GODS OF OUR FATHERS: THE MEMORY OF EGYPT IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Richard A. Gabriel

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Gods of Our Fathers

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Foreword by Mordechai Gichon

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For Profesor Zygmund Friedemann
who showed me the path to knowledge
and first placed my foot upon it

and for

Suzi

"An honest god is the noblest work of man"
Robert G. Ingersoll

Contents

Foreword

There is great enjoyment in following the reasoning of an outstanding analytical mind offering solutions to complex matters that are frequently clouded by the minutiae of detail and controversial arguments marshaled by the "experts." Dr. Gabriel's book enables the interested reader to rise above the complex discussion between opposing schools of thought and grasp an understanding of important problems that are fascinating and vital for the genesis of two of the three main pillars of western culture: Judaism and Christianity.

From the early twentieth century onward, a few scholars have hinted at Judeo-Christianity's indebtedness to Pharaonic Egypt for the creation of monotheism and ethics, without denying the influence of Greek thought, the third of the above pillars. It is, however, only in this book, designed to familiarize the non-expert with the full impact of ancient Egyptian thinking on the western theological and ethical tradition, that one finds the long-overdue and strongly argued case that pays a debt of honor to the thoughts and ideas conceived in the Nile valley long before Moses, the Exodus, Christ, and the crucifixion.

Because of this important contribution, I thought it incumbent upon me to accept Professor Gabriel's request to add some ideas and remarks to his delightful and stimulating new book. His explicit request was addressed to me in my capacity as an archaeologist. But making stones speak, *saxa loquitur*, and answering the question put by Joshua (5.21) into the mouths of future generations, "what mean those stones?," necessitates comprehensive interpretations

that compel the archaeologist as well as other scholars to refer to history, religion, and ethics. Therefore, the following remarks all have a historical and interpretive bearing.

At the outset I wish to declare that there is a compelling logic in the assertion that the religious revolution in the second half of the fourteenth century B.C.E. (brought about by Pharaoh Akhenaten) was a formative forerunner of the Mosaic monotheism that evolved over a century later. It is likely, therefore, that the ethical thinking apparent in Pharaonic literature from this early date may well have deeply influenced the monotheism of the Israelites. This should come as no surprise. Egyptian cultural and spiritual influence on the Palestine landbridge must surely have followed the commercial and military activities along this singular Egyptian line of communication with Syria, Mesopotamia, and beyond. Its physical traces can be archaeologically proven to have existed from the Chalcoliticum onwards.

Permanent adherence of Palestine to the Egyptian empire of the foreign dynasty of the Asian Hyksos "Shepherd Kings" has been abundantly proved by archaeology from small finds, such as distinct pottery and scarabs, to the huge earthen ramparts of their fortifications discovered from Hazor in the north to Sharuhen (Tel el Far'ah) in the south. Though doubted by some eminent scholars, as correctly noted by Dr. Gabriel, this period most aptly fits the Biblical tradition of the entry of the Israelite tribes into Egypt and their peaceful sojourn there prior to the uprising of the native Egyptians and the reinstallation of a Pharaoh "which knew not Joseph" (*Exodus* 1:8) At least one Hyksos dignitary's name rings a familiar sound: Jacob-El. A fresco of the patriarchal age shows a typical Semitic nomad clan with all the appurtenances mentioned in the Bible entering Egypt, led by one "Avishai" (a good Israelite name; I Samuel, 26:6). This and other archeological evidence prove that we may adopt Professor Gabriel's thesis of Egyptian influence on the Israelite sojourners even if we accept the earlier dates of their entry into that county.

Subsequently, in the 15th century B.C.E. as a province divided between multiple petty lords ("Kings" in biblicial parlance), Palestine, then named "Canaan," came once more under the strong influence of Egypt. The excavations of Beth Shean serve as an excellent example of the direct religious penetration during this period, with all its implications. There, from stratum VII to stratum V, five temples were found, one superimposed upon the other, representing the reigns of Thutmose III to the successors of Ramses III (died 1167 B.C.E.). Four temples were Egyptian, and the last one was Egyptian-inspired. Before the last stage, the civil administration and military garrison were Egyptian. From Ramses III on, Philistines were used throughout Canaan as Egyptian mercenaries. These finds, along with similar discoveries in most of the

major excavated cites, afforded various means for the penetration of Egyptian thought and *Weltanschauung* into Canaan. This penetration was eased by the adoption of Akkadian, the Syrian-Mesopotamian *lingua franca*, by Egyptian officialdom for its contacts with its northern neighbors. Thus the correspondence of the Amenophian archives, discovered at Tel El Amarna in Upper Egypt, was conducted in this language. The development of the Canaanite alphabet adopted by the Israelites evolved out of Egyptian hieroglyphs, emphasizing once more contacts beyond material needs.

As Dr. Gabriel reminds us, not all of the latter Israelite tribes immigrated into Egypt. Some remained in Palestine, joining with the former only after the Exodus. These clans were, therefore, already exposed to Egyptian influence in Palestine proper, and thus eased the way for the subsequent spread of the Mosaic message acquired in Egypt. But as Professor Gabriel has argued, all this cannot explain the indebtedness of Mosaic monotheism to the short-lived attempt of Akhenaten to introduce strict monotheism into Egypt. Such indebtedness can only be more thoroughly explained by the presence of the Israelites in Egypt itself, as related in the Bible, in the period of Atenist revolutionary influence.

This position puts me (and Professor Gabriel) firmly in opposition to the present-day fashionable revisionism, fed by a variety of motives, which deprives the Bible of much of its historic veracity. Indeed, all non-religiously orthodox scholars agree that the historical narrative of the Bible is a pragmatic choice of historical events and traditions selected by the faithful to prove that only adherence to God's commands ensures security and a satisfactory life to his chosen people, high or low, as individuals as well as a national entity. Consequently, the compilers of the Old Testament during the Second Commonwealth (583 B.C.E.–70 C.E.) made use of manifold written and oral evidence not necessarily contemporary and at times contradictory in sundry detail to prove the point.

It is, however, completely incorrect to draw from these shortcomings and obvious omissions in the biblical narrative the conclusion that Bible history is largely an invention and thus of no worth as an historical document. Turning to the Exodus, its basic and undeniable truth is proven by the fact that no other people took upon itself the onus of the shameful origin from an ethnic group of fugitive bondsmen. All Old World nations great and small and all autonomous towns took pride to relate themselves and their origins to deities, semi-gods, and heroes. The openly declared descent from the socially lowest order as recorded of the Israelites in the Bible was such an absurd assertion that only its truly having happened, its historical kernel, can serve as an explanation. The extreme vulnerability to slander, derision, and worse, that were the outcomes

of such declarations as "slaves we were to Pharaoh" can easily be gauged by just the example of the Egyptian priest-historian Manetho who, circa 280 B.C.E., described the Jews in his official history as a band of leprous forced laborers who were compelled by Pharaoh to depart Egypt to avoid infecting the rest of the population. I note, by the way, without going into the details of Manetho's garbled account, that he took the sojourn and Exodus for true facts.

Why, then, do we not have any written record for much of Biblical history, including the sojourn into Egypt? The answer is that the preservation of ancient records is largely accidental. Therefore, to argue *ex silentio* on the basis of the absence of written evidence only, is not permissible. Until 1998, revisionists denied the historical existence of David and Solomon. It was only in 1998 that the discovery of an inscription in the biblical fortress of Dan proved beyond doubt the existence of the House of David. Beyond these considerations, however, the occurrence of the sojourn and the Exodus were in their day minor incidents with no indication of their tremendous consequences. There is no reason to assume that they were ever mentioned in official documents, nor was, most probably, the crucifixion of Jesus, an obscure pretender to the Jewish crown, over twelve centuries later. In both cases, contemporary annalists could not have known what consequences these "inconsequential" occurrences were to have all over the world.

Similarly to Jesus and Mohammed, who are not named in contemporary sources, but only, at the earliest, in their "own" holy scriptures, Moses has no contemporary mention. It is refreshing in light of much modern revisionism to find Dr. Gabriel dealing with Moses as an historical person, and rightly so, notwithstanding all obvious mythological and supernatural embellishments of Moses' life and deeds. Equally valuable is that Professor Gabriel draws attention to the ruthlessness of Akhenaten and his circle of religious innovators, an approach very different and more historically accurate than the humane image gathered by other analysts from Akhenaten's portrayal of himself as a poet and family man. In drawing his portrayal of Moses' equal ruthlessness, Dr. Gabriel lacks the mellowing influence of similar pictorial records. In any case, he has gotten it right in both instances. It is a sad lesson of history that religious (and for that matter also lay) innovators who tried to introduce their own creed into a completely hostile and uncomprehending social environment saw no other way but employing draconian measures. Mohammed's annihilation of the Pagan and Jewish tribes of the Arabian Peninsula two thousand years after Moses and Akhenaten, is but one of several examples of this same phenomenon.

In the case of Mosaic monotheism the danger of a backslide was even more acute than with Atenism. The wholly spiritual and non-corporal nature of God presented by Moses lacked the warmth of contact with a deity humanly

imaginable. Even to relate to the sun as the supreme god was much more comprehensive than to an undefined, wholly spiritual being. The notion of the unimaginable deity has always been difficult to grasp. Thus Christianity, unlike Islam later, did not forbid pictorial representation of God-Father. How much more difficult it must have been to adhere to the Mosaic idea in an emotionally completely uncomprehending environment and, therefore, how much greater the compulsion as Moses saw it to apply extreme measures.

In evaluating the personality of the historical Moses, Dr. Gabriel was compelled to interpret the Biblical narrative and to relate his interpretations against the backgrounds provided by eminent Egyptologists. To be sure, their views must be heard. Yet, nevertheless, there is room for doubt on such issues as the assertion of the absence of slavery in ancient Egypt. There is, as always, some contrary evidence to this view. But perhaps the confusion is between what is meant by slavery and servitude. There is no doubt that Egypt maintained its national irrigation system by forced labor, the justification being the divine overlordship of Pharaoh over the country and its people. While in a technical sense corvee labor is not slavery, for it is not a permanent condition of status, nevertheless bondage could be very hard and perceived as more harshly so when imposed, as Dr. Gabriel explains, on a pastoral people as the Israelites seem to have been in Egypt. Because pastoralists were not engaged in agriculture they could be more easily mobilized for longer periods than the peasantry to carry out sundry "public" works, conditions that could easily have led the Israelites to interpret such ruthlessly forced labor as slavery, whatever its legal definition.

Against this background I wish to follow Dr. Gabriel's own guiding maxim so evident in his research that *audeatur et altera pars*, literally, "the other side must also be heard." In this spirit I would like the reader to consider Moses' slaying of the Egyptian task master as the ultimate reaction of the oppressed throughout the ages. From this point of view, Moses' action must be judged like that of Hermodius and Aristogeiton, the slayers of the Athenian tyrant Hiparches, or Kulis and Garbois, who killed Heydrich, the Nazi *gauleiter* of Czechoslovakia, to mention only two pairs from the long list of known and unknown tyrannicides.

As correctly observed by Professor Gabriel, Moses must have been inspired by Akhenaten. Yet, Moses' choice of monotheism under the prevailing circumstances of the time is not explained by the fact that the Atenist example was available. In my view, Moses' adoption of monotheism is somewhat more understandable if, along with the stimulus of Atenist belief, we adhere to the opinion that there is a true kernel to the biblical tradition about Abraham and the Patriarchs, and that the real models of these mythological figures be-

queathed their clan and offspring some kind of monotheistic revelation. The knowledge of this tradition among the Israelites might have triggered Moses' reaction to the Atenist message. Thus it may have been that the two influences—the tradition of a single Israelite god and the stimulus of the Atenist revolution—came together in history to produce a new religious faith.

The idea of a divine trinity, as Professor Gabriel asserts, was almost certainly of Egyptian origin and the idea was very much alive in Hellenistic and early Roman society in the form of worship of Isis, Osiris, and Horus. There is no need for the attempts of various scholars to minimize the basic Jewish character of first century B.C.E./C.E. Galilee to make feasible the acquaintance of the early Christian communities with this doctrine. Jews of the day were, no doubt, just as aware of these beliefs as any non-Jews in Palestine, even as they rejected them. Still, we are surely and completely indebted to the then-existing Egyptian belief in a trinitarian god to introduce Jesus as divine Messiah and the Son of God into the existing Jewish theology of the day and thus pave the way for its spread in Christian garb over much of the world.

I agree with what Dr. Gabriel seems to take for granted, namely that the teaching of Jesus is completely Jewish and is absent from both post-Akhenatian Egypt and from early religious thought in the West. Without going into the divine nature of Christ (not a proper subject for archaeologists in any case!), we may assert that Christ as man was firmly based upon the teachings of both the Prophets and the Pharisee thinkers and reformers of his day. To a large degree, he may be acclaimed to have belonged to both. His lofty moral teaching must be viewed against the background of the insistence of the Prophets that the essence of Judaism lies in social justice toward the poor and the oppressed rather than in the Temple ritual. The Prophets' vision of the last days of eternal peace and brotherhood was old even then. The message had already been put into the mouth of Abraham when he tried to convince God to spare Sodom from annihilation "if only ten righteous men could be found in it." The Biblical message of "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" clearly heralds Jesus' preaching as well as that of the Rabbis. Suffice it to quote Hillel, a Jesus contemporary. When challenged to define Judaism in one sentence he answered, "What you do not want to be done to you, don't do it to another person, all the rest are only deliberations." I might well be argued that Jesus' ministry was a timely demonstration of this Hillelian imperative.

In the end it must be said that Professor Gabriel has written an interesting and intellectually challenging book that will engender a good deal of debate among historians who, for the most part, have not looked beyond conventional explanations for the origins of Judaism and Christianity. Theologians, too, will be unable to ignore it since it suggests that the "revelation hypothesis"

at the center of their discipline may in fact have quite another explantion. Religiously inclined thinkers and readers need to observe that the Almighty chooses in matters spiritual the same way as in matters material, to stimulate human progress by allowing for precedents that pave the way for the acceptance of monotheistic messages in their culminate revelation. The author, my good friend and colleague, has plunged into the deep waters of controversial intellectual challenge, thought, and contemplation in offering up this most erudite research into so controversial a subject. There is no better way to conclude my words of appreciation for his work than to finish quoting Hillel's challenge to all new questions: "As for all the rest, go, read, and learn."

Mordechai Gichon
Professor Emeritus of Archaeology and Military History
Tel Aviv University
Fellow of the Society of Antiquities

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1

The Dawn of Conscience

Civilization requires evidence of moral thinking if it is to be distinguished from a collection of archaeological artifacts, for civilization is no more the sum of its architecture, art, and technology than a warehouse full of spare parts is equivalent to a functioning machine. Civilization is what it is because of the intellectual life of its inhabitants, for it is how human beings think and act, more than their archaeological leavings, that distinguishes civilization from groups of social barbarians. Central to this intellectual life, inseparable from it, is moral awareness and thinking. Only when humans have reached this point can it be said that they have achieved an awareness of their transcendent nature. Only when humans living together in complex groups become aware of the inner voice that we commonly call conscience does a crude social grouping begin to move toward civilization. It is here that man begins to discover what it is that separates him from the beasts, a difference that makes possible the contemplation of moral qualities like justice, charity, mercy, and forgiveness. Out of this awareness of our own moral intuition, what Breasted calls the "dawn of conscience,"[1] arises our ability to fashion gods in our own image, to make of them idealized versions of ourselves so that by emulating them we become more like ourselves. Without the dawn of conscience, the history of man would be nothing but a long, dark night.

At what time and place in history did man first awake to this sense of conscience? What people were the first to look inward to arrive at standards of right and wrong, first to guide the actions of common men and then, inevita-

bly, to curtail the actions of the powerful? This question is of crucial importance, for the development of conscience and a social ethical sense marks the vital step on the road to a civilization characterized by justice and human development, which is to say, the difference between civilization and barbarism. The ability to arrive at and develop doctrines of basic morality rooted in experience and reason permits the creation of religious values supportive of the fundamental humanness of man. Without a moral sense of some sophistication and intellectual activity, humans create powerful deities that reflect only their own worst fears. Then all that is human becomes subordinated to myth, mystery, and unquestioned faith while life becomes defined by fear and punishment. Under these conditions intellectual and moral development cease and everything important becomes subordinated to power. There are few civilizations that have not fallen into this trap.

Where, then, do we find the first evidence of humans struggling to discover and develop their moral sense? The answer is not in the West, although that is the common view. It is often assumed that the first flicker of the age of moral reasoning was found in the age of revelation with the emergence of the Decalogue of Moses and the ethical postulates that attended the founding of the Jewish religion. This stream of moral awareness, so the argument goes, broadened with the revelations of Christianity and the Gospels forming the core of Western moral thinking for the last two thousand years. This argument offers a somewhat myopic Western view of itself as the center of all things great. Similar myopias are found in the common belief that the Greeks "invented" philosophy and Hippocrates was "the father of modern medicine." Perhaps one could affirm that serious moral thinking began *in the West* with such occurrences, but it is not where *mankind's* moral conscience first emerged. Rather, evidence of the first stirring of moral conscience is found in Egypt, long before there was a West at all, three thousand years before there were any Israelites and four thousand years before there were any Christians.

But why Egypt? There are only two civilizations sufficiently old to qualify as the origin of ethical thinking: Egypt and Mesopotamia (Sumer). Both emerged about six thousand years ago and developed writing and man's first serious theologies at about the same time. But it was Egypt that gave the world the gift of conscience. The early societies of Mesopotamia were social orders without moral vision of any kind that transcended material self-interest. They were pragmatic commercial cultures focused upon material wealth, much like modern-day American capitalism, overly concerned with economic, commercial, and legal matters of contract and worth to the utter neglect of higher thinking. Mesopotamian science, too, was highly pragmatic and nonabstract, characteristics that allowed their study of floods and celestial bodies to be

turned to good use in agriculture and religious ritual while ignoring any ethical implications. In their religious thinking the Mesopotamians could not conceive of any purpose to man other than to serve the gods with ritual observance, the only reason the gods themselves created mankind in the first place. And when men wore out from age and suffering they were consigned to a dismal Hades-like existence where vicious and virtuous alike took up residence and suffered more. Aside from commerce and ritual observance, man per se had no worth beyond pragmatic utility. Even in the Babylonian penitential psalms, there is no evidence of the idea that sin is comprised of offenses against fellow men. There is only sin as ritual offense against the gods who might strike out but only because they are powerful, not because they are just.[2] In their hymns to the Babylonian moon god, of the 48 lines of poetry dealing with god and man only one line can reasonably be determined to be concerned with truth or righteousness. All else is mindless adoration. One also senses the absence of human moral concerns in Mesopotamian art. Their sculpture shows no evidence of portraiture, a complete lack of interest in the interpretation of character or human traits.[3] Babylonian statues are statements of power and fear, testaments to a harsh rule by iron kings.

Mesopotamia's history worked against the evolution of a moral sense for another reason. For over a thousand years (3200–2200 B.C.E.) it was plagued by constant warfare between the many city-states that comprised the common culture and language of the area. This led to the development of weapons and tactics that far outpaced those of the rest of the ancient world,[4] but prevented the rise of a truly national authority that could provide the peace required for the development of a sophisticated society. For all of its history, Mesopotamia was ravaged by the conflicts of warring city-states only to be afflicted further after 2000 B.C.E. by the wars of violent, short-lived rival empires. Even the few prolonged periods of peace were little more than oppressive periods of authoritarian rule. Warriors are good for many things no doubt, but warrior societies rarely rise above pragmatic concerns of daily life. Justice and fairness, when considered at all, usually take second place.

Mesopotamian law reflected all these harsh realities. It was a law without moral foundation, among the first examples of a positivist legal system based solely upon the command and power of the king. Even the famous but much misunderstood Code of Hammurabi is barely a legal code at all. It is, instead, merely a listing of punishments for specific crimes. It is comment enough on the Babylonian legal system to note that this list was regarded as a great advance precisely because it mandated specific punishments rather than permitting legal authorities to make them up on the spot! But any idea of justice, of mitigating punishment for extenuating circumstance, is absent. Hammurabi's code is

lex talionis and justice has little to do with it. Most damning is the fact that Babylonian law did not apply equally to all. Hammurabi goes to great lengths to ensure that punishments are meted out by social status. A crime that might bring a fine for a merchant could cost a peasant his life. Whatever influence Mesopotamian culture had on the civilization of the West, it is to be found only in externals and not in the fundamentals. And so it was that the Babylonian myths of creation (Genesis), the flood (Noah) and the birth myth of Sargon (Moses), the introduction of cuneiform script as a commercial language, astronomy, some medicine, and considerable military innovation all influenced the West, but Babylonian morality contributed little if anything to the moral heritage of the Western world.

A completely different set of circumstances obtained in ancient Egypt laid the basis for a different kind of society, one in which moral awareness, intellectual inquiry, and theological speculation could flourish. By the end of the stone age desiccation around the Nile valley turned the grasslands to desert forcing men and animals closer to the river in a teeming hunter's paradise. By the sixth millennium agriculture and animal husbandry were common. The soil was rich and fertile though requiring hard work and the Nile's watery abundance constantly threatened to overrun the land. By 5000 B.C.E., Egypt probably had within it a million souls living in villages and towns along the river. Clusters of towns comprised what the Greeks later called *nomes*. Some scholars suggest that it was at this time, in the predynastic period beginning around 4000 B.C.E., that a new group of people arrived in Egypt and brought about profound changes. Where these people came from remains a mystery. Their skeletal remains show a people of different ethnic stock with larger bodies and wider skulls than the natives.[5] Artifacts relating to art, pottery, and burial practices suggest strong similarities with Mesopotamian culture. At this time cuneiform pictorial writing first appeared in Egypt along with cylinder seals and mace heads of Mesopotamian design.[6] Architectural innovations such as niched brick walls and false doors also make their appearance, suggesting further a people of Mesopotamian origin.[7] Another theory is that these foreigners were Libyans. Ethnically distinct, white-skinned, red-haired and blue-eyed, the Libyans had lived next to the Egyptians for millennia.[8] Whoever they were, these foreigners soon established themselves as kings, introducing the belief that they were gods. Over time the new arrivals fused into the native population leaving the idea of kingly divinity as their legacy.

One of these predynastic kings, probably Scorpion, set out to construct a massive irrigation scheme to control the Nile flood. The Nile runs for more than 700 miles and any attempt to control its waters required the cooperation or conquest of the entire nation. At this time Egypt was divided into a number

of feudal baronies (*nomes*), each possessing its own capital, army, local god, and powerful chieftain. Scorpion or some other king unified the *nomes* probably by force and set upon Egypt its first national government. Around this time the local sun god of Heliopolis, Re, was transformed into an Egyptian national god. Some powerful prince of Heliopolis whose name remains unknown brought the sun god into the realm of secular affairs, imposing on the unified country the idea that the king was the son of god. The installation of Re, "he who overlooks all gods; there is no god who overlooks thee," as a national deity who intervened in the secular affairs of men was of great importance. The desire of Re that men do *Maat* rests at the root of the ethical precepts of the Egyptian state. Re's command that man do what is right on this earth is the earliest Egyptian ethical precept. The precept is, of course, linked to a divine command at this point. Man is not yet ready to move to his own experience as the source of his moral judgment. But here in Egypt some six thousand years ago we find that he has taken the first step.[9]

The First Union lasted for several centuries before conflict among the feudal *nomes* forged two great baronial coalitions into two independent kingdoms. The center of the northern kingdom was the town of Dep in the Nile Delta where the cobra goddess was worshipped. This was the kingdom of the Red Land where its king wore a red crown. The southern kingdom had its capital at Nekhen (near Hieraconopolis) and was called the White Land. Here the vulture god, Nekhbet, was worshipped and its king wore a white crown.[10] Here are the two lands of great antiquity that gave every pharaoh from this time forward one of his five official titular names. Some time around 3400 B.C.E. a powerful king named Narmer rose to power in the southern kingdom and conquered the kingdom of the north thereby becoming the founder of the First Dynasty. As a symbol of unification, Narmer became the first to wear the double crown. The great king moved his capital from Nekhen to a new capital at the neck of the Delta where the southern lands begin. Narmer constructed the City of the White Walls, Memphis, that remained the capital of Egypt for the next seventeen hundred years. Thus had arisen the first great civilized state at a time when most of Asia and Europe were still inhabited by scattered communities of stone age hunters.

Whereas Mesopotamia was divided by constant warfare, the unification of Egypt by Narmer brought into being a large, rich, peaceful kingdom with a genuine national government and national culture. Where Babylon had suffered civil war, Egypt's leaders brought civil peace. Unlike Mesopotamia, which was further disturbed for more than a thousand years by periodic invasions, Egypt was blessed by geography with secure and nearly impenetrable borders. Great deserts to the west and east were formidable barriers to invasion.

To the south the Nile's passage through Aswan and Elephantine afforded protection by swift rapids and easily defended natural strongpoints. To the north the Mediterranean Sea, what Egyptians called the Great Green, protected Egypt from that direction. The result was a nation that was almost hermetically sealed, self-sufficient in food, well-governed, prosperous, and secure. A thousand years of peace provided the social experience for contemplating morality and religion. No culture on earth was more sophisticated in its religious and moral thinking than Egypt.

It is likely that man's contemplation of religion was the first stimulus that led to an awareness of the inner moral voice that lies at the root of conscience from which moral and ethical thinking eventually arose. Egyptian attempts to discern the mind of god led inevitably, as they still do whenever we are faced with personal crisis, to a reflective morality that for the first time in human history pressed man to think about right conduct. The point of reference was still the mind of god, but the process of ethical evolution had begun. And it began in Egypt very long ago indeed. The first moral treatise produced by man is found in Egypt at the beginning of the Old Kingdom or Pyramid Age (2780–2250 B.C.E.) in a document called the *Memphite Drama*. It constitutes the earliest known discussion of right and wrong in the history of humankind.[11]

The *Memphite Drama* survived by happy accident. In the eighth century B.C.E. the Ethiopian Pharaoh Shabaka came across an old papyrus of ancient writings and had copies made to preserve it. One of these survived to be found and translated in the modern age revealing the oldest known philosophical discussion. The treatise describes events that can only be found in the period of the Second Union or about 3400 B.C.E.[12] The document is presented in dramatic form much like the Christian mystery plays of the Middle Ages, which employed drama to frame the discussion of important moral lessons. The *Drama* is a semi-theological, semi-philosophical discussion of the origins and moral responsibilities of man and is the first written evidence of man's propensity for moral discernment in history. Produced by a priestly body of temple thinkers at Memphis, it begins with an explanation of the creation of the universe by Ptah, a local god whom the priests had raised to the status of a national deity to replace the old sun god Re whose powers were not diminished but merely assumed by Ptah. It was Narmer (Menes?) who established the Second Union and the new capital at Memphis. His raising of Ptah to the status of a national deity was probably designed to reduce the influence of the powerful city and priesthood of Heliopolis that had been the locus of secular and religious power during the First Union. The *Memphite Drama* is the first attempt in human history to conceive of a civic moral order as an integral part of a cosmic moral order, and for a thousand years the ideas expressed in this seminal docu-

ment shaped the manner and function of Egyptian political and moral life until the end of the Pyramid Age (2250 B.C.E.) brought forth a further refinement of its ethical concepts.

The *Drama* is complex abstract thinking of the highest kind. Egyptian thinkers see a world that is functioning intelligibly and are trying to discern how and why the order they see about them exists. It is, they decide, the product of the will of Ptah from which everything comes and by which everything is kept alive. The world is brought into being by an active intelligence who keeps it all going. Ptah is the creator and animator of all life, human and otherwise. The act of creation is remarkably conceived by the Egyptian thinkers—perhaps the world's first philosophers—who reckon that Ptah made everything that exists by the agency of his mind, that is, first he thought of the thing and then willed it into being. By calling out the names of things Ptah caused them to exist, for all things "came into being through that which the heart (the mind to the Egyptians) thought and the tongue (speech) commanded."[13] One cannot but point out the obvious similarity of this idea to the Christian concept of creation, for here we see what appears to be the *Logos* doctrine of creation expressed by the Gospel of St. John. John describes the act of creation in the following words: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and life was the life of men.*"[14] Some scholars, like the renowned E. A. Wallis Budge, find in the *Memphite Drama* the first expression of Egyptian monotheism, a subject to which we will return later. According to Budge,

> the priests of Ptah had at that time arrived at the highest conception of God which was ever reached in Egypt, and their religion was a pure monotheism. They evolved the idea of God as Spirit, a self-created, self-subsisting, eternal almighty mind-god, the creator of all things, the source of all life and creation, who created everything that is merely by thinking . . . the Word which gave expression to the thought which "came into his mind."[15]

Here the Egyptians are affirming the existence of a cosmic moral order, an order governed by laws of right conduct where God approves of some conduct and disapproves of others, where "life is given to the peaceful and death is given to the guilty." The good man does "that which is loved" and the evil man "does what is hated."

The *Drama* is the earliest discussion of right conduct and constitutes the earliest example of man's ability to draw the distinction between that which is good and that which is not. It is truly the event horizon of man's moral thinking, the first attempt to think in abstract ethical terms and to judge his own be-

havior precisely in those terms. It is a marvelous moment and it is happening for the first time in human history as far as we know. The *Drama* also contains within it the seeds of a larger *societal* ethic that will emerge at a later date. From the dawn of time the Egyptians believed their king was divine while remaining no less a creation of god than other creatures. So if the god commands that men do certain things and not others, surely this applies to the sovereign as well. The sovereign was, therefore, charged with being a righteous ruler in a politico-social sense and bore the responsibility to see that *Maat* (justice, right, righteousness) was done because god desired it. Here for the first time is the core of the doctrine that the power of the sovereign may be limited by ethical precept, an idea that came to occupy Western political thinkers for hundreds of years.

Only a few centuries after the *Memphite Drama*, other ethical texts began to make their appearance. Among the most important of these is the *Maxims of Ptahhotep* (circa 2700 B.C.E. or even older)[16], which provides us with the specifics of what right conduct meant to the Egyptians of the period. The *Maxims* takes the form of a letter written by an ageing government official to his son, who he hopes will succeed him in his post, and offers advice on how to behave properly. It is a prescription for right conduct, the oldest formulation of right conduct found in any literature.[17] Over half the 43 maxims proffered by Ptahhotep deal with personal character and conduct. The remainder address proper official conduct by a government functionary. The *Maxims* offer us a valuable glimpse into the moral insight of the Pyramid Age.

Ptahhotep begins with the admonition that his son must always "harken" to what is right. The idea that one learns ethics by watching and listening to ethical people finds its distant echo in early Greek ideas on the pedagogy of ethics. While it seems an obvious method, one cannot help but note the absence of ethical instruction in our own institutions of higher learning on the nonsensical grounds that one cannot teach ethics without somehow imposing one's values upon the student! From Ptahhotep's letter we see clearly that the Egyptians thought ethics could be learned. Thus it is that men can be taught to behave ethically through instruction, experience, and example. Right conduct is, therefore, within the grasp of all men and thus a personal and social responsibility. The maxims below provide a good idea of what the Egyptians thought right conduct to be.[18]

"*Let thy mind be deep and thy speech scanty . . . But let thy mind be steadfast as long as thou speakest."* (Say little, but when you speak up, have the courage of your convictions.)

"If thou hast become great after thou wert little, and hast gained possessions after thou wert formerly in want, . . . be not unmindful of how it was with thee before." (Never forget where you came from.)

"*When thy fortunes are evil, thy virtues shall be above thy friends.*" (Only your own virtues and reputation will see you through difficult times.)

"*If thou art a successful man establish thy household. Love thy wife in the house as it is fitting.*" (Egyptians prized family above all else.)

