The Lord of this Sanctuary, great and fair;
That he may let mine eyes see his beauty.
For the Ka of the draughtsman of Amûn,
Nebrê, justified.*

Below is the following text, at the end of which are depicted the four sons⁴ of Nebrê kneeling in worship:

*Praisegiving to Amûn.
I will make him hymns in his name.
I will give him praise up to the height of heaven:
And over the breadth of the earth.
I will declare his might to him who fares down-stream:
And to him who fares up-stream.*

publications see *Recueil de Travaux...*, vol. II, pp. 109, 111, 112, 182, 197, vol. IV, pp. 135, 143; also MASPERO, *De Quelques Cultes et de Quelques Croyances populaires des Égyptiens*, § 3, *La Déesse Miritskro et ses Guérisons Miraculeuses*, in *Études de Mythologie et d'Archéologie*, vol. II, pp. 402 ff. See also ERMAN, *Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, pp. 78 ff. (English edition); BREASTED, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 349 ff. A list of the other texts considered by Erman to be cognate in character with those dealt with by him is given in *Denksteine...* (see above), p. 1108.

¹ I am indebted to Dr Alan H. Gardiner for several suggestions in connection with corrupt or otherwise difficult passages of the *stelae*.

² No. 23077.

³ Dr Gardiner suggests that the 'humble' (*nmḥ*) may be the general name of the poorer population above the slave class, analogous to the Babylonian *mushkēnum*.

⁴ The following members of Nebrê's family are known from this and other monuments: Father, PAY: mother, unknown: brother, PRA'-HOTPE: wife, PESHED: sons, NEKHTAMÛN, KHA'Y, KHUAMÛN, AMENEMOPET.

*Be ye ware of him!
Herald him to son and daughter:
To the great and little.
Declare ye him to generations and generations,
To¹ those that exist not yet.
Declare him to the fishes in the stream:
To the birds in the heaven.
Herald him to him that knows him not and him that knows him:
Be ye ware of him!*

*Thou art Amûn, the Lord of him that is silent:
Who comest at the voice of the humble man.
I call upon thee when I am in distress:
And thou comest that thou mayest save me;
That thou mayest give breath to him that is wretched;
That thou mayest save me that am in bondage.*

*Thou art Amûn, Lord of Thebes,
That savest even him who is in the Netherworld².
For it is thou who art [merciful]
If one call upon thee,
And it is thou that comest from afar.*

*Made by the draughtsman of Amûn in the Place-of-Truth, Nebré, justified,
son of the draughtsman in the Place-of-Truth³, Pay, [justified,] in the name
of his Lord Amûn, Lord of Thebes, who comes at the voice of the humble one.*

*He made⁴ hymns to his name,
Because of the greatness of his power:
He made⁴ humble entreaties before him,
In the presence of the whole land,
For the draughtsman Nekhtamûn⁵, justified,
Who lay sick unto death,
Who was (under) the might of Amûn, through his sin.*

*I found that the Lord of the Gods came as the North-wind, sweet airs
before him, that he might save the draughtsman of Amûn, Nekhtamûn,
justified, son of the draughtsman of Amûn in the Place-of-Truth, Nebré,
justified, and born of the Lady Peshed, justified.*

¹ Reading *n nti* for *nti*, here as elsewhere in this text.

² The *Dé'et* (Old Coptic ⲧⲏ) or 'Duat': so also on p. 90.

³ 'Place-of-Truth' is apparently the name of a distinct part of the Theban Necropolis, not of the whole, as was formerly believed by Brugsch and others.

⁴ Which verbal form is intended, is unrecognisable in the corrupt writing; but there is no doubt as to the general sense.

⁵ Nebré's son.

He¹ said:

*Though the servant was disposed to do evil,
Yet is the Lord disposed to be merciful².
The Lord of Thebes passes not a whole day wroth:
His wrath is finished in a moment, and nought is left.
The wind (?)³ is turned again to us in mercy:
Amûn turns with his air.
As thy Ka endureth, mayest thou be merciful!
May that which has been turned away not be repeated!*

Thus the draughtsman in the Place-of-Truth, Nebré, justified.

He said:

*'I will make this memorial in thy name:
And establish for thee this hymn in writing upon it.
For thou didst save me the draughtsman Nekhtamûn.'
—Thus said I, and thou didst hearken to me.*

*Now mark, I do that which I have said.
Thou art a Lord to him that calls upon thee,
Contented in truth, O Lord of Thebes!*

Dedicated by the draughtsman Nebré and his son the scribe Kha'y.

The text explains itself, and needs no comment. What was the sin by which Nekhtamûn incurred the wrath of the god, we are not told, nor what was the resultant malady from which he happily recovered; perhaps the latter was beyond the diagnostic powers of the sufferer and his friends.

As a literary composition Nebré's hymn has features of interest; the parallelism is good, and the construction of the second strophe, of which one half is the inversion of the other, is, Prof. Erman points out, without counterpart in Egyptian verse-forms.

II.

To the same Nebré belong half-a-dozen other monuments now at Turin, Paris and London⁴, of which must be mentioned in passing, as a striking example of the popular cults of the Empire, the stone at Turin⁵ in which Nebré is shown worshipping *the beautiful dove which endures, endures evermore*, while his sons Nekhtamûn and Kha'y adore *the beautiful cat which endures, endures*. Only one of these, however, has an inscription of any importance to our present purpose, namely a *stela* in the British Museum⁶, dedicated by Nebré, son of Pay, to *Haroëris, Lord of Heaven, Ruler of the Nine*.

¹ Still Nebré.

² 'To be merciful'; 'mercy,' seem to be the best renderings of *h̄tp*; *h̄tpi*, in these texts.

³ *šwhwt* with the egg determinative. There is a rare late word which resembles this, and for which it may be intended, meaning 'wind.'

⁴ Enumerated by ERMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 1096.

⁵ No. 134; cf. *Recueil de Travaux*, II, 108.

⁶ No. 276; cf. *Recueil de Travaux*, II, 182 for full description.

The text runs as follows:

*Giving praise to Haroëris,
Homage to him that hears prayer,
That he may let mine eyes behold my way to go.*

*For the Ka of the draughtsman in the Place-of-Truth, Nebré, justified, son
of the draughtsman Pay, justified.*

Whether the reference to sight is to be taken literally, as desiring a cure for blindness, or in the sense of a prayer for enlightenment, it does not seem easy to say. I incline to think that in this case the latter is more probable.

III.

We come now to three stones dedicated to one of the strangest of Theban divinities, Dehnet-Amentet, 'the Peak of the West,' who was identified with Isis, but was more generally regarded as the home of the Necropolis serpent-goddess Meretseger. The Peak of the West is said by M. Maspero to be the spur of mountain which faces Luxor in the hill of Sheikh 'Abd-el-Gurneh¹.

We will deal first with the Turin *stela*² of Nefer'abu, the best known of these monuments. Before an altar of offerings is the three-headed serpent-goddess, with the superscription:

*Meretseger, Lady of Heaven,
Mistress of the two Lands, whose good name is Peak of the West.*

The following text accompanies the scene:

*Giving praise to the Peak of the West:
Homage to her Ka.
I give praise: hear my call.
I was a just man upon earth.*

Dedicated by the attendant in the Place-of-Truth, Nefer'abu, justified.

*(I was) an ignorant man and foolish,
Who knew neither good nor evil.
I wrought the transgression against the Peak,
And she chastised me.
I was in her hand by night as by day:
I sat like the woman in travail upon the bearing-stool.
I called upon the wind, and it came to me not.
I was tormented(?) by the Peak of the West, the Mighty One:
And by every God and every Goddess.*

*Mark, I will say to great and little
That are among the workmen:
Be ye ware of the Peak!
For that a lion is within the Peak.
She smites with the smiting of a savage lion:
She pursues him that transgresses against her.*

¹ *Études de Mythologie et d'Archéologie*, II, 403.

² No. 102. Published and translated by MASPERO, *Recueil*, II, 109, *Études*, II, 405 ff.; translated by ERMAN, *Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, p. 78 (English edition).