"*If thou desirest that thy conduct be worthy, withhold thee from all evil, and beware of avarice. It is an ill and incurable disease, wherein is no intimate association*." (Greed destroys a man and makes all his friends of uncertain loyalty.)

"Hold fast the truth and transgress it not."

"Precious to a man is the virtue of his son, and good character is a thing remembered." (Filial piety was among the highest Egyptian virtues; good character is its own reward and is noted by others.)

"Established is the man whose standard is righteousness, who walketh according to its way."

Among the more interesting instructions are those dealing with how to raise a good son and what to do if the son fails to become an ethical person. Raising a proper son requires ethical instruction by his father. Thus, *"If he lives correctly (the son), inclines to thy character, harkens to thy instruction, while his purposes are worthy in thy house, and if he conserves thy possessions as should be, then seek for him every good thing.*" And if the son does not harken properly, what then? Ptahhotep is clear enough. *"If he is of poor character, if his purposes are evil and he opposes all that thou sayest, his mouth is defiled with evil speech, . . . thou shalt drive him away; he is not thy son, for he has not been born to thee*."[19] This latter admonition is remarkable in that it demonstrates the Egyptian concern for the primacy of character and personal ethics over the familial blood tie. Even a son is to be cast out if he is of poor character. This is very different from the precedence that the ancient Israelites and Mesopotamians gave to blood loyalties against almost all other obligations ethical or otherwise, and shows clearly the level of moral sophistication that the Egyptians had achieved at even this early time.

The *Maxims of Ptahhotep* is the earliest surviving example of what are called the "wisdom texts," a body of Egyptian literature comprised of letters, plays, moral tales, and stories stressing right conduct. The wisdom texts are only one source of our knowledge of how the Egyptians saw their world. The Pyramid Texts are another. The Pyramid Age is that time when powerful Egyptian kings constructed massive pyramid tombs and funerary temples to protect their mummified bodies so that their souls might achieve everlasting life. The idea of an afterlife was present very early in Egypt and was well established even in predynastic times as was the practice of providing the deceased with sustenance to support him in the afterlife.[20] From predynastic times to the end of the Pyramid Age an afterlife spent in the presence of the gods was thought to be re-

served for the king and his powerful barons and had not yet developed to include all men. The theological system of the Memphite priests taught that *all* men must do *Maat* and the idea developed early that the sovereign, too, would be subject to judgment after death by the god who would assess the moral quality of his life on earth. And so Egyptian kings had records of their lives and good deeds inscribed on the walls of their tombs so that the gods might know of the proper moral quality of their lives and render a favorable judgment. These funerary inscriptions were highly idealized stereotyped biographies of the deceased, testifying to good conduct and are highly ethical in tone and content. Carved in stone, thousands of these tomb inscriptions, called the Pyramid Texts, survived and provide us with a valuable insight into Egyptian moral thinking.

It is in these inscriptions that we find the earliest utterances of man that he could be called to answer for his actions and that his actions on this earth might determine his eternal fate. This is a vitally important idea and completely original as far as we know. It holds man responsible for his own actions, and it is this responsibility and free will that rest at the center of genuine ethics. Nowhere else do we find such thinking at so early a date. In Mesopotamia man underwent no such judgment. After death both vicious and virtuous alike were consigned to a Hades-like existence regardless of the moral quality of their lives. Two thousand years after the Egyptians the Israelites came to recognize the value of an ethical life but did not connect it with either an afterlife or a moral judgment of the deceased, the apocalytic literature of Daniel notwithstanding. It was not until the advent of Christianity, three thousand years after the Egyptians, that the world again witnessed an ethical doctrine that determined one's place in eternity on the basis of moral behavior in this life. One might wonder at this point how the two ethical doctrines, Egyptian and Christian, are connected.

The Pyramid Texts reveal a number of recognizable moral maxims to which Egyptians were expected to conform. An Egyptian nobleman of the twenty-seventh century B.C.E. left the following record of his life. "I gave bread to all the hungry . . . I clothed him who was naked . . . I never oppressed one in possession of his property . . . I spoke no lie, for I was one beloved of his father, praised of his mother, excellent in character to his brothers and amiable to his sister."[21] Here is a clear affirmation that one's standing in the community is of value in its own right. The Egyptian concern for personal character is clearly evident in the pyramid inscriptions, but the earliest written occurrence of the word "character" itself is found in the *Maxims of Ptahhotep*: "*Precious to a man is the virtue of his son, and good character is a thing remembered.*"[22] The Egyptian word for character derives its original meaning from the word "to shape or

form" and is usually employed to designate the work of the potter in shaping clay vessels on his wheel. Its meaning is strikingly parallel to our own modern word for character, which is derived from the Greek meaning the impression obtained from an engraving seal on yielding clay or wax. In both cases the idea is that man's character is something that is shaped by action and experience. Ethical thinking requires a vocabulary, and it is in Egypt that we find the earliest use of the words "character" and "conscience" without which sophisticated moral discourse cannot be undertaken.

Not surprisingly Egyptian moral behavior was originally rooted within the family, which stood at the center of Egyptian life. Gradually, however, the idea of right conduct spread to the treatment of other men (social ethics) and eventually, under the stimulus of the judgment of the god, to the king and the powerful (political ethics). These developments, as we shall see, were accompanied by similar developments in the wisdom literature until the expectation of moral behavior on the part of the powerful became widespread among the populace. The proposition that the king had moral responsibilities to his subjects and that the exercise of power was accordingly limited by them represents the dawn of a radically new idea found nowhere else in the ancient world at this time. For the first time in human history we see the doctrine that political legitimacy depends upon the moral behavior of the ruler and, by implication, on the moral content of his laws and judgments. Here, two thousand years before Plato, is the core idea of *The Republic*.

The Egyptian idea of law was strongly influenced by Egyptian ethics. Early on Egyptians abandoned the idea, common in history for the next four millennia, that law was merely the expressed will of the powerful sovereign. The responsibility of the Egyptian king to do justice extended to making certain that the evil done by other men did not go unpunished. So the exercise of justice (*Maat*) required that the law be just in both content and exercise, otherwise the king himself would be morally culpable in failing to do his ethical duty. And so it was that in Egypt everyone regardless of social standing or wealth was subject to the same law in the same way. This included women and foreigners. Egypt developed a sophisticated multilevel system of courts and magistrates to hear cases, and the availability of the system to the common man is demonstrated by the thousands of court documents that have survived recording the arguments of the litigants and the decisions rendered.[23] That justice rather than power was at the center of Egyptian law was demonstrated symbolically by the fact that the king's vizier and chief legal officer had the official title of "priest of *Maat*" and court judges wore an image of *Maat* on a thick gold chain around their necks as a sign of their office.[24] It was Egypt that gave the world the vision of a society governed by just laws and limited sovereign power.

It is obvious that Egyptian ideas of ethics were radically different from anything found in the ancient world at the time or, for that matter, substantially different from those found in most other cultures for millennia to come. The Egyptian idea of ethics was broader than what we in the West are accustomed to, having derived many of our ideas from the Greeks. In both cases ethics involves a concern for right conduct. But Egyptian ethics also includes matters that Westerners would normally ascribe to religion. Thus, for ancient Egyptians the question of how to treat a man in business, how to do what the gods wish a person to do, and how to address the gods properly in prayer were all equally ethical concerns. At the center of each of them is the central moral concept of *Maat*, perhaps the earliest abstract term found in any language of antiquity.

What, then, did *Maat* really mean to the Egyptian mind? The term itself originally derives from a concrete geometrical or physical term meaning "straightness" or "evenness" in the way that a straight edge or a ruler is useful in determining whether a thing is straight or true. There is a parallel in the origin of the ancient Israelite word *Iasar*, which originally meant "straight" in a geometrical sense but later came to mean "right" or "correct" in the ethical sense.[25] *Maat* and *Iasar* imply the existence of some "honest measure" that can be used to determine if other things are straight or true. The implication is that the "honest measure" is an objective standard against which men and their actions may be assessed.

But in the ethical/philosophical sense *Maat* means much more than to do what is right. *Maat* means also the just order established by god in nature and society through the act of creation. It is the dynamic order that is behind *all* creation, an order man must strive to preserve by conducting himself properly toward god, his fellow men, and all things, even animals. For the Egyptian all life was of a single piece governed by the same moral law. This idea is close to the medieval notion of a natural moral order that is the material expression of the divine order in which human law and human action are participants in and reflections of the larger order of the universe. In the Egyptian view, however, unlike the later Aristotelian concept, this cosmic order does not govern itself nor is it governed by some Unmoved Mover. When men do evil, they bring disorder to the natural order of things. Accordingly, it is *man's* responsibility to preserve and restore the natural order by doing what is right, that is, *Maat*. Without human moral action, disorder would threaten everything. When men act properly they are doing precisely what god wants them to do. But Egyptian ethical thinkers did not conceive of man as merely a servant of the gods as the Babylonians did. For Egyptians, men were free to choose their fate. To do *Maat*, therefore, also made man good in himself for living an ethical life was the best way to live. Ptahhotep made this point when he remarked that,

"Long-lived (his reputation lives after him) is the man whose rule of conduct is in accordance with *Maat* . . . but the covetous (disorderly) have no tomb."[26] In short, proper conduct makes one a good person and virtue becomes its own reward.

The Egyptian idea of how to practice ethics differed radically from the idea of ethical practice as it later emerged among the Israelites and Christians. For the Israelites it was Yahweh who handed down detailed juridical maxims as the ethical quintessence of the scriptures. These maxims were later interpreted and added to by the rabbis to produce a piety that was achieved through extreme legalistic practice. Man was enmeshed in an almost impenetrable thicket of moral prohibitions regulating all important aspects of his moral, ritual, and physical life. Ethics meant keeping the law. In this way if men were knowledgeable of the law and obedient to it, they could not go astray. For the Israelites and later the early Christians, the law was laid down in detail and the detail itself aimed at control over human behavior by being specific about what was to be done in specific circumstances. Free will was reduced to acts of acquiescence that were regarded, quite improperly in the Egyptian view, as genuine choice.[27]

Egyptian moral thinkers saw applied ethics much differently. Greek ethical thinking closely paralleled Egyptian thinking on the same subject although almost two thousand years later. In Egyptian thinking *Maat* is a *general principle* that must yet be applied in a specific set of circumstances and, as such, there is a complete absence of precise legalistic specifics that apply from case to case. One must always do *Maat*, it is true, but how one does *Maat* in a specific set of circumstances is a matter of the actor's knowledge and experience. At the center of moral behavior is the necessity for the actor to reason from the general to the particular so as to determine what the proper course of moral action is and to possess the freedom to choose to undertake it or not. This freedom implies that one is prepared to submit one's choice, if need be, to later review by the law or other moral inspection. Egyptian ethics appears to have placed reason and free will at the center of the actor's moral calculus, something the Greeks finally did as well but the Israelites and early Christians did not.

To conceive of *Maat* as a basic value achievable by human action has significant consequences for how the Egyptians conceived the role of law in achieving justice. The laws of Egypt are not conceived of as divine injunctions from god as, for example, is the Decalogue of Moses in the Old Testament. Instead, laws are edicts fashioned by the king "in the exercise of his supreme power, but by virtue of his insight into the nature of *Maat*."[28] Law is man-made not god-sent, and its purpose is to guide humans to reduce disorder in the world by doing what is right. To be sure, law is participatory in the grand ideal of *Maat* by which standard human law may be judged as good or bad. But it is human law

fashioned by human minds and hands nonetheless, not merely complying with specific divine commands, that brings about justice in the world. Justice being a product of human activity, it is man and not god who bears the ultimate moral responsibility for the justice or injustice of human law.

The problem of how to correctly operationalize a moral maxim in specific circumstances remained as much a difficulty for the ancient Egyptians as it does for ethical thinkers today. This problem always presents itself whenever one places intellect and free will at the center of a moral calculus, which may be why so many in the modern world seem to prefer written moral codes to genuine ethics. Codes, unlike ethics, require little thinking and less choice on the part of the individual. The Egyptians sought to solve the problem by the simple device of attempting to teach ethics! The goal was to help the individual to acquire the experience and insight necessary to make proper moral choices. This is precisely the goal of the wisdom texts. In the Houses of Life, scriptoria, where individuals were taught to read and write, many of the copybook exercises required of the schoolboys utilized questions of theology and morality as examples. From an early age Egyptian teachers saw proper moral instruction of the young as part of their task. The emphasis on developing a moral sense stressed the need for the individual to "harken," that is, to listen, watch, experience, and learn. Anticipating Aristotle by more than two millennia, one Egyptian scribe summed up the goal thus: "The fool who does not harken, he cannot do anything. He regards knowledge as ignorance."[29]

Egyptian ethics was really an ethic of the attitude of the mind, a disposition to think about what is right and a propensity to act upon it because to do so was part of the natural order of the cosmos and the society of men. The requirement that the general moral maxim be applied in specific circumstances through the use of reason and free will meant that the consequences of one's actions must be taken into account. And so an integral part of the moral calculus was the effect one's action had upon other men or, later, upon society. There could be no question of ignoring the effects of one's actions on the ground that one was following some divine will or, more pragmatically, that one had good intentions. True enough, Egyptian ethics were centered upon man's actions, both of omission and commission. But Egyptian ethics also had a healthy regard for the facts and mental attitudes that influenced human behavior. This joining together of *intentions* and *consequences* of one's actions in assessing the good or evil of human actions must be counted as a remarkable advance in the continuing moral discourse accompanying human history.

This manner of examining ethics led the Egyptians to a unique view of sin as well. Unlike the Israelites and early Christians, the Egyptians did not believe that sin represented a transgression of divine law or, as did the Babylonians, a

personal ritual affront to the gods. To be sure, certain actions were sinful because the gods did not wish men to do such things, but there was no expectation that the gods would punish sin on this earth. There are no instances in Egyptian theology, for example, that parallel the murderous conduct of Yahweh against the sinners among his own people.[30] Egyptians condemned sin for more pragmatic reasons, that it injured other men and even oneself by destroying one's reputation and character. Adultery, for example, was severely punished precisely because it threatened the all-important Egyptian family. There was, in effect, no ontological idea of sin in Egyptian thinking.[31] No one but the individual himself caused sin and no one but the individual was responsible for it. The idea of a sinful human nature so central to Christian ethics but unconvincing to Judaism was absent in Egyptian moral thinking.

For Egyptians the range of human conduct governed by ethical principles was very broad and included man's conduct toward his fellows, the gods, society, and even animals and natural things like trees that bore fruit or precious water.[32] The Egyptian belief that men ought to be happy on this earth meant as well that Egyptians were concerned about the ethical treatment of the self lest man harm himself through immoral actions. And so it was that they stressed proper conduct as the best way to achieve good character and to be content in this life. At the same time a religious impetus for ethical conduct is also evident. The Egyptian felt strongly that by doing *Maat* he was doing what god wanted him to do and he prayed to his god for help and guidance in doing what was right. In this sense Christian and Egyptian ethics share an important similarity. In both, ethics is more than just an intellectual perception and exercise attained by insight and experience. In both, there is a strong charismatic and transcendent element as in trying to do what is right one might reasonably call upon god to help one determine what to do and find the strength to do it. For both there is a striving to do right here on earth that is connected with a striving for salvation (doing what god wants) through knowledge and action. For Egyptians and Christians ethics comes to involve intellectual, charismatic, and even magical elements that affect the way men think and act.[33]

The religious dimension of ethical awareness was never far from the surface of Egyptian life. The most powerful and influential of these dimensions was the belief in an afterlife contingent upon a final judgment of human conduct after death. In assessing the importance of the afterlife to Egyptian thinking, the famous Egyptologist James H. Breasted noted that "among no people, ancient or modern, has the idea of a life beyond the grave held so prominent a place as among the ancient Egyptians."[34] Breasted suggests, as do others, that the Egyptian idea of an afterlife has its roots in the period even before predynastic times when Egyptians buried their dead in graves dug in the hot

desert sand. The heat and low humidity would naturally mummify the corpses. Shifting sands and the activities of animals probably exposed these corpses from time to time so that Egyptians coming upon them would have discovered bodies that looked remarkably life-like, giving rise to the idea that the body persisted after death.[35] In fact, we do not know the origins of the Egyptian belief in an afterlife. But it is just as likely to have arisen as a consequence of man's awareness of his own mortality that led him to want to live forever. His thinking about it simply convinced him that it was possible to do so. Whatever its origin, the evidence is clear that the Egyptians were the first humans to systematically think and write about immortality.

In the earliest times the idea of an afterlife was confined to the Egyptian king who was seen as a special person, the son of god. As the begotten son of god, it was expected that upon his death pharaoh would return to his place among the gods from which he had come. The notion that the son of god returns to his heavenly father is also found in other cultures where it manifested itself as human sacrifice, most often of the first son (the "first fruits" of the Old Testament), who was thought to be a gift of the god and, thus, needed to be returned to his rightful divine father.[36] While human sacrifice was found all over the ancient Near East, the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham being the most famous incident, it never took hold in Egypt. In its earliest form only the Egyptian king could achieve immortality, and very early on the idea became closely connected with the belief that the body must be preserved for this immortality to be achieved. The great expression of this belief in external material means of gaining immortality was found in the construction of the great pyramid tombs. These "Houses of a Million Years" along with funerary rituals sought to preserve the king's body and see to his spiritual and material needs in the next world. This purpose was clearly expressed in one of the tomb inscriptions of the early Pyramid Age. "Thou hast departed that thou mightest live, thou hast not departed that thou mightest die."[37] Although originally confined to the king, the hope of an afterlife was gradually extended until, as we shall see, it became the hope of every common man to achieve it.

The Pyramid Texts provide us with the oldest surviving portrayals of man's conception of an afterlife. It was a celestial afterlife, not surprisingly so for a people who worshiped the sun and one that existed in the sky or "up above," an idea that reappears much later in Christian thinking. The dead god-king returns to his proper place, to live with the gods in paradise, where he undergoes ritual purification with water in the sacred lake and then "mingles" with the very body and being of Re himself. The idea of "mingling" with god is a very mysterious concept and may represent an idea left over from the time when Egyptians practiced cannibalism![38] A very ancient Egyptian hymn may be re-

calling precisely these ancient practices when it tells of a time when the Great God hunted down the lesser gods, killed them, cooked them, and ate them to incorporate their goodness and other qualities into his own being.[39] However it was to be achieved, there is a sense in which the king "becomes one with god" and lives forever. The core of this idea can still be found in modern times whenever Christians speak of their anticipated union with god after death.

The intellectual sophistication of Egyptian priests is adequately demonstrated by the fact that by the thirtieth century B.C.E. they had worked out the main outline of how the afterlife was to be achieved and had developed a psychology of the dead to support it. To the Egyptian it was obvious that a person possessed both a visible body and an invisible intelligence, the heart. The combined entity, body and heart, comprised the *Ba*, symbolized by a small human-headed bird always portrayed as hovering over the corpse at death.[40] The *Ba* came into existence only after the person had died, but did not become a soul until the body was preserved and restored to animation by funerary prayer and ritual. Thus it was that the priest pronounced these words over the deceased: "Raise thee up, for this thy bread, which cannot dry up, and thy beer which cannot become stale, by which thou shalt become a soul."[41] Once these rites were performed, the body was said to still live and not decay. The *Ba*'s continued existence depended upon the physical maintenance of the body in the tomb. If the body was destroyed, the *Ba* ceased to exist. In this sense early Egyptian ideas of the soul did not regard it as a truly immortal entity but as something still dependent upon the body for its existence. It is apparent that immortality depends upon the maintenance of the externals of life, that is, the security of the tomb, the physical integrity of the body, and even seeing to its physical sustenance, providing daily offerings of bread and beer for eternity.

Sooner or later it dawned upon the Egyptians that the maintenance of these external mechanisms to sustain the life of the soul would be impossible forever. Once this became evident as it did at the end of the Pyramid Age, the search began for other means to sustain the soul after death. The period of internal troubles that occurred at this time forced intellectuals to cast about for another means of assessing the quality of man's life. The idea that life everlasting could be achieved only by kings and nobles excluded the common man and was increasingly unsatisfactory. As the Pyramid Age ended, the first period of moral development that had produced humankind's first ideas of ethics and religion was also coming to a close. The old belief in externals was slowly being abandoned. Man was about to learn how to shift his moral gaze inward, to a time when his inner voice would come to determine and direct all that lay beyond the externals of his life.

The idea of an afterlife brought with it the problem of determining who would be saved and who would not. Although Egyptian kings were the sons of god, they were no less his creations than other creatures and just as required to do *Maat*. If the heavenly life was a continuation of this one, as Egyptians believed, then the injunction to do *Maat* must hold in the hereafter. As there are human courts so there must be a heavenly court. Amazingly this implies that ethical norms, that is, those by which a man's soul is judged, take precedence over judicial ones, for the latter deal only with material matters. Early on the Egyptians had developed the idea that there might well be some judgment of the powerful after death to call to account those who had not conducted themselves properly in this life. It required more than a thousand years for Egyptian thinkers to work out the details of this judgment, but that it existed was now beyond question.

It was during the Pyramid Age that the judgment of the dead came to center upon Osiris, the god of the dead. Rosalie David suggests that Osiris was originally a god of vegetation; the Egyptians deduced his nature from the agricultural cycle where plants grow, reproduce, and die only to grow again next season as the periodic Nile flood renews them each year.[42] Osiris, David argues, is early world religion's response to agriculture. Eventually the Osiris myth took on the form of a religious doctrine that affirmed resurrection and life everlasting. The earliest reference to Osiris is found in the *Memphite Drama*, where he is portrayed as spouts of wheat growing wild to explain how Memphis became the granary of Egypt.[43] The details of how Osiris became the judge of the dead will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter. It is sufficient here to note that the theology of an afterlife and judgment connected to Osiris was expressed in the Pyramid Age when Ptah was combined with Sekar, the god of the dead of Memphis, and Osiris in one of the earliest expressions of the Egyptian idea of god as trinity, a concept that finds its modern expression in Christian thought.[44]

The incorporation of Osiris into the trinitarian god of Ptah represents the growing importance of a myth that reached first beyond the Ptah mythology and, eventually, beyond the religion of Re as well. The promise of resurrection and judgment central to the Osiris myth struck deep roots among the populace and eventually became the dominant faith of the common man. Even the solar mythology of Re became "Osirized" in that Osiris was absorbed into the Re theology. Thus, when the king arose from the dead, he was said to "mingle" with Osiris and actually become him. The growing importance of Osiris in the Re theology is evident in the tomb inscriptions of this time. A curious duality in Egyptian religion emerges. The solar faith of Re remains the official religion of the state and of the foremost theological colleges and seminaries, even as the

belief in the Osiris faith continues to spread among the general populace. The appeal to the common man of resurrection and fair judgment will win out so that by the Middle Kingdom (2040 B.C.E.) Osiris is completely merged into the official state worship of Re. By this time, too, belief in resurrection and judgment *for all men* has found official expression in the formal religion of the Egyptian state. In this revised theology Re remains supreme, perhaps in the same sense that in Christian thinking *God the Father* is prior in nature and function to the *Holy Spirit*, while at the same time both remain equals in their divinity and power. In the Egyptian thinking emerging at the beginning of the Feudal Age (2200 B.C.E.), Re remains the great creator and ruler of the universe just as Ptah had been in the old Memphite cosmology now taken over by the priests of Re at Heliopolis. It is still Re's moral imperative, the command to do *Maat*, that governs the lives of men on this earth. Re guides the affairs of men; Osiris guides the affairs of the dead.

The development of Egyptian ethical thought proceeded apace for more than a thousand years before the idea that a judgment after death might influence the eternal fate of the common man found official expression in Egyptian theology. This suggests that while the notion of a judgment after death came to influence ethical thinking on proper conduct in this world perhaps in much the same way that it does for modern Christians, the fundamentals of Egyptian ethical belief and reasoning were formed well before this. The Egyptians had come to the conclusion that a moral life was worth living both for itself and for its beneficial effects on society without any fully developed insight provided by Osirian mythology. Morenz in his treatment of Egyptian religion supports the idea that ethical thinking came before the idea of a judgment and that, in his view, the element of a judgment made sense in the Egyptian moral calculus precisely because good and just men were sometimes treated unjustly in this life.[45] Osiris expanded Egyptian ethical thinking by resolving the problem of injustice on earth, providing for a just final judgment in the hereafter. We must not, however, make too much of the Osirian judgment as an influence on Egyptian ethics any more than we would conclude that modern Christians behave ethically in this life solely to achieve immortality in the next. As the Pyramid Age drew to a close, the Re theology recognized that the old idea of immortality achieved through material mechanical means was insufficient and set upon new ways to determine how men might properly behave on this earth so as to merit immortality beyond the grave.

The period from 2200–2040 B.C.E. in Egyptian history is known as the First Intermediate Period or Feudal Age, a time of great trouble for Egypt. The Old Kingdom ended with the death of Pepy II who presided over a long and ineffectual reign.[46] The Second Union, which had lasted for more than a thousand

years and had witnessed man's first attempts at moral contemplation, collapsed in violence. The monarchy gave way under the growing rivalry and power of the feudal barons of the *nomes*, plunging Egyptian society into intermittent civil war. The vital national irrigation system was disrupted, causing economic depression and periodic famine. Law and order weakened and bandits and thieves roamed the countryside and towns. Egypt's weakness tempted her bedouin enemies and there is evidence that parts of the Delta were invaded by Asiatics during this time.[47] The southern half of the country fell away and established itself as a separate kingdom while in the north a series of strong kings at Herakleopolis finally reestablished some order there. Conflict between the two realms exploded into open civil war when the Theban kings attempted to unify the country by force. One of these kings, Mentuhotpe, eventually defeated the Herakleopolite monarch, paving the way a few years later for the reunification of all Egypt under Nebhepetre. A stele dating from Ramiside times lists Nebhepetre, the founder of the Eleventh Dynasty and Middle Kingdom (2040–1674 B.C.E.), among Narmer, the great unifier, and Amos, the founder of the Egyptian imperial age, as Egypt's greatest rulers.[48] The troubled times of the Feudal Age provoked a new wave of wisdom literature that continued the development of Egyptian moral thinking as it tried to come to grips with the difficult circumstances of the day.

In examining this body of wisdom literature it must be kept in mind that we are not at all certain about the order in which these texts appeared.[49] All we can be somewhat certain of is that they were all probably written during the Feudal Age. As with previous Wisdom Texts, the Egyptian habit is to cast a moral lesson in the form of a letter or tale told to a listener, a literary device found later in Hebrew literature and still commonly used in the Middle East.

Among the earliest of the Feudal Age wisdom texts is the *Instruction of Merikere*, whose author may have been one of the last Herakleopolitan kings giving advice to his son on the proper way to govern. The old king reaffirms the traditional doctrine that only character and moral life endure throughout life and ensure one's memory among the people. He says: "Remember, more acceptable is the virtue of an upright man than the ox of him that doeth iniquity." Kingship, he reminds his son, is rooted not in power, but in justice. Thus, "do righteousness that thou mayest be established on earth." The old man warns his son that he must actively seek to do good. "Comfort the mourner . . . afflict not the widow . . . deprive not a man of the possessions of his father . . . do not chastise . . . slay not a man whose worth thou knowest . . . Be not harsh, kindness is seemly . . . establish thy monument in the love of thee."[50] All of this is traditional Egyptian moral thinking as far as it goes. But when Merikere warns his son that "god knoweth the rebellious man and god smiteth his iniquity in

blood," he is giving voice to the new importance afforded the idea of judgment after death and its relevance to moral behavior on earth.

Whereas Ptahhotep had warned that doing right in this world was worth doing in itself because it formed good character, Merikere has taken the argument one step further. In terrible times justice and reward in this life are uncertain. It is the age-old problem that later perplexed both Christians and Jews of how to ensure that the good are somehow rewarded when it is obvious that they are often not rewarded in this life. Merikere turns to the old idea of a final judgment and links it to the proper behavior of a king.

> The court of the judges who judge the unworthy, thou knowest that they are not lenient on that day of judging the wretched, in the hour of executing the writ. . . . A man surviveth after death and his deeds are placed beside him like mountains. For it is eternity, abiding yonder, a fool is he who disregards it. As for him who reacheth it without having committed sin, he shall abide there like a god, striding on like the lords of eternity.[51]

Character remains something good in itself. But now it is also part of man's personal relationship with his god and plays a part in the manner in which man achieves a proper judgment after death.

Here we witness a shift in value between god and man. No longer is it merely the externals of life that matter, for in difficult times they are uncertain in any case. Merikere seems to be saying that the value of a worthy moral life includes the expectation that god will reward it after death. It is, perhaps, a desperate faith, born of the harsh experience of internecine strife with its encompassing uncertainty. The 60-mile-long line of silent pyramid tombs baking in the desert sun was sufficient proof that the emphasis on externals was no longer adequate to guarantee moral worthiness. In an age of uncertainty, character and conscience became the currency of a person's moral worth, and every man had a conscience. It was the beginning of an age of ethical democratization, of the idea that Everyman could aspire to eternal reward and judgment.

The genuine despair that accompanied the collapse of Egyptian society is captured poignantly in a text entitled *The Dialogue of a Misanthrope with His Own Soul*. It is one of the most famous and important poems in Egyptian literature because its theme is unique. The subject is the inner experience of an afflicted and suffering soul and is the first example in history of the self-examined conscience as a state of mind.[52] The poem expresses the despair and pessimism of a suffering human being, subjects generally not found in Egyptian literature up to this time, and is the earliest known literary composition in which the subject is spiritual experience. It is the Egyptian equivalent of the Book of Job written fifteen hundred years earlier.[53]

The *Dialogue* is the tale of a man against whom all circumstances have turned. Deep in his own darkness and despair, he decides to take his own life. He stands on the edge of his own grave looking down and begins a conversation with his reluctant soul, who refuses to accompany him into the shadows. It is history's first dialogue with the self, almost Freudian in substance. Dark and suffering, the misanthrope's words tell of a society that is corrupt, dishonest, and unjust. So terrible has life in Egypt become that the sufferer despairs as well of an honest judgment beyond the grave. The sufferer's soul at first refuses to join him in death, forcing him to contemplate the joys of material life. But it is no use. The forced contemplation only strengthens the suffer's conviction that this life is without worth. Finding only small faith in the promise of redemption beyond the grave, the sufferer embraces death as a glad release. The unhappy man's soul finally relents and both pass into the shadow of death.[54]

The *Dialogue* centers upon the human experience of the sufferer and does not mention god as either cause or cure of human misery. It is an example of an emerging literature concerned for the first time with self-examination and self-awareness.[55] We are witnessing the evolution of a self-consciousness that recognizes the individual as a moral force in *social* life. All the suffering, after all, is condemned precisely because it afflicts individuals. The moral unworthiness of the society is located in the injustices it visits upon people and not just because it displeases god. Pressed far enough, and the Egyptians could never venture so far, the doctrine contains the seeds of a much later Western ideal, that conscience is the ultimate authority under whose mandate a person might confront the ills of society. This is precisely what Thoreau meant when he affirmed in justification of his own civil disobedience, "that God plus one man equals a majority." The moral thinkers of the Feudal Age have realized that the connection between moral character and its worth and the social conditions that confront the individual attempting to live a moral life has been broken. The new task is to reestablish it.

The *Song of the Harp-Player* is a hymn inscribed on the tomb of a king dating from around 2100 B.C.E. that also richly captures the skepticism and disillusionment that followed the end of the Pyramid Age. The author demonstrates how empty and insufficient wealth and power are as vehicles for attaining of happiness and heaven. The proof of their insufficiency is all around in the difficult circumstances that afflict Egypt. The author admonishes us to work to develop good character and morals in all spheres of life. The *Song of the Harp-Player* is a study in reflective morals that asks what is necessary for a man to be made good and to gain salvation. The idea of looking within for the answer is as old as the *Memphite Drama*. But now the area of moral concern has moved beyond the individual to a skeptical detachment through which ethical

concerns may go beyond the self to include the social order itself. The same theme is found in the treatise of Khekheperre-sonbu, a priest at Heliopolis during the reign of Sesostris II (1906–1887 B.C.E.). The author speaks of his deep personal despair but goes on to make a striking moral critique of the society in which he lives. Taken together, both these works point to the emergence of Egyptian moralists' clear concern with social justice. The time of troubles has forced ethical thinkers to extend their range of topics beyond the individual to include man's relationship with his god and the relationship of both to the justice or injustice of the social order itself.