*I called upon my Mistress :
 I found that she came to me with sweet airs ;
 She was merciful to me,
 (After) she had made me behold her hand.
 She turned again to me in mercy :
 She caused me to forget the sickness that had been [upon] me.
 Lo, the Peak of the West is merciful,
 If one call upon her.
 Spoken by Nefer'abu, justified, who says :
 Mark, and let every ear hearken,
 That lives upon earth :
 Beware the Peak of the West !*

'The transgression against the Peak' seems to point to some well-known offence ; but what it was we have no means of knowing.

Erman and Maspero both take the reference to the wind as probably indicating a disease in which the subject suffers from lack of breath. It may, however, be only a poetic figure.

IV.

The other two inscriptions to the Peak are both short. On a British Museum *stela*¹ the *Scribe of the Necropolis Nekhtamûn* (not necessarily identical with either the subject of no. V or with the son of Nebrê ; the name is a very common one at this period) addresses *Meretseger, Mistress of the West*, as follows :

*Praised be thou in peace, O Lady of the West,
 The Mistress that turns herself toward mercy !
 Thou causest me to see darkness by day.
 I will declare thy might to all people(?).
 Be merciful to me in thy mercy !*

There can be little doubt that this man was blind. We shall meet again with the phrase 'darkness by day.'

V.

The Turin *stela*² of Nekhtamûn, son of Didi, bears, according to Maspero, a representation of the Peak, which he describes as 'two slopes of a hill, depicted in accordance with the usual conventions of Egyptian draughtsmanship, running down from right and left and enclosing near the summit a sort of parallelogram, in which four coiled serpents forming a cornice stand out in relief.' Erman, however, mentions it only as 'a gorge.' A goddess with horns and disk stands on one of the slopes, and is celebrated as :

*Great Isis, Mother of a God ;
 Lady of Heaven, Mistress of all the Gods ;
 Lady of children, of many forms.*

¹ No. 374.

² No. 296 ; cf. *Recueil*, II, 112, and MASPERO, *Études*, II, 403.

And again as :

*The great Peak of the West,
Who gives her hand to him that she loves,
And gives protection to him that sets her in his heart.*

The difference between the formal epithets applied to the goddess as Isis, and the phrases used of her as the Peak, is striking.

VI.

In the first and third inscriptions given above it will be noticed that we are not informed as to the nature of the offences which called down upon Nekhtamûn and Nefer'abu the wrath of the gods. The next two examples show that swearing falsely¹ by the name of a deity was thought to be a fruitful source of misfortune.

The same Nefer'abu who 'wrought the transgression against the Peak' dedicated a stone, now in the British Museum², to Ptah. On one side of the *stela* he is depicted adoring the god in these terms :

*Praisegiving to Ptah, Lord of Truth, King of the two banks :
Fair of face, who is on his great throne.
The one God among the Nine
Beloved as King of the Two Lands.
May he give life, prosperity, and health,
Keeness, favour and love.
And that mine eyes may behold Amûn every day
As is done for a righteous man
That sets Amûn in his heart.*

Thus the attendant in the Place-of-Truth, Nefer'abu, justified.

The prayer is expressed in conventional phrases ; but the petition that Ptah should enable him to look on Amûn is curious : why did he not ask this boon directly of Amûn himself ? But 'to behold the Sun-god' is doubtless meant as a synonym of restoration of sight.

On the reverse side of the *stela* is the following inscription :

Here begins the declaration of the might of Ptah, South-of-his-Wall, by the attendant in the Place-of-Truth, to the West of Thebes, Nefer'abu, justified, who says :

*I am a man who swore falsely by Ptah, Lord of Truth ;
And he caused me to behold darkness by day.
I will declare his might to him that knows him not, and to him that knows him :
To little and great.
Be ye ware of Ptah, Lord of Truth !*

¹ *M* 'd'. The word 'd' has the general meaning of wrong-doing, and is frequently employed in apposition to *m;t*, 'truth, right action' ; so that I cannot agree with Erman when he translates this adverb as 'vainly, wantonly' (*frevelhaft*). Perjury, not mere profanity, is evidently the crime in question.

² No. 589 ; cf. *Recueil*, vol. II, pp. 110 ff.