Probably the most remarkable document of the period is the *Admonition of Ipuwer*, although its date is uncertain.[56] True to Egyptian literary form, the dissertation is cast in the form of a discussion between a wise man (Ipuwer) and the king himself (perhaps Pepy II). Ipuwer begins with a long description of the ills that bedevil Egyptian society, including a discussion of the evils that are permitted to exist. He then goes on to argue that these wrongs exist because of the moral failures of important officials whom, by implication, the king has failed to adequately control. The remedy for these injustices, Ipuwer asserts, is a proper king who possesses certain character and behavioral habits, which Ipuwer then enumerates in great detail. The *Admonition of Ipuwer* may easily be regarded as the first treatise on political ethics in history. Here for the first time someone is asking the question, In what does a good state consist? It is a question that concerned Plato and Aristotle and then medieval thinkers thousands of years later, and it concerned them with the same intensity and for the same important reasons as it did Ipuwer.

No less startling is Ipuwer's solution to the curse of an unjust political order. Like Plato and Aquinas, Ipuwer suggests that reform and justice can be brought about by the rise of a great king who seeks justice by right action. But where is such a king to be found, Ipuwer asks. "Where is he today? Doth he sleep perchance? Behold his might is not yet seen . . . as yet." It is unclear if Ipuwer intends this question as a subtle threat of revolution against the sitting king or, as Breasted argues, that it is the first expression of politico-religious messianism fifteen hundred years before the idea of a king who rules by god's wishes for justice appeared among the Hebrews.[57] In either case, the substance of Ipuwer's argument is clear: Injustice is caused by bad kings and only good kings who do god's wishes (*Maat*) can restore justice. Like Nathan's famous accusation of King David, "thou art the man," Ipuwer places the responsibility for the just society squarely on the shoulders of the sovereign. Ipuwer shows a new Egyptian capacity to contemplate society in terms of its moral soundness. But it is the ability to move beyond mere contemplation and suggest mechanisms of reform that is truly revolutionary. The responsibility of the Egyptian

sovereign to preserve justice had been implied from time immemorial in Egyptian thinking. Ipuwer's argument made that responsibility very real indeed.

Perhaps the latest of the Wisdom Texts that have governmental operation and reform as their subject is *The Eloquent Peasant*. It is the story of a poor peasant whose donkeys have been seized unjustly by a local official. The peasant appeals his case to the king's vizier, who listens to his argument. Unknown to the vizier and the peasant, the king himself is eavesdropping on the conversation. Once more we are presented with a lesson in good government cast in the form of a tale involving someone else. The argument moves back and forth between the peasant and the official as a device for bringing forth both the qualities of a good official and those practices that constitute a good civic order. The rules for a good official are simple enough, to always speak and seek the truth and to do *Maat*. The king must always see to it that only good officials are appointed to administer the state or else be held responsible for the injustice that results. Once more an Egyptian writer has produced a dissertation much like the *Republic*, seeking to determine the qualities necessary for a just civic order and levying the responsibility for their achievement squarely upon the ruler.

The Wisdom Texts of the Feudal Age reveal the new way in which Egyptians had come to think about morals and ethics. Strength of character and conscience were now thought of as something more than the value they possess for influencing individual conduct. They have become something of a moral force incorporating concerns about what happens to other men and even to society itself. Harkening to good character is no longer enough. Men and social institutions must always *do* what is right or be held responsible for their failure. This thinking was a reaction to the uncertainty of the times and quite logically it inevitably raised questions about the state and the behavior of the king and his officials. The result was a literature quite specific about how to form a good state and what qualities and actions a king had to possess in order to do justice. No one believed that a bad king could be brought to book on this earth. No such radical revolutionary delusions were possible in the Egyptian mind. But the king could be called to account beyond the grave for his unjust actions and the penalties were just as severe for him as for any man. The age-old ideal that the king and the powerful must practice *Maat* now took on new importance as reflected in the tomb and coffin inscriptions of nobles and government officials.[58] These inscriptions reflect a new urgency to do good as the necessary prerequisite for a positive judgment and life in the hereafter.

It was to be expected that some new ideas provoked by turbulent times would persist to see their wider acceptance in calmer ones. The Middle Kingdom (2040–1674 B.C.E.) witnessed the return of peace and prosperity to Egypt, and along with them came the acceptance of the idea that the state exists to do

justice and that the king is directly responsible for achieving it. These ideas are officially formalized in one of the most important documents in Egyptian history, the *Installation of the Vizier*. The document records a formal speech given from the throne by the king at the time of the installation of his vizier, the chief official of the Egyptian state, in which the king reminds the vizier of his moral responsibilities as a high public official. The text is a statement of official public and political morality that the vizier must live by. Three copies of the *Installation* have survived as tomb inscriptions from the Eighteenth Dynasty at Thebes, one from the tomb of Rekhmire, the vizier of the great Thutmose III (1501–1447 B.C.E.). It is very likely, however, that the *Installation* dates from the early Middle Kingdom, most probably from the reign of Amenemhet I (1991–1962 B.C.E.) of the Twelfth Dynasty.[59] It may be safely presumed, though evidence is lacking, that this or a similar version of the speech was delivered at the installation of other high-ranking public officials, revealing the Egyptian conviction that public life was required to be strongly rooted in ethical ideals and moral behavior.

The text of the *Installation* demonstrates the strong normative idealism that is now attendant to Egyptian public life. The king begins the speech by affirming that the vizierate is the most important office in the government, for the vizier is the official "who shall do justice before all the people." "Said his majesty to him, Look to the office of the vizier; be watchful over all that is done therein. Behold it is the established support of the whole land."[60] The candidate is next warned that the purpose of his office is not the exercise of power, but the pursuit of what is right and fair. "Behold it [the office] is not to show respect-of-persons to princes and councilors; it is not to make for himself slaves of any people."[61] The vizier must be fair to all. "Behold when a petitioner comes . . . see to it that everything is done in accordance with the law, . . . giving every man his right."[62] The king warns the official that if he doesn't do what is expected, the public nature of his position will ensure that his wrongdoing is known. "Behold a prince is in a conspicuous place, water and wind report concerning all that he does. For behold, that which is done by him never remains unknown."[63] The king next enjoins the official to give every man his rights so that "a petitioner who has been adjudged shall not say: My right has not been given to me." Above all, the king commands, do justice and act legally. "Forget not to judge justice. It is an abomination of the god to show partiality. This is the teaching. Therefore do thou accordingly. Look upon him who is known to thee like him who is unknown to thee; and him who is near the king like him who is far from his house."[64] The official was also to see to his own behavior and not become angry at a petitioner or rush over his case without hearing him speak. Do not be afraid of doing right, the king commands, or of raising fear in

other men who seek to do wrong. "Cause thyself to be feared. Let men be afraid of thee. Behold, the dread of a prince is that he does justice."[65] The discussion of how to establish the good and moral civic order provoked by the despair of the early Feudal Age has produced pragmatic consequences evident in the *Installation of the Vizier* speech. Egyptian moral thinking has come a long way since its concern with the character of the individual. Now the moral dialogue has integrated itself into public life and the operations of government with the consequence that social justice has come to be seen as resting at the base of the sovereign's moral responsibility as ruler of his people. By the Middle Kingdom the ethical conduct of public officials is regarded as the only way in which just government can be properly conducted. Egypt has arrived at a point in its history where it expects ethical rulers, officials, and laws as the normative ideal to operationalize the command of god to pursue social justice. It would take another thousand years before any other people, the Israelites, came to see government in this way.

The democratization of the Osiris myth that had begun at the beginning of the Feudal Age reached full development during the Middle Kingdom. The linkage between social justice and religion extant in the command of the god to do justice and the responsibility of the king to see that justice is done produced important changes in the Osirian faith. The gods are seen as the origin and followers of *Maat* and gradually come to assume the role of the protectors of the poor and powerless. Osiris emerges during this period as the unmistakable champion of righteousness standing side by side with Re in the official theology of the age. God made all men equal in the moral sense so that all men must be judged by Osiris after death. The doctrine of final judgment once exclusively reserved for Egypt's kings now extends to the common man. Osiris has become Everyman. The coffin texts of the period reflect the idea that all men are morally equal. The following coffin inscriptions are typical of the period and clearly reflect the new view of god's relationship with man.

"I have made the four winds so that every man might breathe thereof like his brother."

"I have made the great waters that the pauper like the lord might have use of them."

"I have made everyman like his brother, and I have forbidden that they do evil . . ."[66]

The Osiris myth democratized the moral value of men by making them equal in the eyes of god. This implied as well that all men were equal when it came to the opportunity for a final judgement and eternal life. This is an extraordinary development in man's ethical history, but one that occurs within the mainstream of Egyptian ethical thought, which always affirmed that all men had the moral responsibility to do *Maat*. Now they are granted equal

treatment in the hereafter precisely because they possess equal moral responsibility. These ideas could only strengthen the very old Egyptian belief that all persons stood equal before the law, a doctrine that received much new emphasis during the Middle Kingdom. What is remarkable about this democratization of morals and law is that it occurs at approximately the same time that King Hammurabi of Babylon promulgated his famous code. The contrast could not be more striking. Hammurabi's code affirmed no such equality under the law, nor did it offer an ethical basis for punishment. Law and punishment followed social class and position. In Egypt it is precisely the ethical equality of men in the eyes of god that requires their equal treatment under the law. And it is precisely the moral injunction of god to do justice that forms the foundation of proportional punishment within the law.

The developments in Egyptian ethical thought and practice continued at least until the end of the Imperial Age, almost a thousand years later. Then, during the magnificent Eighteenth Dynasty, Egypt rose to become a world power spreading her influence, knowledge, culture, and religion throughout the Near East. The powerful local god of Thebes, Amun, arose to take his place within the great trinity of Re, Osiris, and Amun. The depth and influence of Egyptian ethical tradition is demonstrated by the fact that this local Theban war god quickly assumed the same ethical qualities and duties as the other gods. Amun became the helper of the poor, the protector of the weak, a loving father, and an incorruptible judge, who treated rich and poor alike.[67] The loving character of the new imperial god is reflected in his official hymn, where he is described as the "Lord of Life." Men seek comfort from him for "my heart has no other refuge than Amun" or when "Amen-Re is the strength of the lonely."[68] Amun is the kindly father who cares for his children. His hymn says of him "He who heareth the prayer of the prisoner; kindly of heart when one calleth to him. He who rescueth the fearful from the oppressor, who judgeth between the miserable and the strong."[69] There can be no more convincing testimony to the influence of the Egyptian ethical tradition on Egyptian life and politics than this simple fact: The god of the Egyptian imperium in whose name Egypt conquered the region is at one and the same time a just and loving god who sees to the just treatment of his people. It is a god that stands in marked contrast to the god of the Israelites, who is about to make his appearance on the stage of history.

The presence of a loving and just god who promised fair judgment and immortality had a dramatic effect on ethics in that it increased the growing awareness of man's personal relationship with his god, an awareness of his personal responsibility for his moral character. When Egyptians reflected on ethics, they turned increasingly inward, listening closely to the voice of moral intuition

within their hearts. Moral thinkers came to understand that man's moral responsibility depended upon his own conscious understanding of himself and his god. Men now had to make moral decisions according to the inner voices of their consciences. Here we have the first evidence in history of man recognizing the role of conscience in ethical reasoning, an idea that came to occupy an important place in later Western ideas of ethics. The Egyptian ethical sense had become quasi-secular by the end of the Middle Kingdom and was more closely tied to the idea of an afterlife and final judgment than at any time previously. Following the Imperial Age (1552–1188 B.C.E.) or the New Kingdom as it is often called, the ideal of conscience took on a new dimension in which personal piety in itself came to play an important role in moral behavior. By then Egypt was beyond her greatness, and prolonged periods of turmoil and uncertainty left her people little choice but inward reflection. Egyptian culture degenerated into a static sacerdotalism where magic, ritual, and romanticization of past glories came to replace original thinking in many areas of life. Egyptian ethical development came to an end, replaced by sterile ritual.

But that time was yet far off and Egypt had still to live through the most glorious period of her history, the Imperial Age. The great insights that Egyptian thinkers had reached in ethics, morals, and religion had to this point remained concealed from the world. Except for the period of the Hyksos invasion and occupation (1674–1552 B.C.E.), Egypt had remained sealed behind her geographical barriers for almost 2500 years! Her contacts with other societies of her time were minimal and produced no lasting effect on the direction of her own development. Egyptian ideas of morality and religion were completely her own, developed and applied over many centuries completely within an Egyptian context. By the sixteenth century B.C.E. Egypt was poised by force of arms to expel the Hyksos invaders and to carry Egyptian power throughout the Middle East to the banks of the Euphrates River. The great Imperial Age, the time of the warrior pharaohs, was about to begin. Egypt's great culture was about to be set loose upon the world. Neither Egypt nor the world would ever be the same again.

2

Egyptian Monotheism and Akhenaten

Over the centuries the pharaohs created a national identity for Egypt, raised conscript armies, fought wars on Egypt's borders, and implemented a defense policy that kept Egypt free from foreign invasion and occupation. Defense of the country was made easier by Egypt's topography and natural barriers that conspired to minimize the seriousness of threats to its security. Although Egypt suffered numerous minor incursions from Libyans to the west, Asiatics in the east, and Nubians to the south, the Egyptian social order was larger and more organized than that of any other state in the region, making its destruction almost impossible. Egypt's destruction would have required a degree of shock far beyond the ability of its enemies to administer. For more than two millennia Egypt developed safely behind her borders.

During the Old Kingdom Egypt pursued a policy of preclusive security in which it focused attention on the frontiers to the east and south. A number of fortresses, the famous Wall of Princes, were constructed along the isthmus of Suez and permanently garrisoned.[1] In the south a series of forts were constructed at the First Cataract of the Nile to meet the threat of Nubian invasion. Though safe behind their borders for centuries, Egyptians were well aware of the larger world beyond and from time to time conducted offensive military operations across the defense perimeter. Egypt had always been engaged in the region. Its governmental functionaries and economic consulates were stationed in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon where they conducted trade, gathered intelligence, and saw to diplomatic activities. It was also Egyptian practice to

undertake punitive military operations in response to transgressions of her borders. These operations were never major campaigns nor of long duration and never resulted in the establishment of permanent garrisons on enemy soil.

The consolidation of governmental power during the Middle Kingdom saw the emergence of a new national defense strategy based on the creation of buffer zones beyond the Wall of Princes and the First Cataract of the Nile. The change was accompanied by larger and more frequent military operations into hostile areas. No longer did Egypt only react to military threats, now it attempted to preempt them. Along the eastern border Egyptian armies pressed out from the Wall of Princes and established a major military garrison at Sharuhen in southern Palestine. From this forward base Egypt undertook frequent "search and destroy" operations into Palestine itself, on one occasion reaching as far north as Samaria in north-central Palestine to strike at an *Asiatic* base.[2] As before, however, no attempts were made to permanently garrison strong points within the new area of military operations. To the south Egypt expanded her area of military control against the "vile Kush," pushing almost to the Second Cataract of the Nile.[3] Constructing a classic defense in depth, Egypt constructed no fewer than 21 permanent fortresses in this area. Again, no attempt was made to colonize the area. Instead, it was turned into a military defense zone whose multiple strongpoints made it far too expensive for the enemy to attempt to penetrate the Egyptian homeland.

This new defense strategy worked successfully for more than three centuries before developments in Palestine took an ominous turn. For reasons that remain unexplained, the Palestinian tribes, known collectively to the Egyptians as *Hyksos*, came to possess the superior military technology of the Mesopotamians.[4] Egyptian military success over many centuries had led her to pay scant attention to the advances in military technology occurring beyond her borders. The *Hyksos* armies were modern armies for their day, possessing chariots, horses, helmets, body armor, the composite bow and the penetrating socket axe, all introduced by the warring states of Mesopotamia and weapons not possessed by the Egyptians. Some time around 1670 B.C.E.,[5] the *Hyksos* attacked Egypt with devastating effect, defeating its national army in the field and driving its remnants southward as far as Thebes. Consolidating their gains, the *Hyksos* occupied the Nile Delta and established a capital at Avaris (modern Tanis). They remained on Egyptian soil for more than a hundred years.

Egyptian national authority was driven south to Thebes and came to rest in the hands of a succession of Theban warrior princes. The Nubians were quick to exploit Egyptian weakness and overran the southern defenses, establishing themselves above the First Cataract. Egypt was now occupied by foreigners in the north and south, leaving Egyptian national authorities in control of

slightly more than one third of the country. This was a period of great national humiliation for the proud Egyptians, one that profoundly changed Egyptian psychology and the way in which it perceived the outside world. The expulsion of the *Hyksos* and the Nubians and the reestablishment of Egyptian national identity became the central goal of the Theban princes. The struggle against the invaders began around 1578 B.C.E. when the first warrior pharaoh of Thebes, Kamos, undertook a series of wars against the enemy in the north and gained success by capturing some of the northern towns. Kamos was killed in battle shortly thereafter and was succeeded by his brother, Ahmose I (1552–1526 B.C.E.) who ruled for 26 years and waged unrelenting war against the occupiers, finally driving them from Egyptian soil. This accomplished, he turned his attention to the south expelling the Nubians. At the end of his life Ahmose had restored the territorial integrity of Egypt from the Sinai to the Nubian border, established Thebes as the new national capital, redesigned and modernized the army into a true instrument of national military power, established the foundations for a new caste of military professionals, and passed it all on to his son and successor, Amenhotep I (1526–1506 B.C.E.). Ahmose was the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, which produced 15 kings, eight of whom were great warrior pharaohs. Throughout all of Egyptian history never was there as long a line of talented rulers to oversee Egypt's security.

The psychological shock of the *Hyksos* invasion and occupation permanently altered the Egyptian view of the world. No longer could she ignore the world outside her borders. Egyptian security now depended on her ability to prevent the rise of rival coalitions beyond her borders. Amenhotep I and his successors abandoned the old geographically based defensive strategy and replaced it with a new policy whereby Egypt sought to influence events in Palestine and Lebanon by diplomacy, treaties, and alliances with client states. By using diplomacy, intelligence, and trade Egypt influenced the behavior of the Palestinian states to prevent the emergence of any coalition with sufficient force to threaten Egypt itself. Behind the diplomacy and inducements was the new army, a powerful and mobile instrument of force projection to be used to convince or coerce its potential adversaries. Reflecting the new strategy Amenhotep's first two successors, Thutmose I and II, extended Egyptian power by military action into Nubia, Syria, and Palestine. From this time forward, the defense of the Nile began at the Orontes River.

It is to Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.) that Egypt owes the establishment of its Imperial Age. The greatest of all the warrior pharaohs—the Napoleon of Egypt—Thutmose III fought 16 military campaigns in 20 years, establishing Egyptian power as far east as the Amanus Mountains above Carchemish and across the Euphrates to the heartland of the land of the Mitanni.[6] With peace

came the adjustment of Egyptian society to the new order of things. Egypt was now fully involved in the region and many foreign influences flowed into the country. At the same time, the various cultures of the region for the first time became aware of Egyptian ideas and culture. Within Egypt the center of social power and culture had shifted to Thebes from where a succession of strong pharaohs governed the country for the next three centuries. During this time Egyptian religion underwent changes that were to have important effects on its future development.

Thutmose III brought about the first of these changes when for the first time in Egyptian history he created a single national sacerdotal organization into which all the priesthoods of all the temples in the land were merged. It is the earliest national priesthood, the first pontificate in history. The first "*pontifex maximus*" was a priest named Hapuseneb, who had been grand vizier under Queen Hatshepsut, Thutmose III's aunt.[7] The creation of this Egyptian vatican can be explained by Thutmose's desire to elevate the local Theban god, Amun, to the heights of a national deity, thereby demonstrating the ascendancy of Thebes over Heliopolis and its god, Re. Thutmose lavished great wealth upon the national priesthood and its shrine at Karnak. John Dominic Crossan estimates that in the twelfth century B.C.E., the Egyptian priesthood owned approximately 15% of the land in the country or about the same percentage of land owned by the Catholic priesthood in eighteenth-century France![8] Adolf Erman speaking to the same point notes that at the height of its power, the Theban priesthood possessed 90,000 workers, 500,000 cattle, 400 orchards, 8 ships, 50 workshops, and the income produced by 65 townships in Egypt and the Asian empire.[9]

But there may have been another reason for Thutmose's establishment of the Theban "pontificate," political payment for their support of his regency. Thutmose III's ascendancy to his father's throne was prevented for many years by his aunt, Queen Hatshepsut, who occupied the throne in his stead.[10] Concerned more about commerce than diplomacy, under her rule Egyptian influence in Palestine weakened considerably. The circumstances under which Thutmose came to the throne remain mysterious. It is thought possible that Hatshepsut was forcibly removed, perhaps by military coup. Any such *coup d'etat* would have required the support of the new professional military caste and the religious bureaucracy. The appointment of Hapuseneb, the former vizier, as the first priest of Amun suggests that he may have been involved and the price of his support may have been the increased power of the new priesthood. Whatever the reasons, creation of so powerful a national religious establishment raised the threat that it might eventually become a power in its own right, one the throne could not safely ignore. The time would come when the pontif-

icate would become powerful enough to openly interfere in questions of royal succession and even oppose the wishes of a sitting pharaoh himself.

An ominous sign of the new influence of the Theban priesthood was its emphasis on oracles. Fortune-telling and oracles had always been around on the fringes of Egyptian religion, but it was not until the New Kingdom that consulting oracles came to occupy an important place. Thutmose III buttressed his own claim to the throne by claiming that Amun himself had sought him out in the temple to inform him of his destiny to become king.[11] Thutmose IV claimed to have had a vision while asleep at the feet of the Sphinx that he would be one day be king. Amenhotep III found the oracles opposing him on the choice of a successor. It was, of course, the Theban priests who controlled and interpreted the oracles to great political advantage. A disturbing practice was the use of oracles by priests to administer justice. People accused of crimes by their neighbors were sometimes dragged before the priest of a local temple. Here the statue of the god would render a verdict by nodding or speaking while the priest manipulated some contrivance to make the statue behave in this manner. This practice completely undercut the power and authority of the secular court and magistrate system.[12] The national priesthood came eventually to challenge the power of the king himself. Amenhotep III appointed the powerful Theban pontiff Ptahmose to the viziership in an ominous joining of secular and religious authority.[13] Ramses II was forced to consult the oracles of the priests to guide him in the appointment of high officials.[14]

The establishment of a national priesthood concurrent with the emergence of the new Egyptian empire provided the stimulus for expanding the presence and power of Egypt's national deity beyond its borders for the first time in its history. Re, now joined with the Theban god Amun, still served as the national god. He absorbed all other gods and was responsible for the natural moral and administrative order as he had always been. But once Egypt came to rule all the world it knew beyond her borders, Re-Amun came to extend his concern to the other peoples of the world. The great Egyptian natural moral order (*Maat*) now included all other peoples. Thutmose III expressed this widened view of god and Egyptian religion when he said, "He seeth the whole earth hourly."[15] The point of reference was no longer Egypt; the god of Egypt now directed the world. His subjects were all mankind. Here we find the ancient Egyptian tendency toward monotheism taking a giant stride forward. Religious imperialism it may have been, but there was no doubt that Egyptian religion was now tending toward monotheism and universalism with greater force than ever before. The Egyptians had taken the momentous step of extending the sway and influence of Amun-Re over all lands and all peoples. It is the first known inkling of a universal god who cares for all peoples equally.

The new universal god possessed all the characteristics that Egyptian religious thought had attributed to its former gods, including a concern for ethics and justice. The universal god was not a conquering national warrior god like that of the Israelites. Nor was it the "enclave god" of the Canaanites, a god whose wrath and wisdom applied only to the ethnic tribe or people. Re-Amun was a universal deity whose task it was to make certain men lived according to justice and that the international order was just. The kindness, caring, and just god that the Egyptian thinkers of the Feudal Age had fashioned for themselves became universalized under the New Kingdom. And a universal god of justice inevitably became the only god.

The tendency toward monotheism in Egyptian religion was very old indeed, found first in the Ptah and heliocentric texts of the *Memphite Drama*. Paradoxically it was the tolerance of Egyptian *polytheism* for many gods that led eventually to *monotheistic* thinking. The Egyptians understood that the local gods were very different from the major gods in the same way, perhaps, that Christian saints differ from the deity. The Egyptians arrived at the proposition early on that all gods were but different manifestations or permitted forms of the same one god. Thus the observance of the "many" gave rise to the belief in the "One" god, and to the Egyptian idea that "One is All," which finds its Greek resonance in the idea of the cosmological unity of being.[16] The same common elements of the one god first identified in the old texts reappear during the New Kingdom as the characteristics of Amun-Re. According to Egyptian thinking the one god possessed the following characteristics. He is a god: (1) whose birth is secret; (2) whose place of origin is unknown; (3) whose birth is not witnessed; (4) who created himself by himself; and (5) who keeps his nature concealed from all who come after him.[17] He is "the Hidden One." Yet he exists and is the source of all else. The events of the New Kingdom that brought about a national priesthood and the emphasis on the universality of god resulted in a more powerful expression of the monotheistic tendency that had always marked Egyptian thinking since the days of the Ptah ascendancy. Egypt lacked only a powerful pharaoh to give this idea formal expression before turning it loose upon the world.

The new emphasis on monotheistic elements in Egyptian religion led to a renewed emphasis on another ancient idea, the trinity. Egyptian theologians conceived the idea of a trinitarian god as an answer to one of the basic questions that had concerned them for hundreds of years. How could the many gods of the Egyptian pantheon be reconciled into one god? It was clear to them that behind all creation stood a single deity. The original stimulus for the question was the Egyptian practice of elevating the status of a local god by associating it with a powerful and recognized national deity. At first the Egyptians simply joined

the gods in modalistic trinities in which the supreme deity manifests itself in different "modes" of the lesser gods.[18] Thus, the sun was seen as a trinity manifesting itself in three modes, morning, afternoon, and evening. These primitive attempts were abandoned before the Pyramid Age as the *Memphite Drama* clearly demonstrates. What they show, however, is that very early Egyptian theologians were thinking about a unity that must lie behind the plurality of all existence. Egyptian theologians went on to evolve a bold theory of the basic unity of a single god. To reconcile this intrinsic unity with the complexity of existence that they saw all around them, they conceived of the one god as a trinity.[19]

The Egyptian idea of a trinitarian god is perhaps the most sophisticated theological concept formed by any society of the ancient world, and Egyptian explanations of its nature are arguably as sophisticated as any philosophical discourse to emerge in any later period of intellectual history, including the complex theology accompanying the Christian idea of its own trinitarian god. The Egyptians conceived of a union of important national gods with the single deity of which they were but different manifestations or persons. This union was not static or necessarily everlasting, but a "dynamic inhabitation" that did not limit the independence, action, or nature of the co-joined elements.[20] All persons within the trinity remained identifiable and possessed of their own natures and, quite importantly, all were equally divine. This "indwelling" was an idea that Egyptian theologians applied to the images (statues) of their gods and represents the earliest thinking about incarnation, where god becomes manifest in something material, of which we have knowledge. Images of the gods were believed to be fully alive incarnations of the deity itself.

Such a notion is likely to strike the modern reader as absurd. But one need only to enter a Catholic church to see that the idea of indwelling is very much with us still. Every Catholic church has a monstrance. A monstrance is a golden disc about a foot in diameter with rays shooting out from its center that sits atop a golden stand. At the center of the monstrance is a glass circle containing a host of unleavened bread that is the Holy Eucharist. Catholics believe that this blessed bread is the actual body of Christ itself. That is, the bread host is *not* a symbol of Christ's body but the body itself that "dwells" in the host in the same manner that the Egyptians believed the body of their god to be "dwelling" in the sacred image of the god. The monstrance is brought out with much sanctity and ceremony at special days of the year. Since each church has a monstrance, like the ancient gods of Egypt, the body of Christ is believed able to dwell in more than one place at the same time, the same as an Egyptian god dwelled in its image at different temples and shrines at the same time. The unique nature of the Egyptian trinitarian god was that the trinity was con-

ceived of as a singularity, as a unity that encompassed within it the plurality of the other gods while somehow remaining distinct itself. The singularity of the trinity was reflected linguistically by the Egyptian use of the singular pronoun "He" when applied to god as trinity,[21] in much the same way as the Christian God is referred to as "He" when "He" is seen to be comprised of three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The "He" of the Christians and the "He" of the Egyptians are both singularities representing solutions to the search for the unity that was thought to underlie the complexity of being.

As noted, the oldest trinitarian conception of god is found during the early Pyramid Age when the *Memphite Drama* described the union of Ptah with Sokaris and Osiris. There were other Egyptian trinities throughout the centuries but none was seen as the equal of Ptah. With the ascendancy of Re in the Feudal Age, the trinitarian idea receded into the background as Re himself was perceived as the supreme god. The renewed emphasis on a trinitarian god during the Imperial Age was a consequence of the desire to elevate the Theban city god Amun to the status of the older and greater Re. The result was a new trinity. Re and Amun were joined with Ptah, the oldest and most prominent Egyptian god. The Christian idea of "three persons in one god" and the Egyptian idea of "One is All" were clearly reflected in a New Kingdom hymn to the new trinity: "All gods are three: Amun, Re, and Ptah; and there is no second to them. Hidden is *His* name as Amun, He is Re in face, and His body is Ptah."[22] The idea of god as trinity has no counterpart in any other religious belief system in the ancient world. It appears nowhere else until Christian times when the idea comes to form a central mystery of the Christian faith.

The Imperial Age saw Egypt inundated with foreign influences for the first time in its history as Egypt expanded her diplomatic and economic activities abroad. Everyone it seemed, from Greeks to Hurrians, was coming to Egypt bringing with them their fashions, foods, gods, habits, and ideas. Most of all they brought themselves. From the very beginning of the empire, various Asiatic peoples came to play a significant role in the government of Egypt. The chief charioteer of Thutmose III himself was an Asiatic, the son of an Amorite with clear semitic features.[23] Later kings employed foreign troops and even generals in their armies. For example, there is strong evidence that Amenhotep IV's praetorian guard was comprised of Asiatics while a number of other foreigners held high office in the government itself. Contact with Asiatics influenced Egyptian artistic expression, most particularly in the cult of the nude goddesses Ashtoreth, Qedesh, and Anath. Egypt also witnessed an increase in poetic and literary eroticism. New fashions featured see-through linen dresses. There is even a portrait of Amenhotep III dressed in the new woman's clothing. This worship of the flesh reached its height when men and women began at-

tending parties in the nude.[24] A number of statues of Amenhotep IV portray him completely naked. The increased influence of foreigners within Egypt's military and government came to have important consequences that reached crisis proportions during the reign of Amenhotep IV.

Foreign ideas and practices reached the top levels of Egyptian government when Thutmose IV broke with all Egyptian tradition and married a Mitannian princess named Mutemweya and conferred upon her the title of Great Royal Wife.[25] Pharaohs had taken foreign wives as concubines before for reasons of state. Thutmose III had three Asiatic wives, all daughters of powerful Palestinian chieftains allied with Egypt, in addition to his Great Wife. But to make a foreigner a Great Wife was unprecedented. The queens of the New Kingdom were all women of royal blood who could trace their descent to Queen Ahmose Nefertari, the mother of Ahmose I, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty. A pool of "heiresses" stood ready at all times to be married to a new king. Thutmose IV's motives probably rested in reasons of state. Egypt had a long-standing alliance with the Mitanni, whose support was crucial in balancing the other powers of the region to ensure Egyptian security. The next king, Amenhotep III, was even more influenced by Mitannian ideas.

Amenhotep III was nine years old when he ascended the throne after the death of his father. He, too, broke with tradition and married a commoner, Tiye. Tiye was not a commoner in the modern sense of the word. For Egyptians her being a commoner meant only that she was someone other than a royal heiress. The choice of Tiye was momentous, for it set in motion a series of events that brought great upheaval to Egypt over the next 50 years. Once more we see the influence of new ideas. Although a commoner, Tiye came from a powerful Egyptian family. Her father, Yuya, had retired to Akhim, a town in Middle Egypt, where he held the position of Superintendent of the King's Cattle. He was also an officiant at the shrine of Min there and may have held the title of Chief Prophet, though this is not certain.[26] But at the height of his career Yuya had been a military man, a member of the new professional officer caste created under the New Kingdom, and had held the posts of Lieutenant General of Cavalry and Master of the King's Horse, very powerful court positions. Aldred says that he held these offices under Thutmose IV, but may have seen distinguished service under Amenhotep II as well.[27] It is important to note that Yuya and his wife, Tuya, were foreigners. Yuya's mummy reveals a man much taller than an average Egyptian who had a prominent beaky nose and thick fleshy lips. His white hair was thick and wavy. On official monuments Yuya's name was spelled in several different ways suggesting it was of non-Egyptian origin. He was a cavalry officer, a profession that also suggests Asiatic origin since Asiatics, especially Hurrians and Mitannians, had reputations for being

skilled in training horses and had served in the Egyptian army for years. Yuya's wife's foreign background was evidenced by the thick blonde hair of her mummy.[28] For the second time a queen of foreign origin, most probably Mitannian, sat upon the throne of Egypt. Besides the queen, Tuya had two other children, both sons. One of these, Anen, forsook the military life of his father and became a priest. He eventually rose to the position of Greatest of Seers in the temple of Re-Atum in Thebes. The second son, Ay, followed in his father's footsteps and became a soldier. At the court of Amenhotep IV some years later, we find him holding the same military titles formerly held by his father. He had become a close advisor to the king.[29] Ay was to become one of the most powerful and mysterious people in all Egyptian history.

The Mitannian influence on the Egyptian throne increased when Amenhotep III took a Mitannian woman, Gilukhepa, the daughter of the Mitannian king, as a wife in the tenth year of his reign. Near the end of his life, the king took another Mitannian woman as his wife. In his later years the king lost interest in public affairs, grew obese and took to dressing like a woman wearing the new style see-through dresses. Amenhotep then married his own daughter, Sitamun, and he may have fathered two children by her.[30] While brother-sister marriages were not uncommon among the Egyptian royals, father-daughter marriages were rare and well beyond normal Egyptian custom or morally acceptable conduct. Such marriages, however, were not an unusual Mitannian practice. In the thirty-fourth year of his reign Amenhotep III was struck by an illness that made him visibly ill and weak until his death in the thirty-ninth year of his reign at about age 45 or so.[31] His mummy reveals a man suffering from many cavities and alveolar abscesses, which must have given him constant pain. He was completely bald and obese at his death, and there are indications that the embalmers made great efforts to restore him to some human semblance by stuffing his skin with packing.[32]

Amenhotep and Tiye had six children, four daughters and two sons, Thutmose and Amenhotep, who was probably born some time near the beginning of his father's third regnal decade. The first son, Thutmose, was the heir apparent and was sent to Memphis as a young man to serve as a priest of Ptah as were most royal princes during the Eighteenth Dynasty. There is no evidence that Amenhotep followed his brother, however. In contrast to the frequent appearance of his brother and sisters on his father's monuments, Amenhotep is conspicuous by his absence. No portrait of him as a young man has survived. Indeed, the only reference to the young prince before he became king is found on a wine jar seal where his name appears, testifying that the wine came from "the estate of the true king's son."[33] It was as if the young man did not exist. So when Thutmose died and old Amenhotep III retreated to an opulent

Mitannian life-style until his death, the future king of Egypt was known only to a handful of close royal advisors. Among these was Ay, the queen's brother and a powerful courtier, who enjoyed the support of the military caste.

Amenhotep IV, who later changed his name and became known to history as Akhenaten (1378–1359 B.C.E.), came to the throne around 1378 B.C.E. as a young man. A few years later he married Nefertiti, whose fame and beauty are preserved for all time in the statue of her now kept in the Berlin Museum. Once more we encounter a queen whose lineage is non-Egyptian and, perhaps, Asiatic. It was once thought that Nefertiti was Tadukhipa, a Mitannian whom Amenhotep III had married late in his reign, but that has since been rejected.[34] It is far more likely that Nefertiti was the daughter of Ay. Her mother may have been Ay's first wife, who may have died in childbirth. Tiye, Ay's second wife, may have raised Nefertiti, as her title always included the epithet "Wetnurse to the Queen."[35] With his own daughter as queen of Egypt, Ay's influence had grown to rival that of the king himself. Akhenaten and Nefertiti produced six daughters but no sons. Akhenaten was his father's son at least to the degree that he was attracted to things foreign. As his father had done, Akhenaten married two of his daughters. One, Meritaten, he married in the thirteenth year of his reign and replaced Nefertiti as his official wife. There is speculation that his daughter bore him a child who did not survive, but as we shall see this is unlikely. Some time later he married his other daughter, who was also rumored to have produced a child that did not live.[36] What had begun as a bizarre pattern of incestuous marriage with Amenhotep III was becoming a royal habit.[37]

We may attribute these new sexual mores to the Mitanni, whose culture possessed strong Indo-Iranian elements including the worship of Indo-Iranian deities. The Indo-Iranian peoples also held to an ethical religious practice called *xvaetvadatha*, the marriage of parents and children. Ancient writers including Diogenes, Laetius, Strabo, Plutarch, and Clement of Alexandria all mention this practice among the Persians of their day and note as well that it was regarded by the Persians as holy and sanctifying. Persian priests, the Magi of the Christmas visit to the Christchild, may have been the fruit of such incestuous relationships. Products of these relationships were seen as blessed with the piety of god and protected against mortal sin.[38] Given the Indo-Iranian influence on the Mitanni culture, it is likely, though not certain, that the Mitanni regarded incestuous relationships of father and daughter as at least acceptable behavior if not, perhaps, sanctifying. The close ties between the Mitannian royal family through intermarriage and the family and descendants of Yuya may have introduced the Egyptian kings to the practice.

By the time Akhenaten was ready to take his father's place he may already have begun to manifest the strange physical symptoms of Frohlich's Syndrome.

Later portraits and statues of Akhenaten show him physically deformed in a manner that strongly suggests he suffered from this condition all his life. Gardiner offers the following description of the king:

> The elongated head slopes forward from a long thin neck, the face is narrow, showing a prominent nose, thick lips, and a rounded protruding chin; the body with its sunken chest, swelled out stomach, wide thighs, and slender calves, is the reverse of virile.[39]

Akhenaten's face was long and narrow, giving him a horse-like appearance with a large head set atop a distorted female-shaped body. The famed physician Elliot Smith first suggested in 1910 that Frohlich's Syndrome may have produced these physical features in the king. The most common cause of this condition is a tumor of the pituitary gland, which controls the gonadal development of humans. Lesions in the pituitary often reciprocally interfere with the adjacent hypothalamus causing adiposity. In its early stages, the pituitary is overactive, leading to distortions in the shape of the skull and excessive growth of the jaw. This is followed by a subnormal reduction in the pituitary producing hypogonadism. Secondary sexual characteristics fail to develop and the person's voice remains shrill, body hair does not appear, and the gonads may remain infantile. Usually the disease accompanies the onset of puberty, but in some cases it can begin to produce symptoms before that. As the disease progresses, the person's breasts plump out in the manner of a female, as do the abdomen, buttocks, and thighs.[40] Several of Akhenaten's statues show him with a body that is indistinguishable from that of a female. The disease would have rendered Akhenaten physically weak and incapable of sustained physical effort. Much of the official art of his reign that shows him wearing either the Blue Crown, a war helmet, or the short Nubian wig characteristic of a soldier of the New Kingdom may, therefore, be regarded as mere propaganda so as to portray Akhenaten as a vigorous warrior. His disease would have made such physical exertion impossible.[41]

We must imagine, then, a young man who had been sheltered and ignored for most of his young life with no place prepared for him as an adult suddenly thrust upon the throne. He had been given no training for his role and possessed little experience in judging character or dealing with powerful members of court. Unlike previous royal princes, he had not been sent to Memphis to train for the priesthood nor to the military to be a soldier. We know from the Amarna letters that he was close to his mother, a fact that was well known at court and even beyond to the Mitannian diplomatic corps.[42] And if, as is likely, his body had begun to manifest its strange deformities as a young teenager, one can only imagine what psychological effect it had upon him. Pharaoh he might

be, but underneath lived a lonely, neglected, and deformed boy with only his mother as his friend to comfort him.

One may well wonder what the rest of the court, especially the powerful Theban priesthood, thought of all this. This was a time when priests wielded great power and when the oracle of Amun was believed to be the voice of god. One author offers an interesting, if mostly undocumented, theory of events that may have occurred shortly before Akhenaten's father died. With no other heir besides Akhenaten, Amenhotep III may have consulted the oracle for advice on who might succeed him. The priests may have been horrified at the boy's deformities, thinking him weak and not likely to live long. It would have been a simple trick to put these words into the mouth of the oracle, literally pronouncing a death sentence on the young heir.[43] What prompts such speculation is the puzzling epithet that Akhenaten took for himself. He referred to himself as "Akhenaten, Who Survived To Live Long." The epithet may have been a cruel joke at the expense of the Theban priests, who had failed to prevent his rise to the throne. Nothing is so remembered as a failed attempt on a king. Their failure had given the young king plenty of reason to distrust them from that moment on. The time came when Akhenaten turned on the Theban pontificate with a vengeance.

Among the most peculiar aspects of Akhenaten's reign was the shockingly realistic manner in which he was portrayed in official monuments, reliefs, and statues. The departure of official art from the formalistic, idealistic, and heroic nature of official portraiture could only have come about at the king's deliberate order, for no artisan would have dared portray the king's deformities without official urging.[44] One amazing example is the great statue of the king at the temple of Gempaaten in Karnak, which shows Akhenaten nude and without genitals! Akhenaten's wife and children were often portrayed with extended skulls, although it is certain they did not suffer from any disease. Even high-ranking officials began to incorporate the king's deformities into their own portraits. For example, the portraits of Ramose, the king's vizier, change over time from normal representations to those that incorporate the king's abnormalities.[45] The deformed king, then, made no attempt to conceal his deformities. To the contrary, he openly exhibited and displayed his body. Akhenaten, like all pharaohs, saw himself as the son of god and he may have thought of his deformities as a sacred sign of his own divinity that separated him from the rest of the human race. Later, when he came to believe that he was as well the prophet of the one true god, he may have believed that his deformity was the very fact that defined his special relationship with god. Lest this sound incredible, one might well remember that in modern times stigmatics often be-

lieve precisely this, seeing their physical abnormalities as a sign of god's special presence and grace.

The diagnosis of Akhenaten's symptoms as resulting from Frohlich's Syndrome is not without difficulties. Akhenaten is unique among the pharaohs in abandoning the usual heroic warrior and hunter themes in official art. Akhenaten was the first Egyptian king to have himself constantly portrayed as a family man instead of a warrior. He is almost always shown in the company of his wife and daughters, who are described as "the daughters of the king's loins."[46] The problem for historians is that Frohlich's Syndrome usually produces sterility and reduced libido. How, then, could Akhenaten have produced six daughters? One possibility is that he was not sterile since in rare instances sterility does not occur. Second, reduced libido is not the same thing as no libido so, sterile or not, it is at least possible that Akhenaten could perform sexually. The hypogonadism produced by the disease would not necessarily prohibit the penis from developing to a functional extent. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that even if Akhenaten was sterile, there was nothing that precluded his normal functioning as a male in other respects. But this does not take us very far, for it leaves the problem of fertility unresolved.

The obvious answer is that someone other than Akhenaten fathered his children. The most likely suspect is Ay, the queen's father. As a powerful courtier Ay might easily have calculated that his daughter's inability to conceive might come to be considered her fault. If Nefertiti could not conceive an heir, as she could not with a sterile husband, Ay might have feared that the king would conclude his wife was barren and put her aside for another woman. This would have been disastrous for Ay's fortunes. Everything Ay and his family had worked toward for two generations would be lost. On the other hand, it would have been simple for Ay to father his daughter's children without the king knowing it. Ay, it will be recalled, was a foreigner, most likely a Mitannian, to whom sexual relations between fathers and daughters were not unknown. Indeed, Amenhotep III had married one of his own daughters and, perhaps, even produced a child with her. Later in his life when Ay's power was once again at risk, he forced his granddaughter into marriage with him against her will. There was, then, nothing in Ay's cultural background nor his personality that would have morally ruled out fathering children with his daughter, providing there was good reason to do so. And what more pressing reason than preserving the family's fortunes? In league with the queen, the charade could easily have been carried off with both the queen and her father having an absolute interest in complete secrecy. As for Akhenaten who could not have been unaware of his shrunken genitals, he may have been absolutely thrilled with his own potency. But if the scheme were to succeed, Nefertiti would have to bear a son. Her six

daughters may be mute testimony to one attempt after another to continue until a male was finally produced. So many daughters may offer additional indirect evidence that Ay was their father. As far as can be determined, Ay's only other children were daughters. There is no mention anywhere of a son born to this powerful and famous man. Modern science has provided us with the knowledge that sperm determines the sex of the child; it may well have been that Ay had a tendency to produce only daughters.

Akhenaten began to display hostility toward the old religion almost immediately upon assuming the throne. Within the first year of his reign he issued a court proclamation and had it carved on the palace's southern gate. In it the young king revealed his first ideas for a new religion. The proclamation began with a tirade against the old gods who, for reasons he does not make clear, have failed Egypt. Most startling was the remainder of the proclamation, which tells of the king's interest and belief in a new god that was absolutely unique and located in the heavens.[47] This was heresy and amounted to a formal break with the Theban pontificate. Akhenaten was still only a boy in his early teens and it seems remarkable that he would have taken such actions on his own or without sufficient reason. Two possibilities suggest themselves. There is some evidence, though not conclusive, that Akhenaten had become deeply religious even before he assumed the throne.[48] For a deformed and lonely boy to have taken refuge in a deeply personal religious belief that defined his deformity as a sign of god's grace is not impossible to imagine. Psychologically isolated, friendless, and with his deformity growing more evident by the day, one can understand how Akhenaten might in a manner similar to stigmatics and mystics have turned inward to his god for comfort. However he came to his passionate faith, it is the consensus of Egyptologists that Akhenaten's religious beliefs were sincere at least to the degree that they became central to his personality, transforming him into what Breasted called "god-intoxicated man." All religions have produced similar fanatical personalities who, if they survived, came to be regarded as saints or, if they failed, were persecuted as heretics.

Another explanation for Akhenaten's provocations may be that either Akhenaten himself or someone else saw the power of the Theban priests as an intolerable threat, especially if the priests had already tried and failed to prevent Akhenaten's coming to the throne. Once more suspicion falls logically on Ay. Close to the king and commander of the Egyptian military establishment, Ay might have reckoned that the time had come to rein in the influence of the priests before they became even more powerful. Only the military remained in a position to deal effectively with the Theban vatican. It may have been that Akhenaten was genuinely convinced of his personal relationship with god and intended to do what god wished him to do in any case. Even so, a man as practi-

cal as Ay would hardly have failed to notice that Akhenaten's actions were certain to provoke great resistance from the Theban priestly establishment. In these circumstances the objective was to be on the winning side, and the army had the resources to win. As we shall see, Ay threw the resources of the military behind the king and broke the power of the priesthood.

In the second or third year of his reign Akhenaten introduced an official iconography of his new god, whom he called Aten. The symbol of Aten was an altered sign of the old Egyptian sun god. In ancient times the sign of the sun god was the top point of the pyramid, the *benhaten*, with the falcon perched at its peak. By the New Kingdom the sun god was often portrayed as a sun disc with the wings of the falcon on either side and the *uraeus* hanging from the disc itself. Both these ancient symbols were easily understood by Egyptians. To portray his new universal god, however, Akhenaten wanted a religious symbol that would be intelligible to all peoples within and beyond Egypt's borders. Akhenaten's iconography showed the new god as a sun disc with a number of long stick-like arms reaching down to the earth. Each of these arms terminated in a human hand by which god reached out and touched humanity with his power and grace. In this manner god was seen to be a celestial source guiding and influencing the lives of men on earth. The name of the new god was written in two cartouches, the symbol of royalty, suggesting that the power of god and the king were in some sense synonymous. The virtue of the sun disc and its arms as a symbol of the new god and his power was to turn the manifestations of the creator into a tangible reality that could be easily understood by the common man. And here we see Akhenaten's first attempt to reduce the influence of the priests. The ease of understanding made the interpretive and mysterious priesthood unnecessary. It no longer was needed to act as the intermediary between the people and their god. Instead, "the Aten literally provided mortals with an immediate perception of the divine, in complete contrast to Amun, who was the hidden one.[49]

It is important to understand that this change in iconography was truly revolutionary in substance and would be misunderstood if thought of as only a change in religious symbolism. Aten was not just another graven image. Even the name Aten reveals its importance. The word is often left untranslated as if it were a proper name, which it is not. Aten is a common noun of great antiquity and means simply "disc," a term of no religious significance. Akhenaten's Aten is not a portrayal of god in the traditional anthropomorphic shape and image to which Egyptians were accustomed. The disc is not the incarnation or indwelling of god in a manner similar to that which Egyptians normally thought of their images as being. Aten is a *symbol* of god and his power, not the incarnation of god himself.[50] The use of a religious image in this manner is completely

new in Egyptian religion and distinguishes the nature of Akhenaten's god completely. Once one understands this, Akhenaten's destruction of Egyptian graven images makes sense.

Akhenaten's actions amounted to a declaration of war against the Theban "vatican," and it is unlikely that it acquiesced quietly. There is partial evidence that once again the Theban priests attempted to remove the king by employing the Oracle of Amun. The evidence is mostly indirect. In the fifth year of his reign, when Akenaten broke openly with the Theban priests and moved the capital to the new city of Akhetaten ("Horizon of the Disc" or "The Place Where Aten Rises"), Akhenaten left the following explanation for his departure on a stele. "*For, as Father Hor-Aten liveth, more evil are they than those things which I heard unto year four, more evil are they than those things which I have heard in the year (missing). More evil are they than those things which the king . . . heard.*"[51] What was it that Akhenaten heard? Did the great Oracle of Amun pronounce that the king was a heretic? Or that the king was not a true king? Or that he had abandoned the gods or incited rebellion against them? It is impossible to know for certain. But the king's own words suggest that there was serious opposition against him that most likely came from the priests.

Despite Akhenaten's provocative actions and the reactions of the Theban priesthood to them, for the first five years of his rule the old religious order was not disrupted in any significant way. Akhenaten had explicitly banned the old gods from theological speculation among the priests, but this seems to have had no practical effect.[52] In his fifth year Akhenaten, with his family and court, moved to the new capital, which was still under construction. He had chosen a location on the east bank of the Nile where the terrain receded from the river in an abrupt curve for a length of 10 miles and a depth of four. A rocky wall surrounded this natural amphitheater except for a slot in the mountains over which the sun rose each morning. It was here, Akhenaten believed, where the sun was born each morning, that the "first creation" wherein god had created all that existed from time beyond memory had occurred. And so it was that on the thirteenth day of the eighth month of his fifth regnal year, a month after he had officially changed his name, Akhenaten the Heretic arrived by boat on the site of his new capital.[53] He had chosen the site (near modern Amarna) because "my father has conversed with me."[54] Akhenaten was now conversing directly with god.

In the fifth year of his reign and shortly before moving to the new capital, the king struck murderously against the Theban priesthood. He ordered all of Amun's temples closed and confiscated the income from the temple estates. The name of Amun was forbidden to be spoken or written. People whose names were compounded with Amun were required to change them. To set the

example, the king changed his name from Amenhotep ("Amun is satisfied") to Akhenaten, which means "Effective for the Sun-disc."[55] It was forbidden to portray Amun in art, and even the use of the plural "gods" was no longer allowed. A program of public defacement was undertaken and wherever the name of Amun appeared on monuments, tombs, statuary, and even casual memorial inscriptions, it was hacked out by government workmen. Akhenaten ordered a similar campaign to be undertaken against all the ancient cults and local gods. Once more temples were closed, estates confiscated, and names hacked from temples, tombs, and monuments. The campaign of defacement was conducted throughout the empire so that all the temples and monuments in Nubia and Syria were defaced as well. To the Egyptian the image and hieroglyph of the god was equivalent to the god itself, who was believed to be incarnate in the image. To destroy the image was to destroy the god. Akhenaten was slaying the ancient gods of Egypt with a terrible vengeance.

Even the great Osiris, the god of resurrection who promised every man a fair judgment and eternal life, suffered the same anathamezation. His name was banned. Traditional funerary practices were still permitted but without any mention of Osiris or the other gods associated with Egyptian funeral rituals. *Usabtis* were still allowed, but the inscriptions they bore were changed to eliminate the prayer that brought the dead to life. Heart scarabs, a sacred amulet to Osiris to prevent the heart from betraying the deceased during judgment, were banned. Anything having to do with Osiris' promise of the afterlife was no longer permitted. Even the *Book of the Dead* was edited. But Akhenaten's campaign of exterminating the images and names of the traditional gods did not stop there. He ordered that all objects even remotely associated with the old gods were to be destroyed as well. Carvings of the pet geese that appeared with certain gods were destroyed as were the leopard skins of the *stm*-priest. Even the lettuce plants associated with the god Min, symbolic of Min's fertility, were hacked out.[56] Akhenaten intended to wipe out all traces of the old religious order and replace it with a new god and new theology.

Akhenaten's campaign of destruction was conducted on such a large scale and so thoroughly accomplished that it could not have been carried out without the support of the army who probably provided the manpower to deal with the considerable resistance and violence that must have occurred. After the initial shock had worn off, it was to be expected that the priests would rally the people at their temples and shrines to oppose the defacers. To carry out the king's orders the military would have had to surround these temples in considerable force and restrain the angry crowds. Violent confrontations and killings must have been commonplace. The military's key role in the king's religious war speaks once more to the power and influence of Ay, now the chief military

commander. The Egyptian officer corps was a new military caste that had conquered the world for Egypt and whose members were accustomed to demonstrating loyalty to their commanders and the king. As long as Ay could reassure his officers that what was happening was taking place at the command of the king, the officer corps could be relied upon to carry out its orders. Somewhere in the midst of it all was a young officer, Horemheb, who would one day make his own mark on Egyptian history.

Although commanded by professional officers, the ranks of the army were comprised of conscripts, and it is to be expected that their willingness to carry out the murder of their own gods might have been more problematical. Harsh discipline might have been required at times to stiffen the resolve of the troops. That common soldiers were involved in the desecration is testified to by the manner in which the gods were defaced. On Amun's statues often the genitals were hacked away.[57] This was an old military practice in Egypt. After a battle squads roamed the battlefield and cut the genitals from the dead collecting them in large bloody sacks for presentation to their officers as proof of the great numbers that had been slain. Cutting off the penises of uncircumcised prisoners of war was also common practice. Therefore, hacking away the genitals of the gods seems merely a novel application of an old military habit. There is also evidence that special military units of non-Egyptian troops may have been used in the defacement campaign, perhaps to avoid strong resistance among the Egyptian soldiery. The reliefs and records of Akhenaten in his new city show the constant presence of the military. Akhenaten is shown accompanied by his generals commanding platoons and marching about. One receives the impression from these reliefs that the new city was an armed camp, and perhaps so for the king surely had to fear assassination from a disgruntled priest or temple officiant. Most interesting is the presence of military detachments comprised largely of troops whose features suggest Asiatic and African origin.[58] These units may have constituted a foreign legion or even a praetorian guard that would have shown little hesitation in carrying out the king's campaign against the Egyptian gods. From Syria to Palestine to the Delta and all along the Nile to Nubia, the temples and monuments of the ancient gods were destroyed. An inscription on the tomb of Tutankhamun, Akhenaten's successor, describes the destruction as he found it. "The temples of the gods and goddesses were desolated from Elephantine as far as the marshes of the Delta . . . Their holy places were forsaken and had become overgrown tracts . . . their sanctuaries were like that which has never been, and their houses were foot-worn paths."[59]

The psychological effect of Akhenaten's rage on the populace must have been enormous, reducing the common people to despair. Holy places at which

whole villages had worshipped for millennia were gone, destroyed or sealed shut. The priests, driven away from their temples and their incomes confiscated, wandered the land in poverty muttering their hatred for the heretic king. Feast days came and went in silence, the only times the gods were removed from their sanctuaries and brought before the people, the only times when the people could see their gods in person. They were completely cut off from divine comfort and blessing. Funerals wound their way to desert cemeteries as they always had, but the great comforter and friend, Osiris, no longer accompanied them. The promise of resurrection that had sustained so many in a hard life had been taken away and nothing given in its place. Even mothers were afraid to utter the old sacred names and prayers to protect their infants from the demons of the night, and there was no one to pray to when a new father worried about the birth of his first child. The average Egyptian's psychological world had been completely altered, which must have left him or her with a terrible sense of loneliness and abandonment.

The effect on people's ability to earn a living must have been substantial as well. Bakers could no longer sell their cakes and sweets at temple feasts and hawkers of amulets of the old gods who crowded around the temple gates to sell their wares had no market. Sculptors who made a living hacking out cheap statues for the home and grave market had no one to sell to, and cemetery stone cutters saw their headstones bearing images of the old gods banned from the necropolis. Scribes could no longer make a living copying sections of the coffin scrolls and offering them for sale. Physicians, too, deprived of their magical spells, amulets, and exorcising rites, lost their livelihood. Providers of bread, beer, and other foodstuffs used daily in the tomb offerings went out of business. Egypt, after all, had always been a theocracy and much of its domestic economy involved religious enterprises of one sort or another. Now all this was gone. The whole land must have been seething with discontent.

Through it all Akhenaten and his small group of sympathizers gathered in the new city and established their tabernacle to the daily light serenely unaware of the fatal darkness that was all around them. Anyone but a blind person could have foreseen the consequences of a purge of the ancient gods. But Akhenaten had become a god-intoxicated man, a true believer, who did not see or, if he did, did not care for the consequences of his actions. To do god's will was all; everything else was but meaningless detail. For such men the past is junk. Akhenaten was the only man in Egypt who possessed the ability to forget the past.

Having systematically destroyed the old gods and theologies and the priestly infrastructure that had given them expression in Egyptian life, Akhenaten spent the next 12 years imposing a new god and theology upon the country.

His break with the more than two millennia of tradition had created a tremendous void in Egyptian life. Into this void Akhenaten brought the worship of Aten and a new theology. In so doing he became the founder of the first monotheistic counterreligion in human history.[60] All monotheistic religions are counterreligions in the sense that none was founded in the cultural absence of other extant belief systems. Atenism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as monotheistic religions came into being after having to confront existing countertraditions. All have their roots in some foundational act such as revolution (Akhenaten) or revelation (Moses, Christ, and Mohammed). Given that Akhenaten claimed that god talked to him, he may also be regarded as having experienced revelation.

We are faced with considerable difficulty when attempting to discern the content of the new theology. Akhenaten is a figure of history whose teachings were later expunged from Egyptian history, reducing him in the Egyptian memory to more myth than reality. Moses, by contrast, was far more likely to have been a mythical figure whom Judaism successfully reconstituted as a figure of history. The reason why this could be done with Moses and not with Akhenaten is that counterreligions come to establish a significant body of canonical texts that define and explain the intricacies of their beliefs if permitted sufficient time to do so. Judaism and Christianity did precisely this, as had the early Egyptian theologians with their roots in the myths of the *Memphite Drama*. But history itself overtook Akhenaten and destroyed the Atenist creed well before it had a chance to establish a canonical history of its own. There are, then, no canonical texts to explain Akhenaten's new religion. If we are to discover what Akhenaten believed about his new god, we must rely upon a handful of poems, hymns, and stelles that can be attributed to him with some confidence. We are fortunate to possess a statement of Akhenaten's view of the new god. It is the preface to his oath to build a new city in honor of Aten. Probably written by Akhenaten himself, it reveals the emotional and passionate belief that drove this man to do what he did:

> The great and living Aten . . . ordaining life, vigorously alive, my Father . . . my wall of millions of cubits, my reminder of Eternity, my witness of what is devised, who is established in rising and setting each day ceaselessly. Whether He is in heaven or earth, every eye beholds Him without hindrance while He fills the land with His rays and makes everyone to live. With seeing whom my eyes are satisfied daily when He rises in this temple of the Aten at Akhetaten and fills it with his Own self by means of His rays, beauteous with love, and embraces me with them in life and power for ever and ever.[61]

Here we examine five fundamental beliefs of Atenism as the framework for analysis: (1) monotheism; (2) prohibition of idols as false gods; (3) immortal-

ity of the soul; (4) afterlife and moral judgment, and (5) resurrection. The differences between the old and new Egyptian religions can be briefly summarized as follows. Where the old religion possessed incarnate images of the gods, Akhenaten introduced the worship of an abstract symbol of the sun disc; where the old religion was syncretic, the Atenists were exclusive; where the old religion was trinitarian/polytheistic, the new one was rigidly monotheistic; while the old religions developed theologies that explained creation and natural causality, the new religion had no interest in such questions; where the old religion was integrally tied to moral philosophy and ethics, the religion of Akhenaten offered no similar teachings. And finally, where the old religion promised an afterlife for the immortal soul for all men, the new religion offered no such hope.[62]

Let us consider each of these beliefs. The tendency toward monotheism in Egyptian religion had been there all along, first discerned by theologians of the Pyramid Age and developing further during the Feudal Age, where it acquired a core of universal ethical values fostered by the supremacy of the sun god, Re. The creation of the Imperial Age provided the stimulus to expand purely Egyptian conceptions of moral order and theology to include non-Egyptian peoples within the empire. The need for the Theban princes to incorporate their god, Amun, into the greater Re led to an emphasis on trinitarian theology in which "One is All," that is, one god with three distinct divine parts. Akhenaten took this development a step further, renouncing the trinitarian idea as essentially polytheistic and replacing it with a single unified deity conceived as a singularity unto itself. The *symbol* of the one god was the sun disc and, as explained earlier, represented a complete break with the usual manner in which Egyptians perceived their sacred images. The new god was not incarnate in the sun disc. Here, then, for the first time in human history is a truly monotheistic theological system, one whose essential characteristics reappeared in early Mosaic thinking.

Aten was a new kind of god. The old natural order in which humans and creatures participated and in which the moral order (*Maat*) was so clearly evident in the cycles of nature was no more. The intelligibility of the universal order was destroyed. Akhenaten's new god is sterile and cold when understood in human terms. The great myths of human creation fashioned by the old religion to warm man in his comprehension of the cosmos were completely absent in the new creed. Aten keeps the world going, but we are not told how or why he does so. There is, then, no moral cosmology into which man may find his natural place as he could in the old theology. The singular god still exists, but is a will unto himself. His will commands the world, but his motives are hidden from us. He becomes "the hidden one," whose will no man can know. In this

new cosmos man is but one more creature of no special importance. His end, whatever it is, is not explained. Man can wonder at and worship Aten, but not comprehend him. The old comprehensible god that gave Egyptian theologians their guide-lines for ethical conduct was no longer comprehensible. God is god and man is man, and the two are no longer parts of the same universe.[63] Akhenaten's god is a universal life-giving god whose rays embrace all lands and peoples. But he is not imbedded in human affairs as were the old gods. This cold new god confronts the world from high above it, removed from human concerns, sufficient unto himself.