*Lo, he will not leave aside¹ the deed of any man.
 Refrain you from uttering the name of Ptah falsely:
 Lo, he that uttereth it falsely,
 Lo, he tumbles down.*

*He caused me to be as the dogs of the street,
 I being in his hand:
 He caused men and Gods to mark me,
 I being as a man that has wrought abomination against his Lord.
 Righteous was Ptah, Lord of Truth, toward me,
 When he chastised me.*

Be merciful to me; look upon me that thou mayest be merciful!

Thus the attendant in the Place-of-Truth to the west of Thebes, Nefer'abu, justified.

Two expressions for blindness are used in these texts: 'to see darkness by day' (IV, VI), and 'to see a darkness of thy making' (VIII, XII, XIII) In the contexts in which they stand it is natural to take them as referring to physical blindness; but if this interpretation be correct it is very strange that this affliction should occur proportionately so often, and be at the same time the only one specified by the victims of divine retribution. Are we to infer that the decoration of the dark tomb-chambers of the Necropolis (for that was of course the work of the draughtsmen, sculptors, and perhaps of 'attendants' of the Place-of-Truth) was specially detrimental to the eyesight? or that blindness was believed to be almost always a direct punishment for impiety? Blindness has of course been at all times very common among the poorer classes of the Egyptian people.

VII.

A *stela* at Turin² depicts in its upper part a barque bearing the moon's disk between horns, with the superscription *Luna-Thoth, the Great God, the merciful*; and below the worshipper Hey carrying a portable shrine on his shoulder; and the following text:

The servant of the Moon, Hey, he says:

*I am that man who uttered an oath falsely by the Moon concerning the.....³:
 And he caused me to see the greatness of his power before the whole land.
 I will declare thy might to the fishes in the river:*

To the birds in the heaven.

They shall say to their children's children:

Be ye ware of the Moon!

O merciful one, that art able to turn this away!

'This,' in the last line, is of course the affliction which Hey desires that the god will take from him.

¹ This phrase, *b[w w']h-f sp*, is left untranslated by Erman; but Dr Gardiner points out that there are similar instances of the use of the verb *w;h* in the sense of 'overlook,' 'ignore,' as an extension of the primary meaning 'to lay down.'

² No. 284 (according to Maspero; the number '4' quoted by Erman is doubtless a misprint); cf. *Recueil*, vol. iv, p. 143.

³ *Šdit* (formerly read '*ndit*') with the wood determinative; it is impossible to suggest any meaning that would suit the context.

VIII.

On another *stela*¹ at Turin the triple divinity Khonsu-Thoth-Horus is thus conjured :

Take good cheer, O Lord of the Gods.....

Be merciful, be merciful, thou fair one :

Be merciful, do thou love mercy.

Thus the draughtsman of Amûn, Pay, justified.

Below this Pay's mother is shown upon her knees, and in front of her is this inscription :

Praisegiving to Khonsu in Thebes, Neferhotpe :

Horus, Lord of gladness.

I give him praise :

I propitiate his Ka,

That he be merciful to me every day.

Lo, thou causest me to see a darkness of thy making,

If thou be merciful to me I will declare it.

How sweet is thy mercy, O Khonsu,

To the helpless one of thy city !

For the Ka of the lady Wazet-ronpet, justified. Her son made this memorial in the name of his Lord Khonsu, the draughtsman Pay, justified, who said :

Turn thy face, do mercy :

Hearken to me.....

IX.

The Turin *stela* no. 48 is the most difficult of all these texts, largely because of the errors of writing with which it is crowded.

The Priest of Amenôphis I, Nekhatûm, son (?) of Neferemhôtep, makes sacrifice to Amenôphis, whom he thus celebrates :

Praisegiving to the Lord of the Two Lands,

Amenôphis, to whom is given life,

In (?) the temple 'Merymé'et'² of Menkheprurê³,

The good living God.

He (Amenôphis) saves him that is (in) the Netherworld :

He gives air to him that he loves.

Whoso enters to thee, with troubled heart,

He comes forth rejoicing and exulting.

Great and (little) come to thee because of thy name,

When it is heard that thy name is mighty.