The old trinitarian/polytheism of Egypt was open to all men who could easily approach their gods with their fears and desires. The gods were thoroughly integrated into daily life, their presence, influence, and access to them guaranteed. The god of the sun disc is no such amiable god. He is unapproachable by ordinary men. Only the presumed son of god, the king himself, may know and understand what is in god's mind. Akhenaten makes this clear in the Great Hymn: "When you have gone and there is no eye whose sight you have created in order not to be compelled to look at yourself as the sole one of creation, you are in my heart. There is no other who knows you, only your son Nefer-kheperu-Re, sole one of Re, Whom you have taught your ways and your might."[64] Here is the distinction between the knowledge of god and merely seeing him. All men can see god in his symbol of the disc, but it is a knowledge of god that establishes a true relationship with him. Akhenaten makes clear that only in the heart of the king and not that of the common man is such a relationship possible. It is the divine knowledge of the king that is the point of permanence and stability in the world. God hides himself from the understanding of the common man; he is understandable only to the king. This is a complete inversion of the old religion that gave Egypt its concern for ethics and justice, for these were man's understanding of god's moral order. In the old religion the idea of "taking god into one's heart," that is, establishing a personal relationship with him, was central to human life and gave rise to human conscience and character.[65] All this was cast aside as so much rubbish by the new Atenist religion. The new religion promised only that man can witness the presence of god in the physical sun and feel his power in its rays. Knowledge of god in one's heart, once the property of all Egyptians in the old religion, was now the monopoly of the king. That Akhenaten saw himself as the personification of this special relationship was reflected in the epithet he formally attached to his name. Akhenaten Living in Truth truly sought to do god's will.[66]

A god that hides himself from everyone is unlikely to have much to say to mankind, and so it comes as no surprise that Akhenaten's god offers no formal theology or ethical teaching to explain himself to humans. Aten created the

world. "Thou settest every man in his place and makest their sustenance, each one possessing his food, and his term of life counted; tongues made diverse in speech and their characters likewise; their complexions distinguished, for thou hast distinguished country and country."[67] But we are never told why. The great cosmological and ontological myths of the early Egyptian religion that sought to explain the ways of god to man are completely absent in Atenism. Man must somehow find his place in the new cosmos, but must do so without help from his god. Akhenaten's hymns contain no expression of ethical concerns, which had been the centerpiece of the old religion. Gone is the old idea that god is the champion of the poor and mistreated. The new god has no ethical precepts to offer. He neither promises nor dispenses justice. He offers humans no compassion. All that is left to comfort man is the joy humans may take in seeing the sun as the symbol of the supreme god's beneficence, beauty, and power.[68] Aten is his own wonder, his own justice, whose mystery and actions are beyond the knowledge of all men but the king. There is nothing special about human beings in the new divine universe. They do not matter any more than any of god's other creatures matter. Man is part of the larger natural physical whole of creation, but there is nothing special about him or his place in that cosmos. All creatures participate in the cosmos in exactly the same way. Man has been reduced to what Assmann brilliantly has termed a "vegetative religiosity."[69]

Where the old Egyptian polytheism had been tolerant and syncretic, the new Atenist religion was rigidly and exclusively monotheist and intolerant. Aten was "thou sole god, like to whom there is none other."[70] The possession of religious truth seems to require the destruction of theological error, and Akhenaten's murderous destruction of the old Egyptian gods provides history with its first example of a religious war.[71] All but Aten are false gods and false gods must be exterminated. The old idea that all gods are true insofar as they are manifestations of the one god who resides behind all creation is cast aside. Gardiner captures the harsh spirit of Akhenaten's attack on the old gods when he says, "This is no mere physical theory, but was a genuine monotheism, and it is in the moral courage with which the reformer strove to sweep away the vast accumulation of mythological rubbish inherited from the past that his true greatness lay."[72] The new theological order was built on the corpses of the old.

Akhenaten's murder of Osiris especially produced enormous consequences for Egyptian religious practice. In striking down Osiris the king also destroyed a number of important ideas that had over the millennia become central to the religious life of the ordinary Egyptian. Among the most important of these were the immortality of the soul, resurrection, judgment after death, and eternal life. Akhenaten's beliefs concerning immortality and the soul represent a

turning away from the then widely accepted notion that all men had immortal souls by returning to the old doctrine formed well before the Pyramid Age that only the king's soul was immortal and only he could expect to live beyond the grave. It was precisely this belief, it will be recalled, that prompted the construction of the great pyramid tombs. By the end of the Feudal Age the idea of the immortality of the soul had been extended to the common man through the democratization of the Osiris myth. Akhenaten's new religion reaffirmed the king's monopoly on immortality. Thus, only he could reasonably expect eternal life, which he merited not because he did *Maat* but because of his special knowledge of god that only he possessed.

Akhenaten's attack on the funeral rituals associated with Osiris cut off the common man from his hope of immortality by destroying the way to reach it after death. Funerary rituals served no purpose in the new religion and were forbidden. Akhenaten was at least consistent in his beliefs as his own tomb was not accompanied by a funeral temple wherein the old rites to sustain the king in the afterlife were expected to be performed. Along with the other Osirian practices that he banned, the most significant was the prohibition on the epithet *maet kheru*, the key phrase pronounced over the deceased to indicate that he had been judged by the gods to be an honest man and was now "justified."[73] The prohibition of this simple phrase destroyed the ritual key to eternal life, and the despair it produced among Egyptians of faith can only be imagined from this distance in time. The denial of the immortality of the soul brought with it the negation of the belief in a judgment beyond the grave, resurrection, and eternal life. Because the Atenist religion never survived long enough to develop a canonical literature, much of what Akhenaten claimed for the new god remained only in the form of royal assertions expressed in the famous sun hymn, which Akhenaten himself is thought to have written. Understandably, some of the new ideas are undeveloped and unclear. Akhenaten's idea of an afterlife for the common man is a good example. With no soul immortal but his own, Akhenaten had no need for such ideas. Aldred suggests, however, that it is possible to derive a vision of Akhenaten's immortality for the common believer from the king's hymns. Akhenaten's view of the afterlife was not the agricultural paradise of Osiris. Rather, it was a place where the spirits of the dead came forth by day at sunrise to enjoy the beauty of the sun disc and its rays, perhaps an Egyptian version of the Christian Beatific Vision, only to return to the tomb at night, an imagery suggested by the behavior of sand martins in Egypt that nest in holes in the river banks.[74] Aldred notes that "life after death for the worshipper of the Aten was to live near his god and his king in the temple on earth, and near his former home and tomb,"[75] an idea that marks a return to the Pyramid Age in terms of how Egyptians saw the fate of deceased commoners.

The new state religion Akhenaten imposed on Egypt, as best we may discern from the the king's hymns and poems, can be summarized as containing the following elements. First, the Aten faith replaced the trinitarian polytheism of the old faith with a rigid monotheistic creed that affirmed the existence of a single god manifest in a single person. This all powerful and universal god was symbolized by, but not identical with, the Aten or sun disc. Second, the presence of one true god required that all other gods be false. Worship of false gods is idolotry and not to be permitted. Third, the new faith abandoned the belief in the immortality of the soul that had marked Egyptian religious belief for millennia. The single exception was the soul of the king who, as the son of god, might logically be expected to possess an immortal soul as a condition of his divinity. Fourth, if the human being possessed no such immortal and immaterial element as a soul, there was nothing that might live on after him once his body had died. This did not prevent the person's ka from living on in the tomb where it could be tended to as in ancient times. But without a truly immortal and mobile soul humans could no longer hope for a resurrection from worldly death. Fifth, without an immortal soul to destroy in the "second dying," there was no need for a judgment after death assessing the moral quality of a man's life as a condition for life everlasting. For 15 of his 19 years on the throne, the god-intoxicated Akhenaten suppressed the traditional religion of Egypt while forcing his new god upon the country.

It must have been a time of terrible fear and turmoil. The sheer number of temples, shrines, monuments, statues, reliefs, gravestones, and other places that held the images of the old gods in Egypt and throughout the empire would seem to have required a campaign of defacement that may have gone on for years. It is also likely that at least the initial attempts to destroy the temples and shrines were met by resistance and considerable violence. The Theban vatican must have been purged. It is almost certain that some of the higher ranking priests in Thebes were killed. The economic life of the country or at least that considerable part of it that derived from the practice of religion must have suffered as many lost their livelihood. But the greatest shock was to the psychology of the average citizen whose daily life of faith, ritual, and magic was destroyed. We might obtain some sense of how the average Egyptian felt about all this if we imagine that in our own time a fanatical pope were to suddenly announce from the chair of Saint Peter that Christ, the Trinity, and the saints of the old faith were no more to be worshipped because they had been determined to be false gods through a personal revelation from god to the pope. In their place the ancient symbol of Christianity itself, the cross, was now ordained to be divine in itself, exalted and deified as the one true god and heavenly father of all mankind. At the personal command of the new deity expressed to his vicar

on earth, the pope then ordered that all existing churches, holy sites, and shrines were to be closed, the priesthood turned out into the streets, and every iconographic image or name of Christ, the Trinity or the saints was to be obliterated wherever it was found. The profound shock and sadness of such a revolutionary occurrence would paralyze the Christian world and must have done so in Egypt as well.

The domestic turmoil of Akhenaten's reign was accompanied by uncertainty and defeat in foreign affairs. The king's passion for creating a new Egyptian religious order monopolized his energy and he paid little attention to foreign affairs. The key to Egyptian power in Asia was its long-standing alliance with the Mitanni and their king, Tushratta. The Mitanni played the role of balancer in the area keeping the Hittites and Syrian states in check with Egyptian help. For reasons that remain obscure, Akhenaten turned a cold shoulder to his traditional ally once he felt secure on the throne. Correspondence between the Mitanni and other client states and the Egyptian foreign office, the famous Amarna letters,[76] clearly indicates the sense of concern on the part of these states at the failure of Egypt to react to the disruptions caused by the Hittites, Syrians, and Palestinian client princes. Tushratta sent letter after letter warning Akhenaten that events in Asia needed attention if catastrophe was to be avoided. The king did nothing. Egyptian paralysis did not go unnoticed by the great Hittite king, Suppiluliumas I, who sensed the time was right to strike the Mitanni. In one of the boldest strategic-military strokes in ancient history, he launched an attack eastward in the Armenian highlands to deal with some rebellious border states, then turned suddenly south to descend on the broad Mesopotamian plain, arriving at the borders of the Mitanni in full strength. Suppiluliumas immediately went over to the attack, catching Tushratta completely by surprise driving him and his court from the capital. His line of communications secure, the Hittite king turned west, crossed the Euphrates, and defeated the kings of northern Syria, formerly clients of the Mitanni. Marching south, Suppiluliumas met and defeated the king of Kadesh, who tried to ambush the Hittite army and failed. The king and crown prince were deported and Kadesh occupied. Damascus itself was brought to heel next and the Hittite advance finally halted in southern Lebanon. In a single military campaign, Suppiluliumas had completely changed the map of Asia. The Mitanni were finished as a great power, their king murdered, and their country occupied and literally wiped from the political map. At a single stroke a new nation had burst upon the scene to threaten Egyptian security interests. All the coastal cities from Lebanon to Gaza were now at risk.[77] Within months some of Egypt's Palestinian clients sought to accommodate themselves to Hittite power and broke into open revolt. When at last Akhenaten sent

troops to deal with these rebellions, the Egyptians suffered a number of setbacks in the field. In reaction to these events Ay and the military may have begun to reassess their support for the heretic king.

During all this time a great plague was raging in the Levant. We hear of it first during the last years of Amenhotep III's reign. Whatever the disease was, it must have carried off large numbers of people in Asia before reaching Egypt. Amenhotep III had no fewer than 700 statues erected of Sekhmet, the goddess of pestilence, in Egypt to ward off the disease.[78] As events beyond her borders turned against Egypt, the plague crossed the Nile and struck at the royal family itself. The first to die was Meketaten, the king's second daughter. Her death was followed by Akhenaten's second wife, Kiya. Nefertiti herself disappears from official records around this time and is presumed to have succumbed, although this is not certain. Akhenaten's three youngest daughters may have been the next members of the royal family to become victims of the plague. Surrounded by death and without a male heir, Akhenaten took his eldest daughter, Meretaten, as his new wife. Perhaps he hoped to sire an heir, or maybe all the death and turmoil in his life forced him to seek comfort with someone he could trust. Whatever the reason, nothing came of it.

The death of so many members of the royal family, the deteriorating political situation in Asia, and the domestic turmoil attendant to the campaign of destruction against the old Egyptian gods may have served to awaken in Akhenaten the feeling that time was running out. This true prophet of the true god seems to have ordered that the efforts to destroy the old gods be increased[79] in a great effort to complete his life's work of establishing a new religion for Egypt. This may have exhausted the army's patience. Along with the deterioration of Egypt's position in Palestine and Asia and the successive setbacks on the battlefield, asking the army to increase its domestic suppression against its own people may have been too much. Even the assurance of the powerful Ay might no longer have been sufficient to calm the worried generals. And it is possible that Ay himself realized that Akhenaten had placed Egypt in great danger and had to be stopped.

It was at this point, Schulman argues, that the military decided to act by forcing Akhenaten to accept a co-regent.[80] The appointment of a co-regent would ensure Egypt of an heir and guarantee the continuity of political authority after the death of Akhenaten. Left unsaid, no doubt, was the implication that should events require the removal of the king by a *coup d'etat*, the government and the influence of the military would continue with only minor disruptions. From regnal year 15 the king's daughter, Meretaten, is portrayed in reliefs in the company of a young 14-year-old boy named Smenkhkare ("He Whom The Spirit of Re Has Enobled"). The origins of Smenkhkare and his

seven-year-old younger brother, Tutankhaten, are obscure, but it is likely that they were members of some collateral branch of the royal family.[81] The co-regency lasted for about two years during which we hear no more of Akhenaten's efforts to crush the old religious order. Perhaps the army refused to carry out further suppressive measures or the campaign was simply permitted to trickle away to nothing. Within the court itself, intrigue and maneuver continued and some time shortly before the end, Akhenaten's daughter, Ankhesenpaaten, was married to Smenkhkare's younger brother, Tutankhaten. If Smenkhkare took this as a bad omen, as well he might, there is no evidence of it. In the summer of 1359 B.C.E. Akhenaten died peacefully in his bed and was buried in the royal tomb he had prepared for himself in the eastern wadi of Akhetaten, the city he had built to the glory of his new god.

Smenkhkare held the throne for two years before he died, during which time Egypt continued to drift in foreign affairs as the Hittites consolidated their grip on the remnants of the Mitannian empire. We may safely assume that the army had called a halt to Akhenaten's campaign of deicide and some peace had returned to the land. The death of Smenkhkare brought his younger brother to the throne. The new king was only a boy of seven or eight and real power rested with the King's Council whose most prominent member was the wily old Ay, who as vizier acted as regent for the young king. As Master of the King's Horse, Ay also held command of the army. Aldred has done a fine job of reconstructing the King's Council under Tutankhaten. Besides Ay, there was a general officer named Minnakht, probably a relative of Ay, who commanded the armies of Upper Egypt. Another general named Horemheb who commanded the northern armies also served on the council. During his service he gained notoriety for conducting campaigns against Libya and in Asia. Maya, Treasurer and Master of the King's Works, and the southern vizier, Pentu, were also present. Pentu had served as Akhenaten's Chief Physician.[82] All of these men with the exception of Horemheb, who could not have been more than a middle-level officer at the time of the campaign of defacement, had held powerful positions under Akhenaten. Now that Akhenaten was gone, Ay and the King's Council influenced Tutankhaten to return Egypt to its old ways.

Tutankhaten set about restoring the old temples and shrines. As a symbol of his sincerity he took the Horus name "Propitiating the Gods." In addition, three years after ascending the throne, Tutankhaten and his court abandoned Akhenaten's holy city of the sun and returned to the ancient capital at Memphis. The new king did not persecute Akhenaten's followers and no effort was made to destroy their temples. Instead, he pursued a policy of tolerance and gradualism as the old temples reopened side by side with those of the sun cult. No official punishments were decreed and there was no defacing of monu-

ments and statues. Nor was there a *damnatio memoriae* of Akhenaten's memory or his grave.[83] So complete had the destruction of the old images been under Akhenaten, and so fearful were craftsmen of fashioning new idols, that Tutankhaten had to issue a formal decree authorizing the manufacture of images of the old gods to fulfill the demand of the reopened temples and shrines for them.[84] The king even changed his name to reflect his loyalty to the old gods. Tutankh*aten* became Tutankh*amun*. The circumstances in which he found himself must have seemed strange to the young king. He was, after all, only a boy and had never known the old Egypt or the ancient gods. He had been born into the Atenist faith and his given birth name was derived from the name of the god himself. This suggests that Ay and the Council were behind the restoration of the old ways. Egypt needed domestic peace to deal with the foreign threats to her security. Tutankhamun ruled during a twilight time between the last surge of the rigors of iconoclasm and the full restoration of polytheism in Egypt.

Tutankhamun ruled for nine or 10 years before meeting his death under what must be seen as suspicious circumstances. Evidence gathered from the autopsy of Tutankhamun's mummy reveals that he died a violent death probably from an arrow wound that penetrated his skull in the region of the left ear. His mummy shows that the young king's hair was shaved over the area of his wound, a preliminary preparation for conducting skull surgery.[85] The wounded king held on to life for a few days, long enough for a short stubble to grow on his face, before succumbing to his injury. How he died remains one of the enduring mysteries of Egypt. Assassination can be safely ruled out since Ay and the Council already controlled the king. And there is no evidence that Tutankhamun was killed in battle. The boy could have been shot in a hunting accident, but even this is only surmise. What is certain is that with the death of Tutankhamun the long line begun by the great liberator Ahmose I that had given Egypt so many competent sovereigns and warrior pharaohs had come to an end.

While Tutankhamun lived, he had appointed Ay as vizier and awarded him the title of "the king's eldest son," thereby marking him as his heir apparent. But Tutankhamun's 22-year-old widow, Ankhesenamun, who was also Ay's grandaughter, had other ideas. In what ranks among the most bizarre political maneuvers in history, a trusted messenger carried a written note from Ankhesenamun to Suppiluliumas the Great, king of the Hittites and enemy of Egypt. In the note Ankhesenamun urged the king to send one of his sons for her to marry so that she might retain her rightful place on the throne. The marriage, she pointed out, would make the Hittite's son pharaoh of Egypt. Never one to miss an opportunity, Suppiluliumas sent his son, Zidanza, to take the

queen up on her offer. But Ay and the Egyptian army were one step ahead of Ankhesenamun. Somehow they learned of the plan and when Zidanza crossed into Egypt at the Wall of Princes, he was ambushed and killed. Suppiluliumas was outraged at the death of his son and a clash of arms between the Hittites and Egyptians followed to no conclusion. Ankhesenamun, in the meantime, was arrested and because she was the true queen of Egypt, Ay forced her into a marriage legitimizing his claim to the throne. Ankhesenamun was never seen again.

By now Ay was an old man. He governed wisely for three years until his death. Like Tutankhamun before him, Ay did not embark upon any campaign of vengeance against the followers of the Aten faith. The process of restoring the old gods went on slowly and peacefully as before and there was no official condemnation of Akhenaten. Before his death Ay appointed the young general Horemheb to succeed him, which he did without incident when Ay passed away. Horemheb was a native of the unimportant town of Hnes on the east bank of the Nile about 110 miles from modern Cairo. His parents are unknown, and there is no reason to think he was of royal blood. It is most probable that he was one of the "new men" who rose to prominence in the Egyptian military on the strength of talent and performance. As a young officer it is at least probable that he played some role in Akhnenaten's suppression of the old order, but experts are divided as to whether or not he was actually at Akhetaten.[86] He is unknown until the middle of Tutankhamun's reign when he is recorded as accepting a posting in the north. That he was a professional soldier is beyond doubt, and it was probably he who commanded the punitive raid into Nubia to coincide with the appointment of a new viceroy. Later he appears as "chief overseer of the army," the equivalent of our field marshall or five-star general.[87]

Horemheb turned out to be an energetic king, who moved quickly against official corruption. He published his Edict of Reform, establishing new laws to stamp out bribery, unfair taxation, and biased judges in a judiciary that had become corrupt. He moved quickly against lawless acts committed against the populace by an undisciplined soldiery. Some units had turned to brigandage and may have been elements of the asiatic battalions established by Akhenaten. With their patron gone, crime and brigandage may have been their only livelihood.[88] Horemheb undertook a grand tour of Egypt. He witnessed firsthand the terrible destruction that Akhenaten had visited upon the temples and shrines and set about restoring them at great expense. It was said of Horemheb that "He shaped all their names in number more than before, increasing the beauty in that which he made. Re rejoiced when he saw them . . . He raised up their temples, he fashioned 100 images, all their bodies being correct, and en-

crusted with every splendid costly stone."[89] In another place Horemheb is remembered because "he equipped them [the temples of Egypt] with purification priests and lector-priests, they being the pick of his army."[90] This seems to indicate that while Horemheb was willing to restore the priesthood he remained wary that once again it might become too powerful. He did not reappoint the old priests but chose new ones whose military service and records showed them to be trustworthy and loyal to the crown.

Horemheb had been king for 10 years before he turned his attention to what was to be done about the followers of Akhenaten, who still openly worshipped the new god. In the tenth year of his reign Horemheb closed all the temples of the sun disc. He ordered the holy city of Akhetaten completely destroyed. Not one block was left complete as workmen systematically disassembled every building. Walls were torn down to their foundation, stelles and statuary smashed, and the remains left as a quarry for years to come. The great temples to Aten constructed at Memphis and Heliopolis were torn down as well. Soon after Horemheb had moved back to Thebes, he ordered even the sun temple at Karnak destroyed. Strangely, Horemheb ordered the names of Tutankhamun and Ay hacked out from any monuments and statues on which they appeared putting his own name in their place. Horemheb ruled for 27 years until his death and was buried at Thebes. During this time Egypt began to forget the heretic Akhenaten, as he was always referred to in Egyptian official documents from that time on. Over the next century Egyptians came to forget Akhenaten and his strange teaching. To be sure, pockets of his followers, some among the Asiatic communities resident in Egypt, lived on long afterwards. But for Egyptians the memory faded as the old gods once more took their rightful places in the restored temples to the ancient faith. But ideas, especially heretical ones, have a way of living in the form of suppressed memories. Under the right circumstances these ideas can reemerge into the light. When they escape the subconscious, they do so with tremendous force, exploding into the conscious mind where they wield considerable influence. Akhenaten the Heretic was gone, but the new ideas he dared to propose would once more find their place in history with consequences that even the heretic king could never have imagined.

3

Moses and Judaism

We have seen that the development of Egyptian religion proceeded without interruption for more than two millennia within a cultural context that was remarkably free from foreign theological influences. Until the time of Akhenaten, the stream of Egyptian religious development had consistently been comprised of a number of theological principles that became more clearly articulated and more widely affirmed with each passing century. These principles were: (1) There is a supreme deity ("The One") conceptually expressed as a trinitarian god. (2) There is an immortal soul comprising the essence of man that lived on after death. (3) There will be a resurrection wherein the body, in a beatified state, and the soul rise again after death. (4) There will be a divine postmortem judgment concerning the quality of the deceased's ethical life while on this earth as a requirement for eternal life. (5) Incarnation is possible wherein gods come to reside within ("indwelling") the images fashioned of them through which humans can communicate with them. These principles will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4, Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection. Here it is sufficient that they only be mentioned to recall the theological precepts of Egyptian religious belief prior to Akhenaten.

Akhenaten's deicidal rule forced a radical break in the development of Egyptian religion as it had progressed over the previous centuries. Akhenaten's new religion affirmed theological beliefs that were at odds with those that had come before. The new Atenist creed affirmed the following theological principles: (1) There is a single god who is a genuine singularity and does not exist in trini-

tarian/polytheistic form. (2) Humans do not possess an immortal soul capable of life after death; only the soul of the king may be rightly regarded as immortal. (3) With no immortal soul, man has no hope of resurrection beyond the grave. Only the king rises after death. (4) There is no judgment beyond the grave of the deceased's ethical life through which one can merit and achieve eternal life. (5) The one true god does not manifest himself incarnate in images. All images are false gods and their worship is idolatry. This, then, was the essence of Akhenaten's revolutionary religion and it stands in remarkable contrast to the centuries-old tradition of Egyptian religious development.

The turmoil and disruption visited by Akhenaten during his lifetime upon Egypt's religious life did not end with his death. For more than 50 years after Akhenaten, Egyptian authorities were still trying to repair the damage he had done to temples, shrines, and monuments. Seti I, who came to the throne more than 40 years after Akhenaten's death, was brought to tears at the destruction wrought by the heretics on the holy shrine of Osiris at Abydos. The king was moved to great anger by what he had seen and spent the rest of his life rebuilding Egypt's sacred shrines.[1] Fifteen years later Ramses II was still rebuilding Egypt's religious monuments and temples. The evidence of Akhenaten's heretical rule was inescapable long after his death and it is difficult to conceive of any group in Egypt who was unaware of the effects of Akhenaten's actions or the heretical beliefs that caused them.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the effects that Akhenaten's beliefs had upon a group of Asiatics who had been living in Egypt from at least the time of Akhenaten, and perhaps before, who had ample opportunity to be influenced by the heretic's ideas. The hypothesis to be explored is that this people, as yet unpossessed of a sense of national identity or even a name, were exposed to Atenist beliefs as a consequence of their residence in Egypt during the Atenist revolution and after through the influence of their own leaders some of whom, along with other Asiatics, held positions in the Egyptian governmental hierarchy. From the time of their arrival in Egypt until their departure more than a century later, this Asiatic people had mostly assimilated to Egyptian culture and ideas. Some of their leaders even lost the ability to speak the native Asiatic tongue, a fact from which we might reasonably infer that other members of the group did as well. The wearing of Egyptian clothing, intermarrying with Egyptian women, and adoption of Egyptian social mores and habits, along with other marks of cultural assimilation, were commonplace. Yet, when circumstances arose where these Asiatics fell out of favor with the government, a strong leader arose to lead them out of Egypt. This charismatic leader led his people through a great national saga that conferred upon them a national identity that they maintain to this day. A key element of this

saga was the creation of a new religion remarkably similar in core beliefs to that which Akhenaten had attempted to impose upon the Egyptian people more than a century earlier. This time the new beliefs fell on fertile ground, however, where they took root and produced the flower of one of the great religions of the West. The Asiatics were the Israelites; their leader was Moses; and the new religion was Yahwehism. Over many centuries the Yahwehist beliefs imposed by Moses upon the ancient Israelites came to form the heart of Judaism.

A word about terminology is in order here. I consistently use the term "Israelite" instead of "Hebrews" or "Jews" when referring to the followers of Moses. Likewise, the term "Yahwehism" is employed instead of Judaism until the chapter on Christianity when the term "Judaism" is used. This is done in the interest of historical accuracy. The term "Jew" is not an historically accurate description of the followers of Yahweh until the sixth century B.C.E. Following the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great in 539 B.C.E., the area of southern Palestine and the Israelite tribe of Judah came under Persian control. The tribe of Judah was all that remained of an Israelite national identity and homeland following the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations. Remnants of the Israelite tribes were scattered throughout Palestine in small numbers, but only the land of Judah remained a governing entity to which the exiles could return as a homeland. During the Babylonian exile the Israelites assembled the first five books of the Old Testament into its present form, codifying the Mosaic saga into the source legend of a distinct people. It was in Babylon that Second Isaiah, the name scholars give chapters 40 to 55 of the Book of Isaiah, was written bringing about "a new theological and spiritual epoch" for the Israelites.[2] Before the exile the god of the Israelites had been the god of a single people with even Yahweh's monotheistic character remaining unclear over the centuries. From Moses to Isaiah Yahweh seems as much the most powerful god among others as he does a single god. But with Second Isaiah it was clear as never before that Yahweh had become a truly monotheistic and universal god.[3] The principle theme of Second Isaiah was an uncompromising belief in a single god whose power runs throughout the universe. The words of the new Yahweh as portrayed in Second Isaiah reflect this epochal change.

> I am the lord, there is no other . . . There is no god but me; there is no god other than I, victorious and able to save. . . . Who has gauged the waters in the palm of his hand, or with its span set limits to the heavens? . . . Who is like me? Let him stand up, let him declare himself and show me his evidence. . . . Is there any god beside me?[4]

Yahweh's silence answers his own question. There are no other gods anywhere in the universe. The returning Israelite exiles imposed their new idea upon the old Yahwehism practiced by the Israelites of Judah. The term "Jew" refers to

descendants of the tribe of Judah, and it was at this time that Yahwehism in its new monotheistic and universalist form imposed by the exiles came to be closely associated with the descendants of Judah or the Jews. The rebuilding of the temple in 516 B.C.E. and the codification of Jewish ritual law by Ezra completed the process of establishing the new Yahwehism within Judah. From this time forward it is appropriate to speak of Jews and Judaism as accurately describing the descendants of the Israelites and their religion.

It is appropriate to distinguish between Yahwehism and Judaism for another reason. The Judaism of the sixth century B.C.E. was a considerably different creed in important respects than it had been when first introduced by Moses six centuries earlier just as modern Judaism, the beneficiary of almost two thousand years of ethical introspection and commentary, is considerably different from the legalistic Judaism of Ezra. Like all religions, Yahwehism changed in response to the historical circumstances with which it was forced to deal. Since this chapter is concerned with the influence of Egyptian religious ideas and practices upon the religion of the Israelites, the analysis is limited to the impact made by Egyptian religion on Mosaic Yahwehism. To be sure, Mosaic fundamentals remain at the core of modern Judaism. This connection will be explored in the last chapter of the book.

The word "Hebrews" is often used synonymously with Israelites but inappropriately so. Using only Old Testament sources, it seems obvious that the term "Hebrew" is of ancient origin and applies to the Israelites. While the word itself does appear in the Old Testament, it does so infrequently and under specific circumstances and, in fact, disappears almost completely from Yahwehist writings with the establishment of the monarchy of Saul.[5] It does not appear, for example, in important segments of the Bible such as Joshua, Judges, II Samuel, or I and II Kings. Scholars have pointed to these facts to suggest that the term itself is not deeply rooted in Israelite history and was not a common designation for the Israelites at least as far as they applied it to themselves.[6] "Hebrews" as a designation for Israelites was most frequently used in the Old Testament by foreigners describing the Israelites, as when the Philistines referred to the Israelites as Hebrews or when the Egyptians did likewise. Whenever Israelites themselves used the term, it was in conjunction with their descriptions of circumstances when the Israelites were not free or were being oppressed in some manner.[7] The word is, then, a self-designation to express unpleasant times perhaps in much the same way that my Italian grandmother would use the term "povera creature," literally, poor creatures, to describe the difficult lot of her Italian countrymen in America. Ethnic groups, in America at least, often call themselves by names that are derogatory when used by outsiders but that are otherwise perfectly acceptable when used by members of the

group itself. The term "nigger," for example, is sometimes used by Blacks among themselves to indicate an exclusive community membership defined not only by blood but by the common experience of hardship and suffering. The same term, if used by an outsider, becomes a term of terrible derision, however. It is precisely in this manner that the term *Hebrew* was used by the Israelites of the Old Testament. The preponderance of evidence supports the proposition that in common usage the bounded tribes of the Old Testament spoke of themselves as Israelites and not Hebrews.[8]

The Amarna Letters noted in a previous chapter introduced the world to a group of people that the Egyptians called the *Apiru* or *Habiru*, described as a wandering group of Asiatics in Palestine and Syria with whom the Egyptians were familiar. They are portrayed sometimes as brigands, sometimes as fighting with Egyptian troops, sometimes as ethnic units within the Egyptian army itself, as tenders of cattle, and as being skilled in wine growing.[9] The similarity of the words "Habiru" and "Hebrew" led some scholars to conclude that the *Habiru* were the Israelites of the Bible appearing for the first time in a historical source outside the Old Testament, a source that was at least two hundred years earlier than any known Israelite literature.[10] The *Habiru* were indeed an important factor in Egyptian and Israelite history, but they were not synonymous with the Hebrews. As Professor Bohl has so tantalizingly put it, "All Israelites were Hebrews, but not all Hebrews were Israelites."[11] But if we can understand the nature of the *Habiru* of history, we can arrive at an accurate picture of the ancient Israelites of the Bible.

Habiru was not a designation for an ethnic or racial group, but designated a *class* of wandering peoples in the area of Palestine and Syria who came into frequent contact with the Egyptians after the establishment of the New Kingdom. The term itself appears to mean "wanderers," "outcasts," "bandits" or "passers-by"[12] They are described in an Egyptian document as " . . . the miserable stranger . . . He does not dwell in the same spot, his feet are always wandering. From the days of Horus (from time immemorial) he battles, he does not conquer, and is not conquered."[13] The *Habiru* comprised larger groups than the bedouin and their social structure was more complex, its members more talented in skills beyond animal husbandry. Martin Buber suggests that the *Habiru* were not a tribe in the usual sense of the term, but a group of tribes united in loose confederation so that their name was connected to a common way of life or social interaction rather than an ethnic designation. They were mostly Semites, but not all, a people without a country disassociated from national identity uniting now and again in common journeys for pasture or plunder. Buber says "they are semi-nomadic herdsmen who become freebooters if the chance arises."[14] They wandered with their herds of goats, sheep, and cat-

tle, hunting when they could and engaging in short-term agriculture whenever they found a suitable site. Their habit was to pitch their tents near a town or settlement where they could trade or find temporary work. At times they would remain near a town for a considerable period and the best among them sometimes rose in the affairs of the town even to governing positions. Some became mercenaries or overseers on public works. Others worked as common laborers. This life, Buber notes, required "a peculiar mix of pastoral and military virtues."[15] The *Habiru*, then, were much more than seasonal bedouins in search of grassland for their flocks. They were perhaps more similar to the wandering Gypsies of Eastern Europe or the Tinkers of Ireland and Scotland, a talented but rootless people more loyal to blood ties and marriage alliances than to concepts of nationhood. It was just such a tribe of Israelite wanderers led by powerful chieftains that left Mesopotamia to make their history first in the hills of Canaan and then in the cities of Egypt.[16]

We now turn to the question of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. If it is to be argued that the core religious beliefs preferred by Moses were strongly similar to those introduced by Akhenaten, it becomes incumbent to suggest the manner in which the early Israelites might have been exposed to Akhenaten's monotheistic theology. The story of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and their escape under Moses is derived totally from the Old Testament unsupported by a single item of evidence from Egyptian sources. The Old Testament, as Martin Buber emphasizes, belongs to the literary genre called the saga, the predominant mechanism for preserving the memory of a people's history as long as the people remain a tribe. Once the tribe settles down and becomes a state, the saga is taken over by history or pseudo-history where regular record keeping or annalistic listings (king lists, for example) become predominant.[17]

A saga can be understood in two ways. There is the saga produced near to the historical occurrence, whose purpose is to capture and report the event itself, and there is the saga at a distance, whose purpose is to "round off" or complete the story by filling in the details so as to create a complete memory of the story. It is here, years after the event and after it has been reorganized and rewritten, that the saga becomes transformed into the "sacred legend" of a people.[18] The first five books of the Old Testament containing the Mosaic saga were not organized and compiled in their near-present form until at least four hundred years after the events described therein and only after the Israelites had settled down into a state political structure. The Old Testament is the only "history" we have of the early Israelites and their experience in Egypt and must be accepted as a generally reliable account of these early events, at least in the absence of any convincing evidence to the contrary.

Assuming, then, that the Israelites "went down" into Egypt, the question arises as to when this occurred. Early scholarship dating from the turn of the last century argued that the Israelites were amongst the *Hyksos* invaders of Egypt in the seventeenth century B.C.E. This hypothesis rested on the assumption that the *Habiru* were the Hebrews. Since the *Habiru* were mentioned in Egyptian documents as early as the nineteenth century B.C.E., it was assumed that the Hebrews were an identifiable people in Palestine as early as this and, accordingly, could have been among the *Hyksos*.[19] This argument crumbles if the *Habiru* are not Hebrews and modern scholarship no longer holds that the Israelites entered Egypt along with the *Hyksos*. Breasted and others have suggested another time for the Israelite arrival.[20] Breasted argues that the descriptions of the *Habiru* contained in the Amarna letters date from the fourteenth century B.C.E. and suggest that the period of the Israelite arrival was probably some time during the reign of Amenhotep III, Akhenaten's father. There is no doubt that the establishment of the Egyptian empire had opened up Egypt's borders to foreign visitors far more than ever before, and evidence from reliefs, monuments, and texts, as we have already seen, suggests an increased presence of Semites in Egyptian governmental and military life. That Israelites were among these Semitic Asiatics seems probable. Redford supports this view when he notes that even before Akhenaten there is evidence that many Asiatics had achieved important positions in Egyptian society. Texts and reliefs show asiatics in the priesthood, police, palace bureaucracy, the military, and in the foreign office.[21] Two other scholars, Rowley and Kraeling, agree that the Israelites arrived some time during the Amarna period, perhaps even during the reign of Akhenaten himself. It was then that a group of Israelite tribes, including Judah, Simeon, and Levi, perhaps together with Kenite elements, entered Palestine from the south. At the same time other Semitic tribes were gaining a foothold in Palestine in the north. Some elements of the first group separated and went down into Egypt. The remainder of this first group pressed on northward to reach Shechem, but could not sustain their advance and fell back to the south. The Simeon elements were absorbed in Judah while elements of the Levites rejoined the group of Levites that had gone into Egypt.[22] The Bible says that the group under Joseph that went to Egypt comprised only 70 of his kinsmen, an assertion that indicates that only some elements of the tribe of Levi went down into Egypt. We may safely disregard the idea that all 12 tribes of Israel underwent the Egyptian sojourn and the Exodus as an attempt by later compilers of the saga to endow the Israelite tribes with a common history.[23] Elements of other Israelite tribes remained in Palestine at this time, some in the north and others in the south under Judah, suggesting that an Israelite "people" as such were not present in Egypt although it cannot be completely discounted

that straggling elements of other tribes may have at some time joined their relations in that country. Thus, at the time of the "descent" there were still no identifiable Israelite "people" at least in the sense that the Israelites regarded themselves as such. There were tribal elements united in loose coalition, only a small number of which seemed to have sojourned in Egypt. According to the Bible the leader of the Israelite settlers was Joseph.

The preponderance of scholarship suggests that the Israelites arrived in Egypt most probably during the New Kingdom some time around the time of Amenhotep III (1417–1378 B.C.E.) during whose reign the Amarna letters were produced. The evidence of Semite assimilation into Egyptian society testified to by other documents and reliefs points to a substantial Asiatic presence in the country even before Amenhotep III's reign. There is nothing to preclude the Israelites from having been among this group, as the dating of the evidence is uncertain. The point of importance for this analysis is this, however. The Israelites were established in Egypt at a time that virtually guarantees that they would have experienced Akhenaten's religious revolution. Their presence there would have exposed them and their leaders to the theological beliefs of the new religion even as they were similarly exposed to the old Egyptian religion that Akhenaten tried to destroy. And that exposure was not short-lived. Rowley has reckoned that the Israelites remained in Egypt for about 160 years or so before the Exodus took them back to Palestine.[24] This estimate fits with Albright's conclusion that the approximate date of the Israelite conquest of Palestine, as deduced from the date of the first wave of destruction visited upon Palestinian towns, occurred some time between 1250 and 1150 B.C.E.[25] The first mention of the Israelites as a people in any source outside the Old Testament occurs at about the same time as well in April of the fifth year of the reign of Ramses II's son, Merneptah who, after putting down rebellions in Palestine, erected a stele to his victory. Included in the inscription was the following: "*Israel is desolated, his seed is not. Palestine has become a widow for Egypt. All lands are united, they are pacified. Everyone that is turbulent is bound by king Merneptah.*"[26] The hieroglyph used in the text to denote Israel is the hieroglyph denoting a people or tribe, not a nation, suggesting that at this time, approximately 1235 B.C.E., the Israelites had moved into Palestine but had yet to conquer it sufficiently to form a stable social order of their own. If one assumes that the Israelites arrived some time during the reign of Amenhotep III and that Merneptah's stele indicates they had already left Egypt for Palestine, they would have remained in Egypt approximately the 160 or so years that Rowley calculates, plenty of time to witness firsthand the destruction by Akhenaten and to experience the turmoil that followed for almost a century afterwards.

The Israelites who descended into Egypt were indistinguishable from the other *Habiru* in any significant way. While the authors of the Bible portray the Israelites as a people worshipping the monotheistic god of their fathers, in fact, their religious practices were unlikely to have been significantly different from the other tribes of Canaan, that is to say, the polytheistic worship of various spirits, "els" or "baals." The story of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son written to show that the Israelites had abandoned child sacrifice actually suggests that Breasted is correct when he notes that the early Israelite tribes either still practiced child sacrifice in the offering of the "first fruits" or had only recently abandoned it.[27] That the Israelites may have remained polytheistic throughout their stay in Egypt seems clear enough from their tendency to fall back into the worship of idols both during and after the Exodus. Even as Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land and made them swear a new covenant to Yahweh, he was compelled to remind them to put their strange gods behind them. "*So now, fear Yahweh*," he says, "*and serve him perfectly and sincerely; put away the gods that you once served beyond the River (Jordan) and in Egypt and serve Yahweh."*[28] The story of the golden calf, which strongly parallels the worship of the Egyptian Apis bull, suggests as well that the Israelites had acquired an affinity for worshipping the many gods of Egypt over those of Canaan, thereby hinting at some degree of assimilation to Egyptian theological practices.

It was common practice for Egyptian authorities to assign immigrants to various districts of the country and the Israelites were assigned to "dwell in the land of Goshen."[29] Goshen was located near the Wadi Tumilat in the area of modern Ishmayliyah.[30] It is land fit for raising cattle, suggesting that the Israelites were not nomads in the usual sense of the term but *Habiru*. Buber points out that as far as we can tell from the Bible, the Israelites in Egypt raised cattle and nothing else. There is no evidence of any skill at agriculture, which may be why Moses kept them at Kadesh for a full generation so that they could learn how to grow crops.[31] As befits a talented *Habiru*, the Bible tells of Joseph rising in pharaoh's court as an interpreter of dreams. Soon, he becomes a vizier, perhaps governing the Delta, and among the most powerful men in all Egypt. The Egyptians required a loyalty oath from the leaders of the foreign clans and tribes resident in Egypt, a practice that brought the two parties face to face. Tribal leaders were held responsible for the behavior of their peoples, and we might expect these leaders to have been important means of transmitting the wishes of pharaoh to resident foreigners. That government officials saw the leaders as important to their control of the tribes is evidenced by their sometimes educating the leaders and their children so that the government could communicate more readily with them.[32] This would have required, it seems

reasonable to assume, that the tribal chiefs, or at least their sons, learned Egyptian.

The story of Joseph fits with the Amarna Age, specifically with the time of Akhenaten himself, so that the "Amarna age would provide a more satisfactory background for it (the story of Joseph) than any other age of which we have knowledge."[33] The question raised by the tale of Joseph is the degree to which segments of the Israelite tribe assimilated into Egyptian life and thereby adopted its values and habits and, perhaps, even religious beliefs. It can be assumed as well that a tribe without any clear notion of religion beyond the worship of spirits might be susceptible to adopting the religious beliefs of their leaders if there was practical advantage to doing so or when their leaders demanded it. That other groups including Nubians, Libyans, and other Asiatics were well on their way to assimilating into Egyptian society is clear from Egyptian records. In addition to Asiatic soldiers, special military units, and charioteers already mentioned, Buber notes other Semites who rose to high office working for pharaoh. These include the minister for Syrian affairs responsible for granaries there. Another Semite was described as the "highest mouth of the whole land" (a political adviser?), who is shown in a rock painting being awarded the "golden chain" and being driven through the streets in a carriage.[34] It is not unlikely, then, that the story of Joseph may be substantially true, the tale of an Israelite tribal leader who rose to great heights and used his position to help his people. The pharaoh under whom Joseph was most likely to have risen, Rowely asserts, was none other than Akhenaten himself.[35]

Is there, then, any evidence that Joseph may have adopted the religious beliefs of Akhenaten? There can be no doubt that every high official of the Egyptian court was well aware of pharaoh's new religion so that at the very least Joseph, along with his tribe, would have known of the beliefs of the Atenist faith. Given Akhenaten's religious fervor, common sense suggests that it was unlikely that any foreigner would have risen to such great heights as Joseph without having to accommodate himself to the new faith. The evidence is surprisingly strong that Joseph did much more than accommodate. Joel Klein notes that Joseph adopted an Egyptian name, *Zophnat-Pa-aneah*, and suggests he may have been a member of the priestly college at Heliopolis.[36] Although Akhenaten destroyed the Theban priesthood, he protected the priests of Heliopolis, who continued to act as his theological advisors and ritual officiants. Joseph's religious loyalty could hardly have been an issue when it came to his marriage. Joseph married Asenath, an Egyptian woman whose father was no less than the chief priest of Heliopolis. That such a marriage would have been permitted had the groom not already been theologically acceptable is unthinkable. Klein goes further with his argument. Joseph sometimes referred to

his god by the hyphenated name *Adon-Alohim*. *Adon*, Klein argues, is a transliteration of *Aten*, indicating that Joseph worshipped the same god as Akhenaten.[37] Rowley suggests that it was the priests of Heliopolis who saw to Joseph's theological education and to his acceptability at court. That religious loyalty paid off handsomely under Akhenaten is obvious from the rise of other foreigners in his court and may have been why Joseph came to govern the Delta as southern vizier from Helipolis while Akhenaten remained in his new capital. This arrangement would have made it possible for Joseph to be near his kindred, as the Bible attests, while at the same time being somewhat removed from pharaoh to prevent Joseph's people from giving offense.[38] To reach this high office Joseph would have had to be fluent in Egyptian. There probably is no more convincing evidence of Joseph's assimilation than that upon his death he was embalmed and buried in the manner of a high Egyptian official. Indeed, when the Israelites left Egypt during the Exodus, they did so carrying Joseph's Egyptian coffin. Whether Joseph's "conversion" was genuine or not is beside the point. His position at court and his role as a powerful tribal leader could easily have served to make the tenets of the Atenist faith comprehensible to the Israelites and to a new generation of leaders.

But what of the Israelites themselves? Did they accommodate themselves to Egyptian society if not to Akhenaten's new faith? That the Israelites assimilated to Egyptian culture is almost beyond dispute. Klein points out that while there is no direct evidence to be had in the Old Testament regarding the question of assimilation, there is plenty of later commentary that makes the case that the Israelites did *not* assimilate. The *midrashim* affirm, for example, that the Israelites kept their native clothes, their language, continued to circumcise their children, did not change their names, and "harbored no informers," that is, did not spy for pharaoh's police.[39] It is likely, however, that such disclaimers were written much later precisely to counter the charge that the Israelites did in fact assimilate. Otherwise, why would Joshua instruct them to put away the gods of Egypt? And the affirmation that the Israelites circumcised their children in Egypt as a covenant of their faith may prove precisely the opposite. The story of Abraham notwithstanding, circumcision was probably not practiced by the Israelites until the time of Moses and therefore could not be a sign of their special faith during the time of Joseph. While among the Midianites Moses did not circumcise his own child, in the book of Joshua Yahweh orders that all Israelite males be circumcised before being permitted to go up into Canaan, thereby implying that the males who came out of Egypt were not circumcised. It was likely that only after Yahweh had ordered those born on the trek to be circumcised the practice became commonplace among the Israelites.[40] Breasted notes that the claim in the Old Testament that the Israelites were circumcised from

the time of Abraham is false. Circumcision was an ancient Egyptian-African rite and evidence is found of its practice in the earliest predynastic Egyptian graves.[41] The actual operation is pictured on a lintel on the tomb of an Egyptian physician in 2800 B.C.E. in Memphis. The Egyptians placed no religious significance on circumcision, and it seems to have been practiced as a matter of social habit or as a sign of high status. By Moses' time circumcision was widely practiced in Egypt and it is most likely that Moses adopted this practice from the Egyptians.

Assimilation of the Israelites into Egyptian society would have diluted whatever sense of ethnic identity they may have possessed. And, as we have already seen, beyond the level of identifying themselves as a remnant of the tribe of Levi, it is unlikely that the ancient Israelites in Egypt had much of any identity. Once their leaders began to prosper as a consequence of their imitating Egyptian ways and language, could other elements of the tribe be far behind? On the other hand, Martin Buber suggests that the success of individual leaders in rising in Egyptian society probably had no effect on the tribal identity of the remainder of the group. The individual may rise, Buber argues, but the clan "remains closed and separate."[42] But with the tribal leadership itself openly accommodating to the new circumstances, who would be left to enforce the old tribal identity? How might it reasonably be enforced in light of the hypocrisy it would have required? If the story of Joseph is any guide, leaders of the clan who rose to prominence were sometimes resident apart from the clan itself. How, then, might tribal identity have been enforced? Even the idea that the Israelites were living in an area apart from the rest of Egyptian society, thereby reducing their exposure to Egyptian habits and values, is uncertain. Wiener points out that even the area where the Israelites lived is uncertain. Originally, the Bible affirms, they settled somewhere in the land of Goshen. But elsewhere, the Bible implies clearly that they were living cheek by jowl with Egyptians.[43] Each view is associated with a different writer of the Bible as it was constructed later. It is not impossible that both are correct, but for different times. Thus, the Israelites could have settled in Goshen upon their arrival in Egypt. But as time passed, elements of the tribe moved elsewhere in pursuit of their fortunes. If so, such movement would strongly imply assimilation to some degree. This, of course, leaves open the question of how an assimilated people could still be identified and singled out by Egyptian authorities for harsh treatment prior to the Exodus, a question to which we will return later. At the very least the evidence supports the conclusion that the Israelites were sufficiently part of Egyptian society to be aware of Akhenaten's religious revolution and its aftermath. Some Israelites, we might surmise, may have followed after their clan leaders who, like Joseph, may have even taken Aten as their god, in which case it is possible

that in Egyptian eyes some elements of the Israelites came to be perceived as followers of the heretic king. Years later, when the old order asserted itself and the traditional gods were reestablished, this group of followers of the heretic might have found itself in difficult circumstances.

From the death of Joseph to the appearance of Moses, the Bible is silent concerning the activities of the Israelites in Egypt. The death of Tutankhamun had put an end to the bloodline of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Beginning with Ay, Egypt was ruled by a succession of competent military men most of humble social origins chosen for their proven ability as officers. Horemheb (1344–1317), who succeeded Ay, chose Ramses I as his successor, a man from the northeast corner of the Delta who had risen no higher than a "captain of troops" but must have been well known to the king to be chosen successor. Ramses I (1317–1315) was already old when he assumed power and died within two years, leaving the throne to his son, Seti I (1315–1300), also trained as a soldier. Seti passed the scepter to his son Ramses II (1300–1232), who ruled for 67 years and was probably the *Meror* (The Bitter One) of the Bible, who sent the Israelites to indentured labor.[44] Ramses' son, Merneptah (1232–1222), followed him and was probably the pharaoh of the Exodus.[45] The story of the Israelites in Egypt continues when we find them hard at forced labor making bricks for pharaoh's new city in the Delta. This period came to be known in the Biblical saga as the "Oppression" and portrays the Israelites as "in bondage" or slaves. The enslavement comes to form a central event in the Israelite saga for it is to escape from it that the Israelites follow Moses into the wilderness and the Exodus.

Upon assuming the throne, Seti I found the temples and shrines of Egypt's gods still in a terrible state of repair. Although it had been 57 years since Akhenaten's death, the old religion had by no means recovered from the extensive damage inflicted upon the temples and shrines. The new pharaoh immediately set about rebuilding the holy places and restored the mutilated inscriptions of his predecessors. Seti toured the land inspecting the damage and when he came to Abydos and saw the destruction of Osiris' great shrine he wept and was moved to anger at what the heretics had done.[46] Seti's reaction is of importance for it marks him as a genuinely religious man, a believer in the old gods, and, we may surmise, a man who could be moved to righteous anger against whatever remnants of Akhenaten's followers remained in Egypt. Seti began to rebuild the great shrine at Abydos, a task completed by his son Ramses. Abydos was among the oldest holy cities in Egypt, tracing its roots back to the fourth millennium B.C.E.[47] Over the centuries Abydos became known as the birthplace of Osiris and the place where his head was buried so it assumed a place in the Osiran myth similar to that held by the Church of the

Holy Sepulchre in Christianity or Mecca in Islam. And here it was in ruins, torn to pieces by the followers of Akhenaten. One can only imagine what Seti must have felt at seeing the damage. In restoring the shrine Seti was also restoring the hope of the common man in his resurrection. Osiris, the god of Everyman, was finally returned to his rightful place in the Egyptian pantheon. How much greater the irony that this should have been accomplished by a pharaoh named Seti, whose name is Seth, the god who murdered Osiris!

Seti had other problems to deal with as well. Almost immediately after he became pharaoh, Palestine flared into open revolt and he led an army into Palestine near Beth-Shean close to the Jordanian border. Despite his military efforts, Seti was barely able to hold onto this key city and the cities of Rehebn and Megiddo as an uneasy peace settled upon Palestine. As always, Egypt's enemies were the rebellious princes, this time assisted by bands of *Habiru*, who joined the revolt.[48] It was probably this renewed trouble in Palestine that prompted Seti to begin construction of a new city and summer capital in the Nile Delta. This was the great city of Raamses mentioned in the Bible. The city, called "the dwelling of the lion" by the Egyptians, was built as an important supply base and military strongpoint to protect the main avenue of advance that led from the Delta to and from Palestine. The main dry road through the Delta marshes passed before its walls. Every summer the king arrived at the city where he trained his soldiers and conducted maneuvers to keep his enemies in Palestine off balance and confused about Egypt's military intentions. Although designed for defense, Raamses could as well be used along with Sharuhen further east as a springboard for a sudden military strike into Palestine itself. It was here and at Pithom eight miles away[49] that the Israelites were put to work by pharaoh as brick makers and construction workers. Although it was Ramses II who completed the work on the cities and thus gained the title as Pharaoh of the Oppression, it was almost certainly Seti who first set the Israelites to work. But why, one might ask, would Seti oppress the Israelites?

There are a number of possible answers. First, the Israelites appear to have been living nearby in Wadi Tumilat in Goshen. Otherwise, the story of Moses' birth near the court of pharaoh would make no sense. If Moses was set adrift in the Nile to be found by pharaoh's daughter and raised at the court, it must have been near the town of Raamses, the king's summer residence.[50] The Israelites could have been conscripted simply because they were conveniently located near the construction site. Second, what the Israelites came to remember in their history as "oppression," may have been no such thing. Slavery was never an Egyptian social institution, even during the New Kingdom when foreigners lived in the country in large numbers. Slavery made a brief appearance during the Greek occupation of the third to first century B.C.E. when the Greeks intro-

duced house slaves, but the practice never caught on among Egyptians. It is, then, somewhat curious that the Israelites should have been "enslaved" in a country that did not practice slavery on any scale.

The Egyptians did, however, employ corvee labor to construct their great temples and government buildings. Usually this labor was performed by military conscripts who did not meet the standards for assignment to combat units or regular forces. These conscripts would from time to time be supplemented by civilian laborers, but the civilians were not slaves nor, most often, impressed against their will. Most government construction in Egypt took place during the inundation, the two-month period of the Nile flood, which began in September and ended in November. Agriculture was impossible during this period and the land was full of unemployed workers. These temporarily unemployed agricultural workers were hired at local construction projects as a way of keeping them fed. That these workers were not slaves is evident from the texts, which show military doctors assigned to the construction crews to look after their health and injuries. Considerable attention was paid to the workers' diet to keep them fit and healthy. It is likely, then, that the Israelites perceived a form of Egyptian national service as a punishment that took them away from the routine of their lives. As raisers of cattle, the inundation would not disrupt their lives as much as it would for agricultural workers and they may have had less need for the free food that came with work on government projects.[51] Later, as the Exodus saga was rewritten, this episode came to be remembered as a period of oppression and enslavement.

If Seti was pharaoh when the oppression of the Israelites began,[52] then it was still possible that the Israelites were forced to work against their will by a king who distrusted and perhaps even hated them. The Bible records that the Israelites had prospered and become numerous. Their presence in large numbers in the area of Goshen during the time of Seti's troubles with the Palestine rebels may have led him to see the Israelite *Habiru* as a potential fifth column in the midst of a threatened military area. The rebellious princes of Palestine were being supported by the *Habiru* in the highlands there, sufficient cause to give a military commander reason to doubt the loyalty of their fellow tribesmen in Egypt. Moreover, the location of the Israelites in Goshen would have caused Seti even more concern. The two roads leading from the Palestine-Egyptian border at Oar passed directly through the Wadi Tumilat and Goshen.[53] It was to block this route from behind that the city of Raamses was constructed. Any military commander with a tactical sense would have been concerned that such an important avenue of advance passed through the territory of a people who may have more in common with the enemy than with Egypt. If this was how Seti saw the situation, he may have forced the Israelites into construction ser-

vice if only to keep an eye on them and remove them as a factor in the tactical equation.

There may have been yet another reason for Seti's actions. The king's strong reverence for the old gods and his anger at the destruction brought about by Akhenaten's religious revolution may have led him to develop a hatred for anything connected with the heretic king. Is it possible that some Israelites had adopted the faith of Akhenaten years before and were still adherents? If these elements had accommodated as it appears some of their leaders did, it was not entirely unlikely that at least some Israelites had become adherents of the Aten faith while others remained confirmed in their tribal religion. Despite the anger caused by Akhenaten's religious rages, there is no evidence that his followers were persecuted by any of the pharaohs who came after him. Any Israelites who became adherents of Akhenaten's religion during his reign or shortly thereafter would have faced no impediment, as far as we know, to their continued religious observance. Four generations later, the sons and daughters of these converts might have continued their religious observance in the land of Goshen. All this, of course, is speculation. But if these Atenist elements did exist and if, somehow, they came to the attention of Seti—the restorer of the old faith and the great shrine of Osiris—his own religious fervor might have prompted him to punish the Israelites for the sins of their fathers. What is clear, however, is that the period of Israelite forced labor continued for many years. Ramses II kept the Israelites at their work, but it is unlikely that he did so continuously. If, as is the consensus of scholarly opinion, Ramses' son, Merneptah, was the pharaoh of the Exodus, it seems that the Israelites were still at it when Moses returned to lead his people out of bondage.

Next to Yahweh, Moses is the most intriguing character of the Old Testament. Held in awe as the founder of one of the world's great religions, respected as a national patriot who led his people out of slavery, employed as a role model for religious youth, and the subject of endless writings and speculations, Moses has become a figure of history. And yet, there is scant evidence beyond the Old Testament that he ever existed. Moses, whose existence cannot be proven, has become a figure of history while Akhenaten, whose existence is beyond question, has become a figure of myth. Whoever he was, Moses is regarded as the founder of Yahwehism and, ultimately, modern Judaism, a claim that must be accepted in the absence of any other explanation to the contrary. The Exodus, Moses' conversations with and revelations from Yahweh, and his death at the hands of the very god he served, are offered as evidence of Moses' foundational acts in bringing the new religion into being. If we are to inquire into the memories of Egypt that rest at the foundation of Judaism, Moses' actions and the

theological precepts he imposed upon the Israelites need to be examined for evidence of these memories. We begin with Moses the man.

The Bible tells us that Moses was born to Israelite parents in Egypt. His father was Amram, a man who married his aunt, Jochebed, in clear violation of the law against incest found in the Book of Leviticus. Much effort has been expended by theologians and religious historians to explain away this "inbreeding characteristic" found among the patriarchs. Both Abraham and Isaac, for example, passed off their wives as their sisters.[54] The idea that the founder of a great religion should have been the product of incest is so embarrassing that one wonders why the later compilers of the Exodus saga included it, unless there was some truth to it. Its importance here is that it supports the claim that Moses was born an Israelite and that he was not, as is sometimes argued, an Egyptian. Even if we suppose he was an Egyptian and the compilers of the Exodus saga wished to "Hebraicize" him as the national hero of his people, they could have found a less demeaning version of his parental lineage.

We have no knowledge of where in Egypt Moses was born. The claim that he was set adrift in a basket on the waters of the Nile to be found by pharaoh's daughter and raised at court can safely be ignored. This story is clearly a fabrication and contains elements that are common to the birth myths of many other heroes of the ancient world. Sigmund Freud in his *Moses and Monotheism* lists the following heroes whose births took place in circumstances similar to those claimed for Moses: Amphion, Cyrus, Gilgamesh, Heracles, Karna, Romulus, Paris, Perseus, Telephos, and Zethos.[55] The birth myth of Sargon, the great Akkadian king who ruled in Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C.E., is so close to the Moses tale that some scholars believe that the Exodus compilers simply cut and pasted the story of Sargon into the Old Testament. The Sargon text appears below:

> *Sargon, the mighty king, king of Agade, am I*
> *My mother was a changeling, my father I knew not. . . .*
> *My changeling mother conceived me, in secret she bore me.*
> *She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid.*
> *She cast me into the river which rose not over me.*
> *The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water . . .*
> *Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me.*[56]

Sargon comes to the attention of the king and becomes his cupbearer. Introduced to court life, he becomes invaluable and is made king. Being that as it may, if we accept the other element of the Moses legend that he was born close to the court of pharaoh, it is likely that he was born among the Israelites living in and around Raamses and Pithom during the time of the Oppression.

Ramses II ruled for 67 years, and if he was the pharaoh of the oppression Moses could have been born during Ramses' reign and still had sufficient time to lead the Exodus under Merneptah. From beginning to end, Moses would have been 72 years old, fairly close to the 80 years claimed for him at the time of the Exodus.

One of the reasons why Moses was sometimes thought to be an Egyptian is that his name is Egyptian. Moses is the Greek translation of the Egyptian word "*mose*" meaning child and is an abridgement of a usually more complete theophorous name such as Ptahmose (child of Ptah) or Amunmose (child of Amun).[57] The name is a common one found on many Egyptian graves. "There is therefore," Griffiths states, "no longer any reason to doubt that Moses comes from the Egyptian *mose*. And it is a fact of some significance that the founder of the Yahweh religion had an Egyptian name."[58] The name "Moses" rendered in Greek sounds plural, which it is not. In Egyptian it is "Mose" and in Hebrew "Moshe." It may seem curious that an Israelite couple would give their child an Egyptian name. We have suggested that there is considerable evidence that some Israelites had become acculturated to Egyptian manners and ways—part of which, perhaps, was taking Egyptian names. In the same way that the children and grandchildren of immigrants in America took American names, Moses, who would have been a fourth-generation Israelite resident in Egypt, probably was given an Egyptian name for similar reasons. Possessing an Egyptian name suggests that Moses' family had already acculturated to some degree. It does not, however, prove that Moses was an Egyptian.