Whoso fills his heart with thee is glad :

Woe to whomso attacks thee !

¹ No. 299 ; cf. *Recueil*, vol. II, p. 118.

² This is the most likely meaning of the obscure phrase.

³ Tuthmosis IV. The oldest of the group of small brick temples from which many of these *stelae* probably came was built under this king, and the cult of his ancestor may appropriately have found a place there.

*Ye shall contend(?) with a crocodile out of the land of Nubia(?):
 And charm(?) a lion.
 Do I not stretch forth my hand to a hole,
 Wherein is a great serpent?
 Behold ye the authority of Amenôphis, to whom life is given,
 When he works a miracle for his city!*

The first three lines of the last strophe are exceedingly obscure, and such translation as I offer is mainly conjecture. This is unfortunate as the purpose of the whole monument may be contained in the reference to the serpent in its lair. This may be interpreted in three ways, according as one understands the sense of the vague temporal form of the verb.—(a) As given above: this is Erman's translation, and makes of the *stela* a thank-offering for a special gift of immunity from snake-bite for which Nekhatûm believes he has Amenôphis to thank. If this is the right rendering it makes the inscription of particular interest, as containing one of the very few references to snake-charmers from Pharaonic times. (b) 'Did I not stretch.....,' in which case we have a thank-offering for a danger averted by the intercession of the God-King. (c) 'Shall I not stretch.....,' merely a figure by which is extolled the protective influence of Amenôphis, potent in death for the welfare of the citizens of Thebes.

X.

A Turin *stela* for Pay¹ represents him worshipping the solar barque, described as *The setting Sun, the Great God*, with the following short hymn:

*Giving praise to the Sun:
 Homage to Harôëris.
 I give thee praise when I see thy beauty:
 I hymn Ré when he sets;
 O august, beloved, merciful God,
 Who hearest him that prays,
 Who hearest the entreaties of him that calls upon thee,
 Who comest at the voice of him that utters thy name!
 Thus the draughtsman Pay, justified.*

XI.

A small wooden shrine at Turin², perhaps made to contain a serpent, dedicated by *the attendant in the Place-of-Truth, Kes, renewing life*, for himself and several others, bears inscriptions of an entirely conventional character in honour of Khnûm, Satis and

¹ No. 309; cf. *Recueil*, vol. iv, p. 135. Of the three persons named Pay—this one, the dedicator of no. VIII, and the father of Nebrê (no. I)—it is impossible to say if any two or all three are the same man.

² No. 913; cf. *Recueil*, vol. II, p. 197. The *naos* is from Thebes, where Kes of Elephantine evidently dwelt, continuing the cult of the gods of his home.

Anûkis of Elephantine. In a general address to this triad is however introduced, with an abrupt change of style, the following reference to the Theban god :

*Mine eyes behold Amûn at his every feast,
That beloved God, who hearkens to humble entreaties,
Who stretches forth his hand to the humble,
Who saves the wearied.*

XII.

I give in conclusion two short inscriptions, similar in character to the preceding, which Erman has not included in his collection. On a Turin *stela*¹ Luna-Thoth in his boat is worshipped by a dog-headed ape, *Lord for all time*, and by *the sculptor in the Place-of-Truth, Neferronpet*, and his wife (or sister) and daughter :

*Giving praise to Luna-Thoth :
Homage to the Merciful One.
I give him praise to the height of heaven :

I adore thy beauty.
Be thou merciful to me,
That I may see that thou art merciful :
That I may observe thy might.
Thou causest me to see a darkness of thy making ;
Lighten me, that I may see thee.
For that health and life are in thine hand :
One liveth by thy gift of them.*

XIII.

On yet another Turin *stela*², dedicated by *the attendant in the Place-of-Truth, Onnofre, justified*, Onnofre's wife Nebtnûhet thus adores Thoth :

*Giving praise to Thoth :
Homage to the Lord of [Hermopolis.
What is this] that thou givest me, thou fair one ?
Be merciful ; lo, great is <thy> power ;
Thou causest me to see a darkness of thy making.
Be merciful to me that I may see thee.*

In these memorial and votive stones we find the manifestation of a religious emotion for which we shall look in vain at any earlier or later period in Egypt, until Christian times. It is not theological, it is unconscious of any break with orthodoxy or with the past ; it goes out toward the great gods as well as to popular local divinities ; but the whole personal attitude of the worshippers is radically different. To what causes this difference is due, is a question which it seems hardly possible to answer satisfactorily.