If Moses was an Israelite, one would think that he would at least be able to speak the ethnic tongue. In fact, we do not know what language the Israelites spoke. That it was some Semitic tongue that dated back to the patriarchal period is almost certain, but we have no particulars of its grammar or pronunciation. It was not, however, Hebrew. It was only after their arrival in Canaan, while still retaining some elements of their old language, that the Israelites gradually developed a form of speech that eventually became biblical Hebrew. Hebrew seems to have grown out of a dialect of the northwestern Semitic languages spoken by the Canaanites. Hebrew closely resembles this dialect in syntax, style, and meter.[59] There is no reason to expect that the Israelites lost their language while in Egypt, but it is not unlikely that the more acculturated Israelites had lost considerable fluency in the same manner that second-generation American ethnics often understand the language of their parents and speak a few words of it but have difficulty making themselves understood in the native tongue. This would explain why the Bible says Moses spoke with *aral sefatayim* or "an uncircumcised lip." This is often taken to mean that Moses suffered from some speech impediment or that he stammered, an excuse Moses prof-

fered to Yahweh so that he would not be sent back to Egypt. The term *sefah* in Hebrew has two meanings, lip and language, while *aral*, although meaning uncircumcised, is an idiomatic expression for foreign, as when David calls Goliath "this uncircumcised Philistine."[60] In the same way that the Latin *barba* means "beard" and implies that "barbarians," that is, "bearded ones" are foreigners, so to be uncircumcised is to be foreign in the Israelite context. So did Moses speak a foreign language? No doubt he spoke Egyptian and to some Israelites that would appear to be a foreign language. More likely Moses spoke "like a foreigner," that is, his poor command of the Israelite tongue would have made it difficult for him to communicate with his Israelite kinsman. We are left, then, with the conclusion that while Moses spoke Egyptian, this does not make him an Egyptian. He was more likely an acculturated Israelite who had lost fluency with his native tongue and spoke it with an Egyptian accent so that he sounded like a foreigner to the Israelites.

Tradition holds that Moses was adopted by pharaoh's daughter, was educated at court, and grew to be a prince of Egypt. None of this is rooted in Biblical evidence, however, for the fact is that the Bible reveals nothing about Moses' childhood experience or his education.[61] The commonly held idea of Moses' education is that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in his words and deeds."[62] But this is from the New Testament. The Old Testament says nothing of the sort, saying only in Exodus 11:3 "and moreover, the man Moses was exceedingly important in the land of Egypt." These descriptions probably affirm an essential fact that Moses was some sort of leader in Egypt, either of his own people or as a governmental official of some authority. This would suggest that Moses may have received an education at state expense. The Egyptian government often educated the children of important foreigners in state schools as a way of ensuring that they had someone to deal with directly on ethnic questions. It was probably expected that exposure to Egyptian ways and values would make ethnic representatives more reasonable in their dealing with the Egyptians. Thutmose III, for example, caused a number of the sons of allied asiatic princes to be educated in Egypt for precisely these reasons. If Moses was educated in this manner, he would have been sent to one of the Houses of Life near the palace, scriptoria, where reading and writing were taught, and where history and religion were also subjects. In the normal course of things, he would have lived at the scriptorium and would have attended between the ages of 8 and 12 years old. These circumstances may have contributed to the tradition that Moses was educated at the court of pharaoh himself. To those of his countrymen who remained cattle raisers, Moses would have appeared as an Egyptian nobleman wearing fine clothes and speaking pharaoh's language even as he struggled with his own tongue. We are not to

imagine, however, that Moses rose in this manner from some lowly position. More likely his family already had attained some status in Egyptian society and in the Israelite society as well. Otherwise, it is difficult to imagine how any of these opportunities would have been offered to him. He was, then, most likely the son of an Israelite family that in its fourth generation was very much acculturated to Egyptian ways. The Bible suggests that in outward appearance Moses was an Egyptian. When Jethro's daughters encountered Moses at the well after he fled from Egypt, they ran home and told their father that "An Egyptian saved us from the interference of the shepherds."[63] Biblical scholars suggest that Moses may have been wearing Egyptian clothes, that his speech was Egyptian or that he spoke the Israelite tongue with a heavy accent, all marks of an Israelite who was strongly acculturated.

Martin Buber denies that Moses was an Egyptian, but concedes that the evidence of his education and the story of his Egyptian appearance and language and his education in some way "at court" suggest strongly that while still an Israelite, Moses may have derived from a largely Egyptianized segment of his people.[64] This segment was most probably the leadership elite of the group, those who like Joseph before them had become virtually Egyptians even as they remained leaders of their less assimilated brethren. It is only if Moses was a member of the Israelite "leadership class" that his return to Egypt from his successful escape after murdering the Egyptian overseer makes any sense. Only a leader would have felt the obligation to return or expected that he would be followed by the people he left behind. If this analysis is correct, it helps solve the problem of what Assmann calls the "theological education" of Moses.[65] Simply put, an Egyptianized (though not Egyptian) Moses would have been readily aware of Egyptian religious practices and of the story of Akhenaten as almost all educated Egyptians of his time would have been. His formal education in the scriptoria made him literate, but also made him aware of Egypt's religious history, a subject commonly taught by the priestly faculties in the Houses of Life. Egyptians were great archivists. When the Greek king Ptolemy II (283–246 B.C.E.) instructed Manetho, the Egyptian high priest of Heliopolis, to construct a history of Egypt so that the Greeks might learn of its past,[66] Manetho was able to assemble four thousand years of Egyptian history in short order from the records kept in the temple libraries. It is to Manetho that we owe our first knowledge of the predynastic and early dynastic history of Egypt and of the earliest king lists. Later archeological and historical research has shown Manetho's account of these early events to be substantively accurate. It is, then, quite likely that Moses' "theological education" was sufficient to make him aware of the history and rituals of Egyptian religion, including the Atenist

interregnum. When we encounter elements of Egyptian theological belief in Mosaic Yahwehism, there ought to be little mystery as to their origin.

The notion that Moses was an Egyptian begins with Manetho's history in which Moses was portrayed as a renegade heretic priest and follower of Akhenaten, who led a group of lepers in the practice of the heretical religion. Unlike the biblical account where the Israelites leave Egypt in triumph under divine protection, Manetho has them deported by Egyptian authorities to prevent them from spreading their disease to others.[67] It was one of the most virulent manifestations of racial prejudice of the ancient period, although probably prompted by theological more than racial animus. The Jews of Alexandria were outraged at Manetho's calumny and set about countering it by translating the Hebrew and Aramaic sources of the Bible into Greek. The new Greek Bible became known as the Septuagint (from Latin *septuaginta*, 70) because it was supposedly compiled by 70 translators working under divine inspiration. So it was that the Hebrew Bible entered the Greek world and the mainstream of Western culture.

The idea of Moses the Egyptian did not vanish, however, but appeared again and again first in the early history of the West, then in an amazingly complete form during the Enlightenment when John Spencer (1630–1693), a Master of Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, published two works on the subject, and again in 1939 when Sigmund Freud wrote his last book, *Moses and Monotheism*. The most recent work on the subject is by Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, published in 1997. Beyond its academic interest, the issue has relevance here only insofar as an Egyptian Moses could be more convincingly argued to have been exposed to Egyptian religious practice and history as a matter of course. I have argued, along with Buber, that an Egyptianized Moses, that is, an Israelite Moses acculturated to Egyptian life, could just as easily have possessed a knowledge of Egyptian religious beliefs. In either case, Moses remains the essential link between that knowledge and any similarities with it that appear later in Yahwehism.

Two other aspects of Moses' behavior are worth examining insofar as they shed light on his personality. The first was Moses' bloodthirsty and violent nature. I am not referring here to the murder and mayhem committed by Moses and others at the command of Yahweh, itself terrible enough, but to the violence and killing that Moses committed at his own initiative in the absence of Yahweh's directives. History first encounters Moses as an adult when he murders the Egyptian overseer. This was no act of rage. It was, instead, clearly premeditated murder. The Bible says, "he looked this way and that, and seeing there was no one about, he struck the Egyptian down."[68] Having become a mankiller, Moses showed no sign of panic. Instead, he coolly dragged the dead

man away and "hid his body in the sand," that is, buried it. Moses calmly went about his business and even returned to the scene of the crime where he realized his own brethren knew about the crime and might betray him. But it was only after he learned that pharaoh knew of the murder and "seeks to slay him" that Moses fled.[69] This was the behavior of a man not easily upset by violence, and was a terrible portent of his willingness to use it whenever it suited his purpose.

Another violent incident occurred when Moses returned from the mountain to discover the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. Having convinced Yahweh not to exterminate the Israelites for their sin, Moses took it upon himself to punish them. Moses called upon his Levite praetorian guard and instructed them: "Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor."[70] With this command, the Levites became the strong-arm police force that Moses used time and again to keep his people in line. Interestingly, it was only among the Levites that we find Israelite men with Egyptian names.[71] Phinehas, the commander of the expedition that exterminated the Moabites, for example, was a Levite with an Egyptian name. Three thousand Israelites were put to death that day and then only after Moses had crushed the idol into powder, mixed it with water, and forced the apostates to drink it before being killed.

The next murderous outburst came when camped near the border of Moab, some Israelite men took up with the "daughters of Moab" taking them as concubines and fornicating with them. Moses ordered the death of every Israelite man who "committed harlotry with the daughters of Moab."[72] Some of the Midianite women had apparently joined the Moabites in seducing the Israelites. In revenge, Yahweh ordered Moses to exterminate the Midianites, a particularly cruel command since Moses' wife, Zipporah, and father-in-law, Jethro, were Midianites. Moses was being asked to kill his blood clansmen. He complied without hesitation or pity. He gave command of the expedition to the religious zealot Phinehas, son of the high priest and executioner of Zimri and Cozbi, whom he killed by driving a single spear through both of them as they lay in a sexual embrace. Moses gave the order to exterminate the Midianites; no one was to be left alive. Phinehas attacked the Midianites with cruel vengeance, but even this cold *apparatchik* could not bring himself to slaughter the women and children even as he slew every Midianite male. When Moses saw that Phinehas had spared the helpless, he flew into a rage. "Have ye saved all the women alive!" This man of god ordered all but the virgins to die. "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him."[73] The young girls were turned over

to his troops to do with them as they wished. It might also be noted that while the Moabites were slain because of their sexual proclivities, the Midianites were slaughtered because they seduced the Israelites into worshipping idols, that is, they were killed for religious reasons. And it is here that we find the first religious genocide in recorded history.[74]

A second aspect of Moses' personality was his flair for the dramatic, for the mysterious ritual or gesture, that confounds the comprehension of his clansman at almost every turn. His encounter with Yahweh on Sinai may have left him with some sort of disfigurement. Exodus says that "the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face sent forth beams."[75] From that moment on Moses always wore a mask, removing it only when he spoke with Yahweh in the "tent of meeting." The effect of walking around the Israelite camp with a mask covering his face, no doubt marked Moses as mysterious and a man somehow chosen by god. Interestingly, the word used in the Bible to denote the mask that Moses wore is *masweh*. Often translated as veil, this word also means a mask of the kind commonly worn by pagan priests when addressing their gods.[76] To further mystify his actions, Moses ordered the "tent of meeting" moved to the center of the camp and mounted an armed guard around it comprised of his Levite clansman. If anyone came near the sacred tent, "the common man who draweth nigh shall be put to death."[77] Moses had arranged the circumstances of his leadership in such a manner that, like Akhenaten, he alone remained the only connection between the people and their new god. Only Moses could employ the magic paraphernalia, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, to communicate with Him.

Ritual as a mechanism of personal power is nothing new in any religion, ancient or modern. Moses may have found himself in a difficult spot when it came to keeping the Israelites in line. We do not know the ritualistic specifics of the ancient Israelite religion except for its practice of animal sacrifice and, perhaps, human sacrifice of the first born even up to their arrival in Egypt. That the Israelites worshipped the nameless and numerous "els" and "baals" that inhabited every hilltop, forest, and brook is clear and they may, from time to time, have fashioned them into idols. How many of these practices continued in Egypt and how many changed or were abandoned and replaced by Egyptian rituals we cannot know. But it would be, to say the least, extraordinary that a people whose leadership had accommodated to the dominant culture would somehow remain completely ritualistically loyal to habits brought to Egypt four generations earlier. There is, too, the problem of the extent of Moses' own religious knowledge of past Israelite rituals. How much of the old Israelite rituals did Moses know? Finding himself in command of wandering Israelites, he may have had a desperate need for recognizable rituals to rally his troops. Some

of these he may have recalled from the old Israelite rituals as when he fashioned the magic-soaked ritual of passover with its sacrifice of the lamb and smearing of blood on the door posts of the Israelites so that Yahweh would know his own people as he went about exterminating the Egyptians. Others he may have adopted from common Egyptian rituals as when "Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived."[78] Or, when Moses acted as an Egyptian magician by using his magic staff to summon serpents or bring forth water from the rock. Egypt was full of serpent gods and their images were commonly used to ward off evil. All of these common Egyptian rituals would have been familiar to any Israelite who had lived in Egypt for even a short time.

It even seems that when the Israelites themselves were given the opportunity to choose their own rituals, they chose familiar Egyptian ones. The fashioning of the golden calf, for example, is strikingly reminiscent of the worship of the Apis bull, the sacred animal of Ptah, or, perhaps, even the bull of Osiris. Moses may not even have known how to perform a ritual sacrifice in the old Israelite manner. Thus, when the time came to perform the first sacrifice to Yahweh, it was not Moses who performed it. When the knife cut through the animal's flesh, when blood spilled upon the altar, and when the flesh was offered to the flame, it was Jethro, the old Midianite pagan priest and Moses' father-in-law, who offered the sacrifice.[79] Showmanship is the stock in trade of any successful leader, secular or religious, and Moses knew how to mix magic, mystery, and mastery with the best of them to convince the crowd. As Will Durant put it, "poetry embroidered magic and transformed it into theology."[80]

The portrait of Moses that emerges is that of an Egyptianized Israelite at home with the norms of the dominant culture that provided him with a successful life. The product of four generations in Egypt, Moses' knowledge of the norms of the ethnic culture from which he came, like his declining language fluency, was probably not substantial. In this regard Moses was no different from the thousands of sons and daughters of immigrants in America in modern times. And like them, he would probably eventually have forgotten his ethnic roots had life continued without incident. But the murder of the Egyptian overseer and pharaoh's efforts to bring him to justice as "he sought to slay him" forced Moses to flee,[81] leaving behind the life and status he had enjoyed in Egypt. Being rejected by the society he had sought to join might have been traumatic as it is when other ethnics experience similar rejections. The Jews or Italians in America who sought to become "American" only to discover that others still thought of them as ethnics were similarly rejected. Like other rejected people at other times, Moses sought refuge among his own kind and fled

to the Midianites, his mother's tribe. Here he was taken in, married an ethnic woman, and settled down to his new life as a tender of livestock where, under the instruction of Jethro, he became reacquainted with the rituals and beliefs of the Semitic religious tradition. Under these circumstances Moses may have become what social psychologists call a "marginal man," a person who belongs neither to his original culture nor to the one to which he aspired but brings elements of both to his personality and behavior. That these cross-pressures could have made themselves felt once Moses started to accomplish the task he believed Yahweh set for him seems reasonable. There is nothing in this understanding of Moses that makes him any less the great national Israelite leader and founder of Yahwehism that history claims he was.

The details of the Exodus need concern us here only to the extent to which they form a quasi-historical framework within which Moses carried out his divinely directed tasks, leading ultimately to the foundation of the new religion of Yahwehism. There is sufficient historical evidence to support the view that something like the biblical account of the Israelite flight from Egypt may have occurred,[82] leaving the writers of the Israelite saga sufficient room to fill in the details from their own perspective much later on. The flight and settlement at Kadesh where the Israelites stayed for two years before attempting to invade Canaan is probably historical, as is the failure to gain their objective probably at the hands of the vassals of Merneptah. Here the Bible and Merneptah's victory stele seem in strong accord. The fact that the Israelite saga records the defeat suggests a degree of historical accuracy, for why enshrine defeat and slavery in a people's history unless it actually occurred? The recording of negative events in the Israelite saga implies that they are "events the historical character of which is guaranteed by the psychological impossibility of supposing any nation would gratuitously invent narratives so little to its credit."[83]

We turn now to the search for Egyptian influences in the theological premises of Yahwehism. The fundamentals of Yahwehist belief are found in the Decalogue of Moses, known commonly as the Ten Commandments. There are two sets of precepts within the Decalogue, one ritual or cultic, the other ethical. The ritual precepts are: (1) the worship of one god; (2) prohibition of making and worshipping idols; (3) not speaking the name of god; and (4) observance of the Sabbath. The ritual precepts are more appropriate to a settled agricultural community, a fact that has prompted some analysts to suggest that they were written some time after the Mosaic period.[84] Later in Exodus 34:10–26, these fundamentals of cultic observance were expanded upon in detail. The ethical precepts are: (1) honor thy father and mother; (2) prohibition of murder; (3) prohibition of adultery; (4) prohibition of stealing; (5) prohibition of bearing false witness; and (6) prohibition of coveting one's neighbor's

wife and property.[85] The ethical precepts are probably earlier and may reach back to the Mosaic period, but that is far from certain.[86] Even so, a list of ethical precepts guiding human behavior at so early a date would not be unusual, as Martin Buber points out.[87] The ancient agricultural world paid attention to ethics because limits on behavior were essential to governing a complex society. Egypt, as we have seen, was foremost among these societies in developing an ethical code. Indeed, the ethical precepts of the Decalogue were extant in Egypt at least two millennia before Moses and can be found in the inscriptions of the Pyramid Age as well as in the more recent *Book of the Dead*. What may have been unusual about the Mosaic Decalogue was that the ethical precepts contained within it were intended to apply not to members of a settled agricultural society but to the unsettled world of nomadics.[88] That Moses would have known of the traditional pre-Atenist Egyptian ethical code is beyond dispute since it was such a fundamental part of Egyptian religious and social life.

The Mosaic Decalogue differs from the traditional Egyptian code in one important respect, however. The Mosaic code is *apodeictic*, that is, its precepts are absolute, unconditional, and categorical. They bind because Yahweh has commanded that they be obeyed and not because they are reasonable or part of some larger universal order of nature.[89] Egyptian ethical codes, by contrast, are *casuistic*, that is, stated as general principles whose application depends upon circumstances and reason. Egyptian ethical codes were thought to be part of a larger universal order of *Maat* or justice so that their precepts bind because they bring about justice. In this sense, the Mosaic ethical code is not ethics in the proper sense of the term insofar as it removes from the individual any need or requirement to freely decide how to behave by reasoning through the connection between precept and circumstance in which the ethical precept must be applied. Mosaic ethics substitutes obedience for freedom and as such is more catechism than ethics. Because the Canaanite idea of ethics was casuistic, and thus different from the Mosaic code, some historians have offered the idea that the Mosaic code "may therefore be identified as an original Israelite contribution."[90] The prototype of the Mosaic code is not to be found in Palestine but in the legal codes of Sumer and Babylon with their stress upon unquestioned obedience to the law legitimized as the edict of the sovereign backed by the threat of punishment. Moses may have borrowed the idea of an ethical code to govern his people from the pre-Atenist Egyptians as the Decalogue's ethical content suggests, but the manner in which the Decalogue was to govern the affairs of the Israelites was adopted from non-Egyptian sources, probably Babylonian.

In Western history Moses is regarded as the founder of the world's first monotheistic religion rooted in the assumption that the existence of one god necessarily requires that all other gods, previous and subsequent, be false. It is

perhaps tempting to believe that the religions of the ancient world routinely distinguished between their own true gods and the false gods of others. In fact, this was not the case. In the ancient world polytheism functioned as a vehicle of *cultural translation* and drew no distinctions among deities with regard to their being true or false. Polytheism's contribution was to overcome the earlier ethnocentric loyalties of tribal "enclave" religions by distinguishing many deities by name, form, and function. Names and forms of these gods varied from culture to culture, but their functions as recognizable cosmic deities were identical.[91] Accordingly, the sun god or fertility goddess of one culture was readily equated with a similar deity in another. This made it possible for the deities of both cultures to be seen as the same gods manifested in different forms. While the cultures of tribes and nations were different, their religions provided them with a functional common ground and served as mechanisms of *intercultural transmissibility.*[92] Different peoples worshipped different gods but nobody contested either the reality of the foreign gods or the legitimacy of foreign forms of worship. When cultures came into contact, they identified foreign gods as simply different forms of their own gods and often incorporated them into their pantheons. This syncretism was a near-universal practice among the more complex cultures of the ancient period until well after the time of Moses.

The honor of first affirming that the ancient practice of religious syncretism was no longer applicable customarily goes to Moses, the "father of monotheism," who was also believed to be the first to draw the famous *Mosaic distinction*, as it is called, between true and false gods. Research during the last century regarding Akhenaten and the Amarna period has made it sufficiently clear, however, that these claims are incorrect on two points. First, as discussed earlier, the founder of the first genuine monotheistic religion in the ancient world was not Moses but Akhenaten of Egypt. Second, any distinction between true and false religions is more properly called *Akhenaten's Distinction* since it was he who declared all other gods except Aten to be false and who undertook a deicidal pogrom to destroy the false gods in their temples and shrines. Both claims have been erroneously attributed to Moses for centuries simply because our knowledge of Akhenaten's existence and his theology dates only from the turn of the twentieth century. The religion created by Akhenaten died with him without producing a body of canonical literature or theological tradition that passed from ancient times into the present. The religion founded by Moses, on the other hand, generated a rich canonical tradition that passed completely into the mainstream of Western history becoming one of its main pillars in the process. Akhenaten only became a figure of history in the twentieth century while the story of Moses was presumed to be history for more than three thousand years before that.

So strongly has monotheism entrenched itself in our thinking over the centuries that it is almost beyond the modern imagination to think of the polytheism that preceded it and existed for much longer than has monotheism itself as anything but a primitive idea on the part of intellectually unsophisticated people. This view confuses polytheism with ethnic or tribal religions. Moses' impact upon the religions of the ancient world cannot be fully comprehended without correctly understanding the nature of polytheism in those religions. The religions of Egypt and the ancient Near East were not mere tribal episodes in man's religious development but represented highly developed cultural achievements that were closely tied to the introduction and development of the first state institutions in man's history. Tribal societies were incapable of such sophistication and institutional complexity. "*The great achievement of the ancient polytheistic religions is their articulation of a common semantic universe to understand the divine.*"[93] Unlike tribal religions, the gods of polytheistic religions are neither ethnocentric nor bounded by tribal identity as was, for example, the Yahweh of Moses. Polytheistic gods, by contrast, are international and translate *across* cultures because they possess not only names but common functions. Function comes to supersede form from culture to culture, endowing the common functions of the different gods with common legitimacy. This ability to translate foreign gods into one's own culture was first evident in Mesopotamia about 2500 B.C.E. when the Sumerians produced a list of their gods in which their names appear in Akadian next to their Sumerian names. By 2000 B.C.E. the list of gods was enlarged to include the names of the same gods as they appear in the languages of other peoples.[94] In a world such as ours that lacks a genuine international order, it might be wise to remember that the intercultural transmissibility of the gods of ancient polytheism made possible the conclusion of international treaties by swearing to oaths that were binding precisely because both parties recognized the legitimacy of each other's gods. It is to polytheism, therefore, that we owe the birth of the first stirring of international law.

Monotheism itself owes a great debt to polytheism. The notion that all gods were the same everywhere even as their cultural forms differed led ancient Egyptian theologians to contemplate the idea that behind all gods was one god, that the religious truths and obligations pertained to mankind per se and not to culture as such. It was man not culture that was truly universal. This is the early pagan concept of *cosmotheism* from which monotheism sprung. The ancient polytheists saw the evidence of gods all around them in the cycles and movement of nature while the monotheists rejected such evidence in favor of revelation whose content was, to say the least, not always so easily comprehensible. The unquestioning faith of the monotheist was positioned against the polythe-

ist's belief in his own senses and reason. It was this insistence upon the "evidence" of revelation that produced the great catastrophe of monotheism, that is, religious wars of genocide and extermination.

Karen Armstrong's description of the religious world of the ancient pagan is revealing for the humanistic vision it portrays. "The pagan vision was holistic," Armstrong notes. "The gods were not shut off from the human race in a separate, ontological sphere: divinity was not essentially different from humanity. There was thus no need for a special revelation of the gods or for a divine law to descend to earth from on high. The gods and human beings shared the same predicament, the only difference being that the gods were more powerful and were immortal."[95] So strongly rooted was this idea in antiquity that Plato adopted it in secular form as the basis of his philosophical perspective. The idea that this world reflects the divine world—but imperfectly—was to cast the ancient myths of the divine archetypes into a secular philosophical form. Plato's eternal forms and ideas can be correctly seen as nothing more than a rational version of the mythical divine world of which the things of this mundane world are but the merest shadows. Even the pre-Mosaic Israelites shared this polytheistic perspective of the world where gods were everywhere, easily approachable by men. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived on friendly and easy terms with their god. He gave them friendly advice, guided the tribe in its wanderings, talked to them, suggested whom they should marry, and spoke to them in dreams. Occasionally, as with Jacob wrestling with El, God appeared to them in human form. The god of the pre-Mosaic Israelites was similar to the gods of the ancient Egyptians in these respects[96] and radically different from the one that Moses' rigid monotheism forced the Israelites to adopt later.

The distinction between true and false gods that originated with Akhenaten and was introduced by Moses to what became a primary root of Western culture was a radically new idea that changed the world. Yahwehism became the first counter-religion in the West repudiating everything that went before it and rejecting everything outside its own experience as false or pagan. Monotheisms always appear as counter-religions for there is no evolutionary way of proceeding from error to truth. The path to truth cannot be discovered from the past but is revealed by some traumatic event that forms the foundation of the new religion's beliefs and rituals.[97] For Akhenaten this traumatic event was his conversations with Aten, for Moses it was the encounter with Yahweh on Sinai, for Christ it was the crucifixion, and for Mohammed it was the voices in the cave. In monotheisms the future springs from such revelations and all that went before is corrupt, especially if the older religion is the protosource of the new one. Thus it was that Akhenaten attacked the traditional gods and religion of Egypt, Moses attacked the religious rituals of Egypt

as idolatry, and Christians attacked the Jews as murderers of god, while Muslims attacked the Christians as idolaters. In the new religion the past is remembered only for its corruption against which true believers must be ever vigilant lest the past reemerge. The past is constantly remembered only so it may be constantly disowned as the price of one's identification with the new belief. This is precisely how history becomes transformed into mythology.

Monotheistic counter-religions are nonsyncretic and intolerant by their very nature. Whereas the old polytheisms of the ancient world functioned as a form of intercultural translation, the new monotheisms functioned as a means of cultural estrangement. The dawn of Yahwehism in Western history and its covenant with the one true god created an immense gulf between man and god that has never been closed. Whereas in the old polytheisms the evidence of god was everywhere, comprehensible and approachable by the common man, the new monotheism of Moses placed god beyond the reach of man except through precise adherence to belief and rituals whose evidence was unseen. Mosaic Yahwehism was in this sense a retrogression to the religions found among tribal ethnocentric societies, what Mary Douglas calls an "enclave religion."[98] The distinction is reflected linguistically in Hebrew. The Hebrew word for holy is *kadosh*. In religious usage the word does not connote, as we might expect, a sense of morality or ethics or righteousness. Instead, *kadosh* means "otherness," connoting a radical separation between man and god.[99] Like Akhenaten's god who could only be understood and approached by his prophet, Akhenaten himself, the god of Moses is a deity remote and unto himself reached only by faith.

The radical ideas of monotheism and the distinction between true and false gods reappeared in the theology of Mosaic Yahwehism some time around a hundred years after the death of Akhenaten, making it almost certain that these ideas were borrowed by the Egyptianized Moses from the Atenist theology and incorporated into the new Israelite religion founded at Sinai. There is no other reasonable way to account for the appearance of such sophisticated theological ideas in Mosaic Yahwehism at this time. One can, of course, maintain that the Bible is quite literally true in asserting that god himself introduced these ideas directly into the affairs of humans. But such a claim belongs to a different order of thinking and cannot be addressed by the historian. The incorporation of Atenist ideas into the new Israelite religion is merely an example of the occurrence of cultural transference, which is frequent throughout history between cultures that have significant contact and would be readily accepted as such if the artifacts transferred were not theological in nature or did not concern the national myth of a people.

Beyond the obvious borrowing of theological ideas, Mosaic Yahwehism incorporated a number of aspects of Akhenaten's monotheism into its own forms. Yahweh and Aten are gods of isolated glory who are their own wonders. It is their greatness and power that compel man to worship them and the threat of divine punishment is ever present. Neither offers a cosmology of justice or human meaning that can be comprehended by man. Absent are the old humane cosmologies that revealed the ways of god to man and made human life meaningful by explaining man's place in the universe. Yahweh and Aten are cold and remote, their motives and purposes known only to themselves or their prophets, Akhenaten and Moses. Worship is offered by men because it is commanded by the divine, not because it ennobles man or even makes him good in an ethical sense. Denied the knowledge of any divine cosmology, humans cannot deduce a reasonable ethics from the existence of their god. It is neither Yahweh's nor Aten's role to do *Maat*, nor is there a perceptible natural order in which to ground ethical precepts. The old Egyptian idea of ethics as principles to be applied by reason is abandoned in both creeds replaced by apodeictic codes that bind only because god commands that they do so. To the gods of Moses and Akhenaten humans and other creatures are almost irrelevant. Neither god promises justice or mercy or compassion to its faithful. In the Exodus Yahweh repeatedly slays the Israelites over what seem to be ritual trivialities. The story of Job, written much later, exemplifies the Atenist idea that god is his own purpose and power and the inability of humans to discover it is irrelevant. All that is left is obedience to a deadly power that must be complied with under any circumstance. Where the old polytheistic gods promised justice for proper behavior, the new monotheistic god promised only death and suffering if proper behavior was not forthcoming. This was clearly the point of the *Song of Moses* expressed in *Deuteronomy* 32: 39–41.

> *See now that I, even I am He, and there is no god with me.*
> *I kill, and I make alive; I have wounded, and I heal;*
> *and there is none that can deliver you out of my hand.*
> *If I whet my glittering sword,*
> *And my hand take hold on judgement;*
> *I will render vengeance to Mine adversaries*
> *And will recompense them that hate Me.*
> *I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood,*
> *And my sword shall devour flesh.*[100]

Martin Buber suggests that Mosaic Yahwehism differed from Egyptian religion on precisely this point. Whereas the Egyptians conceived of the universe as an ecumenae of existence in which all things have their place and where the

cycles of nature and the struggle between good and evil continued with all sorts of demons and spirits playing a role, Yahwehism saw the power of god as singular. There were no devils or spirits to cause evil or harm to humans. If a power attacked man and harmed him, it is proper to recognize that god was behind this act.[101] Once more the *Song of Moses* is instructive when Yahweh says, "*I kill and I make alive; I have wounded and I heal, and there is none that can deliver you out of my hand.*" Professor Buber is correct in contrasting Yahwehism with traditional Egyptian religion. But the proper point of comparison is not with traditional Egyptian religion but with Akhenaten's new religion, and here the contrast does not hold. Akhenaten completely repudiated the gods, spirits, and demons of the old religion, replacing them with the single power of Aten to do all things. Arthur Weigall notes that "Akhenaten flung all these formulas into the fire, djins, bogies, spirits, monsters, demigods and even Osiris himself with all his court, were swept into the blaze and reduced to ashes."[102] Both Akhenaten's god and the god of Moses presided over all things good and evil and in this sense the Israelite god closely resembled Akhenaten's god.