¹ No. 318 ; see *Recueil*, vol. II, p. 119.

² No. 279 ; see *Recueil*, vol. II, p. 119.

It is to be noted in the first place, that all the *stelae* come from the same place, and that the persons who dedicated them all belong to the same class, and that a relatively humble one—the artizans and ‘attendants’¹ attached to a district of the vast Necropolis of Thebes. That this should be so is striking; but the existence of very similar sentiments in certain other manuscript prayers and hymns of the same period precludes any theory that the new outlook was peculiar to these cemetery workers, who might in that case, forming as they did a community apart, be thought to constitute a local religious school or sect.

It may be the right view that we have here the evidence of a popular religious development of the Empire period, noticeable occasionally in the general literature of the time, but especially appealing to the poor, who would see in the new ideas of a merciful and forgiving god a solace for their difficult existence. It need not militate seriously against this view that the development cannot be traced in, say, the Eighteenth Dynasty; apart from purely formal tomb and temple inscriptions, and copies of the traditional ‘Book of the Dead,’ the religious documents of that period which popular influences might be allowed to affect are by no means numerous. At the same time, the discovery of more material might show us the beginnings of what on this hypothesis is a new tendency.

For it cannot be maintained that the Doctrine of Ikhnaton is such a beginning. In the splendid El-Amarna hymn the features which constitute its originality are, firstly its exclusive monotheism, and secondly its wonder at the omnipotent and universal activity of the god, and the marvellous variety of his creation. Neither of these features is to be found in our texts. Moreover, the Doctrine was anything but a popular movement; it was the somewhat learned product of a court circle inspired by a royal enthusiast. It is little likely that the masses of the people absorbed any of its teachings during its initiator’s lifetime, and its radical extirpation shortly after his death would give it no chance of permeating traditional beliefs. The Doctrine (in which God is brought into no closer relation with man than that of a provident creator and preserver) is not even a precursor of our texts; it is a vastly more salient but equally ephemeral manifestation of various obscure religious influences at work in the Empire period.

That some of these influences were foreign is not impossible. The Syrian immigrants who came or were brought to Egypt in such large numbers may have communicated to the people among whom they settled some of that consciousness of Divine mercy and human dependence thereon which is the character alike of Semitic religion and of our texts. A change of interior feeling rather than of external cult is just the form such an influence might take.

Alternatively, it may be thought that we see here the folk-faith, always existent undisturbed by official or philosophic changes and speculations, becoming temporarily articulate in favourable circumstances, and affecting somewhat the views of the more educated. The conditions of the time might well account for such a phenomenon. We find on the one hand a body of artizans taken from the lower ranks of the people, but rendered literate by the necessities of their occupation, with ample opportunities and

¹ For a discussion of the terms *ist m,t*, ‘Place-of-Truth,’ and *sdm-š*, ‘attendant’ with a list of persons bearing this title, see MASPERO in *Recueil*, vol. II, pp. 159 ff.

material for making for themselves monuments such as would be beyond the reach of others of the same class; living together (in numbers previously unknown) in a separate community away from the rest of the population of the Capital¹: on the other that wider expression of thought in writing which is one of the marks of a modern period; the loosening of many traditions; much desire for and sanction of novelty: what more natural than that these men should introduce upon the monuments which they made for themselves with their own hands conceptions current among the people from a remote past, but hitherto denied expression in writing? Assuming this to be the true solution of the problem, it is tempting to speculate on the extent to which the religion of Egypt might have been modified but for the rise to absolute spiritual and temporal power of a reactionary established church at the time of the later Ramessids.

Whatever theories one may devise, the fact remains that in these monuments we have remarkable and touching records of what was, for a time at all events, a religion of the poor in Ancient Egypt.

¹ For an account of the Necropolis workmen at this time, see ERMAN, *Life in Ancient Egypt* pp. 123 ff.