In refuting the hypothesis that the god of Moses was the god of the Kenites adopted by Moses through the influence of Jethro, Martin Buber offers two characteristics of Yahweh that, in Buber's view, make the Israelite god unique among the gods of antiquity. First, Yahweh addressed men directly, instructing them as to what they must do. Second, Yahweh was not the god of a place, as was the Kenite god, but a wandering god who went before his people throughout the world.[103] These characteristics do indeed distinguish the Yahweh of Moses from the god of the Kenites but in the process reveal important similarities between Yahwehism and Atenism. Buber's first point speaks to revelation as the root of the new religion. Moses founded the new faith of the Israelites because god instructed him to do so. From time to time god spoke to Moses on more specific matters. The central point, however, is that god speaks to man. No less so than with Akhenaten who, as we have seen, founded his new theology because Aten instructed him to do so. Beyond this, Akhenaten claimed to speak with god on other matters. It was, he says, his conversations with Aten that provided him with the location of the new city of the sun and told him when to leave Thebes. In Atenism only Akhenaten speaks with god; in Mosaic Yahwehism, only Moses speaks with god. Akhenaten took his ability to converse with god to the grave with him while the practice lived on for centuries in Yahwehism. Unlike other peoples who used magic and spells to discern the minds of their deities, when the Israelites sought to learn the will of their god, they used the voices of their prophets who spoke of communicating with god through ecstatic visions.[104] The idea is the same. God communicates directly with human beings through revelation, an idea first put forth by Akhenaten.

Buber's point about the mobility of the new god of the Israelites is of only minor importance. The idea of a god who moves and "goes before his people" was hardly an innovation of Mosaic Yahwehism. The Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians all carried their gods with them in sacred tents and shrines. Buber's point is that the Kenite god was the god of a settled agricultural community and did not move, while the Israelite god was the god of a nomadic people and did. Buber concludes from this that the god of Moses was the old wandering god of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph.[105] The central idea is that this mobility of the new god is what came, albeit much later, to shape the vision of the new deity as a universal one. The god of Moses was still a tribal god; universalism would come much later and then only through the influence of the universalism characteristic of the gods of Egypt. Akhenaten's god, like the trinitarian god of the New Kingdom, was a universal god that had a place for all men everywhere under his rule. Mosaic Yahwehism did not reach this level of theological universalism until much later in its history. By then it had undergone considerable change, acquired a casuistic tradition, and had become Judaism.

The monotheisms of Moses and Akhenaten were strongly similar also in the way each man saw the role he played in his respective theologies. Both men saw themselves as the singular prophet of the true god. Only Moses and Akhenaten engaged in sacred behavior. Both spoke directly with god; both "saw" him in person; and both "knew" him in their hearts the way no other man could know him. Both prophets heeded the instructions of direct revelation and destroyed traditional cultic practices replacing them with new ones. Neither man functioned as a priest, however. Akhenaten destroyed the Theban priesthood as an unnecessary incumbrance upon his ability to communicate directly with Aten. And while there is some debate, it can be reasonably argued that there was no Israelite priesthood in existence while Moses was alive[106] so that he alone monopolized all religious functions in his person. Neither man made a distinction between religion and political and social life. Martin Buber's description of Moses' role as leader of the Israelites applies equally to Akhenaten.

> What constitutes his idea and his task: the realization of the unity of religious and social life in the community . . . , the substantiation of a ruling by god that shall not be culturally restricted but shall comprehend the entire existence of the nation, the theo-political principle; all this has penetrated to the depths of his personality, it has raised his person above the compartmental system of typolgy, it has mingled the elements of his soul into a most rare unit.[107]

Power and religion are a whole that legitimize political rule. Moses' conception of governance is pharaonic and almost indistinguishable from Akhenaten's vi-

sion of himself as king of Egypt. Political legitimacy is joined tightly with religion and, in the case of both men, with their strangely personal relationship with an omnipotent god. Both Moses and Akhenaten are equally god-intoxicated men.[108]

The similarities between Yahwehism and Atenism have been extended by some religious thinkers to include the name of the god worshipped by both faiths. It must be stressed in this regard that Akhenaten did not worship the sun but the being manifested in abstract form within it. As Breasted notes, "however evident the heliopolitan origin of the new state religion might be, it was not merely sun-worship; the word Aten was employed in the place of the old word for god (*Nuter*), and the god is clearly distinguished from the material sun."[109] Joel Klein agrees and asserts that Moses had precisely the same concept in mind when he used the word *S'NEH* to describe his god. The passage in *Deuteronomy* is part of the blessing that Moses delivered upon the tribes of Israel before his death, where Moses speaks of the call he heard in the desert to make Yahweh known to the Israelites. He speaks to the tribe of Joseph and says, "Adonai's blessing is on his land . . . with precious fruit ripened by the sun (*SHEMESH*) . . . by favor of Him who dwells in the *S'NEH*."[110] The word *S'NEH* is used in the entire Bible only in Exodus and Deuteronomy and on both occasions it is used to refer to the vision of Moses when he discovered Yahweh. The word, Klein argues, means "he who dwells in the sun," so that Moses' description of Yahweh was precisely the same as that used by Akhenaten when he described Aten as "the spirit who dwells in the sun disc."[111] Moreover, the word *S'NEH* is not a Hebrew word at all but of Egyptian origin, a fact that made its meaning unclear to early translators of the Bible. They placed the emphasis upon the context of the phrase in which *S'NEH* occurred and took as its meaning the idea that whatever Moses had seen when he met Yahweh would not be consumed in the flame of the fire in the same way that the sun is not consumed by its fire. As a consequence, they translated *S'NEH* to mean "burning bush." Klein concludes "that the *S'NEH* of which Moses spoke was the sun disk, not a desert bush which did not consume itself."[112] If Klein's linguistic analysis is correct, then the name of the one true god in both Mosaic Yahwehism and Atenism reflected the same substantial entity, an abstract god whose presence is symbolized by the material sun but whose essence is separate from it.

It seems curious to the modern mind that the Mosaic Decalogue should have placed such emphasis on forbidding the name of god to be spoken. The Decalogue records the prohibition thus: "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. For the Lord will not leave unpunished him who takes his name in vain."[113] The prohibition has its roots in the memory of Egypt

where knowing the name of the god carried with it great power. This may have been what was in Moses' mind when he described his attempt to discover Yahweh's name. When Moses asked his god what his name was, Yahweh replied, "*ehyeh asher ehyeh*;" "I am that I am." The reply means either god has no name or, more probably, that he will not reveal it. But why? Moses and his Israelite followers were well aware of Egyptian magical rituals and would surely have known of the Egyptian practice of conjuring their gods by calling out their names. To discover the name of the god conferred great power on him who possessed such knowledge for with the god's name a person could call the god forth to do the person's bidding. In Egyptian magic the conjured god could be threatened by the conjurer, who could reveal the name of the god to the demons who could then harm the god by their own magic powers. It is likely, then, that the injunction in the Decalogue against speaking the name of god is really a repudiation of the ancient Egyptian magical practice of conjuring.[114] With it Moses was repudiating the old Egyptian religion in a manner strongly similar to that in which Akhenaten repudiated it.

The name of Akhenaten's god was, of course, known. But the magical practice of conjuring was forbidden along with many other rituals that used magic to call upon the gods directly. Heart amulets, for example, and *ushabtis*, statuettes buried with the dead, were forbidden to bear the traditional inscriptions calling upon the gods to aid the deceased in the afterlife. Neither Akhenaten's nor Moses' god could be conjured nor could he be approached or communicated with by anyone except his prophets, that is, Akhenaten and Moses themselves. So strictly did the Israelites regard the prohibition that centuries later the name of god was permitted to be uttered only once a year and then only by the high priest as he stood within the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple.[115] Under these circumstances the true name of Yahweh passed from the Israelite memory. Forbidden to speak the name of god, the Israelites took up using the word for Lord as a euphemism until the knowledge of how to pronounce the name of god was forgotten completely. They remembered the four consonants, YHWH, of their god's name but now pronounced it with the vowels of the Hebrew word for Lord, resulting in the name Yehovah, a form of the name that the Greeks passed to the West and by which the god of the Jews became known among the gentiles but that had no ancient existence whatsoever.[116] Jehovah became the god who never was.

At least two key Mosaic theological precepts, then, monotheism and the prohibition of speaking the name of god, have strong similarities to theological precepts originating with Akhenaten and the Atenist faith. In both cases, moreover, the precepts are also repudiations of traditional Egyptian religious belief (trinitarianism) or practice (conjuring). Affirmation of the new through

repudiation of the old occurs commonly throughout cultural history and is known as "normative inversion."[117] One way to prevent a new cult from being swallowed by the dominant culture is to affirm that those things that are abhorrent to the dominant culture are sacred to the new cult, thereby clearly establishing the cult's identity and uniqueness and making it impossible for the cult's members to return to the dominant culture. A number of Mosaic ritual practices seem to be normative inversions. The sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb is one example. In Exodus, Moses asks pharaoh for permission to take the Israelites into the desert for three days to make the spring sacrifice to Yahweh. Pharaoh asks, why not hold your sacrifice in Egypt? Moses replies, "Lo, if we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians, will they not stone us?"[118] The Israelites intended to sacrifice the ram, the sacred animal and very incarnation of the Egyptians' highest god, Amun! Nothing could have been more calculated to separate the Israelites from the Egyptians than this act of ritual deicide, an act that simultaneously established their respective religions as absolutely irreconcilable.

Another and more important example is the Mosaic prohibition on making and worshipping idols. The prohibition is the second command in the Decalogue and carries with it the harshest punishment. Yahweh commanded that *"You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation."*[119] That Moses was familiar with the Egyptian belief that their gods dwelled within their man-made images and required worship as a consequence is simply beyond doubt. Moses himself often acted like an Egyptian magician. He carried the magical staff, used it to good advantage in his duel with the other magicians of pharaoh's court, and employed it in the miracles he performed in the desert. Moses even fashioned a bronze serpent to ward off the epidemic of disease that was ravaging the Israelites. The serpent was a representation of the scores of serpent gods widely worshipped in Egypt. Interestingly, Moses' bronze serpent was still being worshipped by the Israelites long after his death. It was kept in the Jerusalem temple and incense burned to it until the eighth century B.C.E. when Hezekiah destroyed it in a fit of rage over the Israelites' worship of idols.[120]

The prohibition of idolatry in the Mosaic Decalogue appears identical to Akhenaten's forbidding idol worship as a central tenet of the Atenist faith. Akhenaten declared war on these false gods, annihilating them by destroying their images and shrines. When the Israelites entered Canaan they, too, embarked upon a campaign to destroy the idols of the *baalim*. And like

Akhenaten, the Israelites chose the god Osiris as the principal idol to be feared and destroyed. A. S. Yahuda makes a strong case that the Israelites were well aware of the Osiris cult and railed against it vehemently although without using the name of Osiris in the Bible. Instead, the biblical references to idolatry refer to the *gillulim*. The word is drawn from the Hebrew root *galol*, which means to wrap up or to roll up. Yahuda suggests that the reference is to the Egyptian notion of an embalmed corpse, the *wt* in Egyptian or the "enwrapped one."[121] The god of the Israelites was a living god and death was his principal taboo. Everything connected with death, especially the idols of the "enwrapped ones," but including mourning rituals, corpses, embalming, funerals, graveyards, and so on, was loathed. Who, then, would be more logically hated than Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, who was always portrayed as an "enwrapped one," a mummified corpse?[122] When the Israelites used the word *gillulim* to warn against idolatry, the reference was to Osiris, the same idolatrous deity that Akhenaten attempted to destroy. Israelite religious literature singles out the *gillulim* with contemptuous and opprobrious expressions such as abomination, abhorrence, pollution, and defiling in a manner no less vehement than that found in Akhenaten's deicidal war against the idols of Egypt.

Akhenaten's destruction of Osiris necessarily took with it the principal tenets of the Osiran myth, namely, the belief in an immortal soul, resurrection and judgment after death, and an eternal life for the deceased judged to be worthy. Akhenaten's god, like the Mosaic god, had no need for such ideas because neither deity offered a cosmology that explained man's purpose beyond obedience to the will of god. The god of Moses and of Akhenaten was to be obeyed because he is what he is and, of course, because of the power he displayed to punish and kill. Lacking any affirmation of a natural moral order within which man could find a place that rendered justice or mercy (*Maat*), human beings are possessed of no transcendent purpose beyond worship and obedience to the god.[123] Accordingly, neither Atenism nor Yahwehism affirmed the existence of an immortal soul, resurrection, final judgment, or eternal life. As Freud observed, the idea of immortality is never mentioned in any place in the history of the Jews whereas in Egypt, at least before Akhenaten, it was the centerpiece of the Osiran myth as it later became the centerpiece of the religious life of Christians.[124]

The search for the memory of Egypt in the theology of Moses leads to the conclusion that the theological precepts of Akhenaten's radically new Egyptian religion and the Mosaic Yahwehism of the Israelites, the forebearers of modern Judaism, are substantially the same in content and even form. Both share the following precepts: (1) a monotheism that rejects all other gods as false; (2) the

role of religious leader as prophet, not priest, who alone communicates with god; (3) a hatred of idols and rejection of the notion of indwelling; (4) the rejection of a transcendent or cosmological destiny for human beings; (5) denial of the existence of an immortal human soul; (6) denial of the possibility of resurrection after death; (7) rejection of a moral judgment of the deceased; and the (8) denial of the possibility of an eternal life. These similarities stand in stark contrast to the precepts of the Egyptian religion that existed for millennia prior to the Akhenaten interregnum. These precepts were: (1) a tolerant polytheism that by the time of the New Kingdom had manifested itself in the affirmation of a single trinitarian god; (2) a pharaonic conception of the leader as chief priest not prophet; (3) an established priesthood that connected believers to the deity; (4) affirmation of images as true indwellings of the god; (5) affirmation of a natural order and cosmology providing for a transcendent role for human beings; (6) affirmation of an immortal soul; (7) affirmation of resurrection after death; (8) affirmation of a moral judgment for the deceased; (9) affirmation of an eternal life beyond the grave.

If, as we have argued, Moses' experience in Egypt would have made him aware of *both* religious models, it seems reasonable to conclude that Moses, for reasons we cannot know, constructed the Yahwehist religion around the fundamental principles and forms first introduced to the world by Akhenaten. Since these principles and forms did not exist anywhere else within the ancient world at the time, there appears no other reasonable explanation for the theological similarity of the two religions. The conclusion can, of course, be rejected on theological grounds, that is, that the precepts of the Mosaic religion were in fact revealed directly by god to Moses. It is an argument that depends upon a different order of thinking appropriate only to faith. Even granting the theological argument, however, the historian may still wonder why god would choose to reveal a set of precepts to the Israelites identical to those that had already been discerned and implemented by an Egyptian heretic only a short time earlier. What the limited evidence of history appears to show, however, is that Moses borrowed the principles of the Atenist religion and incorporated them into his new faith. If so, the memory of Egypt and Akhenaten lived on in Mosaic Yahwehism long after Akhenaten was dead. To the degree that modern Judaism incorporates the theological precepts of the Mosaic period, the memory of Egypt persists within it.

Moses did not live to reach the Promised Land, struck down by Yahweh who "drew the life out of him." Of the original Israelite population that left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb lived to reach Canaan. The rest died over the 40 years that they wandered in the desert, a punishment decreed by Yahweh for their refusal to fight their way into the Promised Land when commanded to do so ear-

lier.[125] When at last the time came for a new generation of Israelites to enter Canaan, Yahweh ordered them to undertake a war of genocide against the Canaanites and their false idols. Yahweh commanded that all in Canaan were to be slain. "*Of the cities of the peoples that the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.*"[126] It required more than two hundred years for the Israelites to consolidate their control over Palestine, and by 1000 B.C.E. the Israelites had forged a national political entity under David and Solomon. The Israelite monarchy lasted less than a century before disintegrating into rival kingdoms and civil strife. Even during the period of greatest Israelite control, Palestine remained an ethnically and religiously mixed nation in which the Israelites were always a minority.[127] Under these circumstances Israelite kings had little choice but to accommodate the practice of Canaanite religions, a necessity that brought the Israelite kings into direct conflict with the new prophets who railed against idolatry and eventually precipitated the collapse of the national government. From the end of Solomon's time to the Babylonian Exile, the Israelites never truly succeeded in impressing their own ethnic or religious stamp completely upon Palestine. They always remained a cultural and religious minority within the dominant Canaanite culture.

The two powerful cultural influences, Babylonian and Egyptian, that had shaped Canaanite culture within Palestine also shaped the Israelite culture there. In art, literature, law and mythology, Canaanite culture drew heavily upon Babylonian sources, which it transmitted to the Israelites. This is evident, for example, in the incorporation of the flood and creation myths, both of Babylonian-Sumerian origin, into the Old Testament.[128] Martin Buber suggests that the Mosaic injunction to keep the sabbath was also derived from Moses' knowledge of the Babylonian creation myth.[129] Canaanite religious influences made themselves felt in the design of Solomon's temple. It is in design and equipment very similar to the temples that the Canaanites raised to their gods, including bronze serpents, the fertility pillars of Asherah, and the basin of Yam, the symbol of the Canaanite primeval sea.[130] But in the areas of moral thinking and religion, Yahwehism was most strongly influenced by Egyptian ideas that were deeply entrenched within Canaanite culture long before the Israelites arrived in the Promised Land.

Egyptian influence was the oldest and most profound external cultural stimulus in Palestine beginning almost two thousand years before the Israelites arrived. Cultural and economic contact between Egypt and Palestine began before the Pyramid Age. After the *Hyksos* expulsion and the establishment of the New Kingdom around 1500 B.C.E., Egypt occupied and governed Palestine on and off for 400 years. King Solomon depended upon Egyptian power to ward

off his enemies and concluded an alliance with Egypt in which Solomon married pharaoh's daughter. As a wedding present Solomon was given the fortified Canaanite city of Gezer and promises of Egyptian troops to defend his kingdom. Solomon's very idea of government owed much to Egyptian ideals found in Canaanite practice. Under Egyptian influence the Canaanites had rejected the Babylonian notion that civic rule rested only upon the power of the sovereign. As a consequence of Egyptian influence, the Canaanites belonged to that section of humanity that believed that *Baal* required the sovereign to do justice for his subjects, an idea whose origins lay in Egypt two millennia earlier.[131] Solomon's conception of political rule as requiring that the king pursue the justice of god represented a complete repudiation of the Mosaic idea of political government and its replacement with the traditional Egyptian idea of *Maat* under whose aegis the pharaohs had claimed political legitimacy for millennia. The very foundations of the early Israelite state, then, were strongly grounded in traditional Egyptian cultural influences passed through the Canaanites to the Israelites after their arrival in Palestine.

For centuries before the arrival of the Israelites, Egyptian ideas of morality and religion had produced a rich high culture within Palestine upon which the Israelites could draw in their own religious and ethical thinking. Much of the Egyptian wisdom literature was already available in Palestine in the form of Semitic dialect translations. It is likely that even Akhenaten's *Hymn to the Sun God* passed into Palestine through Phoenician translation. Excerpts from this and other wisdom sources reappeared later in the Hebrew *Psalms* and the *Book of Proverbs.*[132] In *Proverbs* 21:3 one finds, for example, the idea that "to do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice." Here we see the incorporation of the Egyptian doctrine of justice and conscience superseding ritual as the primary ethical motive appearing for the first time in Yahwehist ethical thinking and marking a movement away from apodeictic precepts of human behavior toward a genuinely casuistic manner of ethical thinking. Even Egyptian linguistic forms appeared in the *Proverbs*, as when it was said that "Yahweh weigheth the hearts" of men. And so it was that much of traditional pre-Atenist Egyptian wisdom literature was incorporated into Israelite moral thinking and eventually passed to the West after Palestine became a Greek and then Roman possession. By that time it had been refined and codified to a much greater extent and rewritten in the Hebrew language so that what had in its origins been a highly derivative body of moral thought drawn largely from Egyptian sources appeared to the Western mind to be an original contribution of the Israelites themselves. This belief passed into Western history without challenge for two thousand years.

As a consequence of its contact with Egyptian ideas embedded in the Canaanite culture, Mosaic Yahwehism underwent three important changes incorporating them into its own tradition and eventually passing them to the West. The first of these, the idea that government must do justice as a command of god and the natural order, was the ancient Egyptian ideal of *Maat* that had legitimized Egyptian political rule for millennia. When joined with another ancient Egyptian idea, equality before the law, these ideas came eventually by another route to form the basis for the Greek philosophers' contemplation of the good state, which eventually led to the idea that men may resist the commands of an unjust ruler, one of the fundamental principles of Western political thought. The second was the abandonment of apodeictic ethical precepts and their replacement with casuistic ethical thinking, an idea introduced to history at least a thousand years earlier by the Egyptians. This profoundly influenced Greek thinking on ethics, preserving the role of human freedom and conscience in ethical reasoning so that it became the hallmark of ethical thought in the West. Third, and theologically most important, was the transformation of the god of Moses who protected only his chosen and enforced his will with harsh punishment into a universal god whose actions toward men were characterized by love, justice, and mercy. The Egyptians first formulated the idea of a universal god who embraced all humans regardless of their race, language, or country. It was the centerpiece of traditional pre-Atenist Egyptian theology that such a god must treat all his creatures with justice and compassion, that is, *Maat*.

The great contribution of the Israelites was to capture, preserve, and transmit these three important Egyptian ideas into the mainstream of Western culture after first incorporating them into their own moral thinking. But as James Breasted has noted, "The fundamental conclusions that form the basis of moral convictions, and continue to do so in civilized life to the present day, had already been reached in Egyptian life long before the Israelites began their social experience in Palestine, and those moral convictions had been available in written form in Palestine for centuries when the Israelites settled there."[133] There is no intent here to diminish the Israelite contribution to the religious and moral thinking of the West, for no doubt the enrichment that these Egyptian ideals acquired as a consequence of Jewish experience, thinking, and writing is truly priceless. It is only intended that we understand that the ideals themselves did not originate with the Age of Revelation as is so commonly thought. Transmitted by the Jews to the West, the profoundly human ideals of just government, ethical thinking, and a universal and merciful god who cares for all humans are critical memories of pre-Atennist Egypt that are still with us.

4

Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection

The two previous chapters sought to discover the memories of Egypt within the theology of Mosaic Yahwehism that was later passed to the West in what came to be known as Judaism. The search began with an analysis of the Atenist creed of Akhenaten in an effort to establish its main theological premises. This done, a search for similarities and differences between the theology of Akhenaten and the theology of Moses was undertaken. The conclusion that emerged was that *all* of the fundamental theological principles of Mosaic Yahwehism, along with a number of less significant cultic and cultural practices and beliefs, were strongly similar, if not identical, to the theological principles and beliefs first introduced and practiced by Akhenaten well before Moses appeared on the stage of history. Moreover, the proximity of the Israelite and Egyptian cultures over four generations, the degree of cultural contact, and the time when Moses appeared to lead his people out of Egypt conspire to support the proposition that Moses, as well as other Israelite leaders before and after him, was reasonably aware of the history and principles of Akhenaten's radical theology. This awareness could account for the similarity between the theological precepts of Atenism and Mosaic Yahweism, in which case it is likely that Egyptian memories lay at the very roots of Moses' thinking and remained preserved in the basic theological premises of early Judaism.

The two chapters that follow undertake a similar analysis. This time the search begins with an examination of *the traditional Egyptian religious beliefs* extant within Egypt for more than fifteen hundred years before Akhenaten and

reestablished as the primary religious tradition for another fifteen hundred years after Akhenaten's death before finally being displaced by Christianity some time in the second century C.E. The hypothesis to be examined is whether or not these traditional theological beliefs of Egyptian religion can be discerned within the body of the next great theological innovation of the West after Yahweism, that is, Christianity. If these Egyptian memories are found to exist at the roots of Christianity, the analysis will be forced to suggest how such important memories came to be there. If a reasonably convincing argument can be mounted to explain the similarity in fundamental theological beliefs between Christianity and Egyptian paganism, the analysis will be forced to conclude that the two great theologies of the West, Judaism and Christianity, are in their fundamentals *not* genuinely innovative religious systems at all. They are, instead, newly expressed forms of far older theological systems whose origins lay unambiguously within Egyptian history and culture, origins that were either repressed or simply forgotten by the West over the course of two-thousand years of its own history.

Classical Egyptian theology was characterized by three main elements: (1) a monotheism expressed in the existence of a solar deity who manifested his power in the sun and its operations, (2) the cult of the regenerating power of nature expressed in the adoration of ithyphallic gods and animals, and (3) a perception of anthropomorphic divinity where the life of man continues beyond death in the celebration of an afterlife.[1] These themes were fully articulated by the Fifth Dynasty (2500 B.C.E.) when they can be found inscribed in tombs and on monuments. But the absence of evidence does not constitute the evidence of absence, and it is a reasonable assumption that Egyptians were thinking and writing about these theological questions for a long time, perhaps at least a millennium, before written evidence of their existence appeared. One does not, after all, arrive at such sophisticated ideas overnight. Their development requires considerable intellectual spade work before anything approaching a comprehensive formulation is possible. The development of a conceptual vocabulary to express such ideas is itself a remarkable achievement, and Egyptian theologians were the first to invent and use a conceptual vocabulary. There was a time, early in the twentieth century, when it was thought that the Egyptian language as expressed in hieroglyphs was too literal and pictographic to permit the development of abstract terms. Gardiner, writing in 1914, says that the Egyptians were not "philosophical" in that they did not manipulate abstract terms.[2] As with so much about Egypt, this conclusion was based upon partial knowledge of the artifact under examination. In point of fact, the language of Egyptian theologians was sufficiently abstract and they arrived at such highly abstract ideas as incarnation, the soul, the beatification of the body, a

complete psychology of the human person, a psychology of the dead, notions of political and social justice, the unity behind the complexity of being, a trinitarian god, and the distinction between substance and accident, to mention but a few. Egyptian semantics recognized the difference between abstract and descriptive terms by requiring that an hieroglyphic descriptive be inserted at the end of a word group whenever the meaning intended was abstract. Egyptian scholars inserted the hieroglyph of a rolled papyrus scroll to indicate that the thought expressed was a product of the mind and not something that could be found outside the mind.[3] Equipped with a vocabulary to express abstract concepts of their own invention, Egyptian theologians became the first humans to manipulate and express complex abstract ideas and, later, to write them down in stone and on papyrus where they would be discovered by future generations.

The fundamental features of pre-and post-Atenist Egyptian religion remained unchanged in their essentials from the Fifth Dynasty down to the period when Egypt began to embrace Christianity after the preaching of St. Mark the Apostle in Alexandria around 69 C.E.[4] This did not, however, prevent each of the main theological principles from becoming more completely refined and articulated, a process that led to significant changes in the manner in which the theological fundamentals were understood. But from beginning to end, except for the period of Akhenaten, Egyptian religion remained centered around the following principles: (1) a single trinitarian god; (2) a cosmology in which all things, man, god, and nature, have a place that can be comprehended by man; (3) man's possession of an immortal soul; (4) resurrection of the dead and a life beyond the grave; (5) a final judgment beyond the grave where man's ethical life is weighed; and (6) an eternal life for the deceased. It was these principles that Akhenaten repudiated and it was these principles that were reestablished after his death and continued to characterize Egyptian theology from the twelfth century B.C.E. until the first century C.E.

We have already explored the first two theological principles in some detail in the previous chapters. It need only be recalled here that over the centuries the original solar monotheism of the Egyptians gradually transformed itself into a monotheism where the single god was expressed as a trinitarian entity in which all three persons were present, distinct, and equally divine. Over the centuries the single god changed from an Egyptian national god to a universal deity "who watcheth over the earth hourly," that is, one concerned with all humanity everywhere. The other Egyptian principle of a natural order encompassing all things permitted the development of a moral cosmology where all beings were required to do *Maat*, that is, justice or that which is appropriate to the thing's nature, and explained the place of man and god in the universe. God himself

must pursue *Maat*, a principle that early on transformed the Egyptian god into a just and loving god. Thus it was that when the Persians conquered Egypt in 525 B.C.E., followed by Alexander and the Greeks in 332 B.C.E., and then by the Romans in 31 B.C.E., all three cultures encountered a deity whose character none had encountered before. Only in Palestine, and then not before the fifth century B.C.E., does one find another people of the ancient world beginning to think of their god as genuinely monotheistic, merciful, and just. These people were the Jews. Over more than seven hundred years their early Mosaic theology had transformed itself into a truly monotheistic, ethically casuistic theology that affirmed a universal god of justice and mercy.

The remaining principles of Egyptian theology were all derived from the incorporation of the Osiris myth into the body of traditional Egyptian religious thought, a process that began even before the First Union (3200 B.C.E.), although the first available written evidence dates from the Fifth Dynasty (2500 B.C.E.). It is very probable that the cult of the dead and the accompanying idea of an afterlife originated even before the dawn of the fourth millennium.[5] The legend of Osiris became so thoroughly integrated into Egyptian theology that it transformed the solar Re mythology, in that it came to promise resurrection and life after death for the individual believer regardless of rank or station, a privilege that the original solar theology had reserved for the king and the powerful. Over a period of two thousand years the central solar myth of Egyptian theology became "Osirized" in that the justification for and the character of the king's resurrection became expressed completely in terms of the Osiris myth. So close was the identification of the king's resurrection with the Osiris myth that when the king rose again after death he was said *to become* Osiris.[6] The first written evidence of the adoption of Osiris into the solar myth appeared during the Pyramid Age. By the end of that period the importance of Osiris in the solar myth of the divine resurrection of the king was reflected in the incorporation of Osiris into the company of the four solar genii known as the Four Eastern Horuses.[7] These genii accompanied the king into the afterlife, and for the first time Osiris was listed among them, signifying that in the official theology of the resurrection of the king Osiris was recognized as playing an important role.

Once the Osiris myth asserted its importance within the state solar theology, it was only a matter of time before it spread to the rest of the populace. The great attraction of the Osiris myth was its promise of life after death, and by the end of the Feudal Age Osiris had achieved a place equal to Re in the mind and faith of the common man, creating a theological duality within the Egyptian religious tradition. The official religion of the king and the state remained the solar myth of Re even as it absorbed the premises of the Osiris myth into the of-

ficial theology. Parallel to the state religion, the Osiris myth spread among the general populace and gradually developed an institutional structure of its own. The syncretic nature of Egyptian religion prevented conflict between the two myths and, indeed, over time Osiris became solarized while Re became Osirized into a single complete theology. This symbiotic synthesis was already evident during the Feudal Age but became more formally so by the New Kingdom where the need of Egyptian theologians to accommodate the desires of the warrior pharaohs to raise their local god, Amun, to national status led them to reemphasize the trinitarian nature of the single god and create the trinity of Re, Osiris, and Amun.

The official incorporation of the Osiris myth into the Egyptian religious tradition as well as its wide support among the Egyptian population led to a set of circumstances where the doctrine of resurrection became the central theological principle of Egyptian religion as it was finally transmitted to the West through the experience of the Greek and Roman occupations of Egypt. This in itself is amazing. Here we find a doctrine of eternal life and the resurrection of a glorified or transformed body based upon an ancient story of the resurrection of Osriris after a cruel death and horrible mutilation inflicted by the powers of evil that is at least four thousand years old before the West encountered it and remains unchanged in its essentials throughout all periods of Egyptian history. Indeed, as we shall see, the Osiris myth of resurrection and eternal life was more widespread and of greater influence in the Hellenistic and Roman periods than at almost any other time in its theological history.[8] It may be said with some confidence that the Egyptians believed in a future life of some kind beyond the grave from the earliest times and that the doctrine of eternal existence became a leading feature of their religious history. It was an idea that greatly affected Egyptian thinking about ethics, for if life was possible beyond the grave, then the question of who was to be saved and how became a central moral question. It is easy to see that Breasted was correct when he affirmed, "among no people, ancient or modern, has the idea of a life beyond the grave held so prominent a place as among ancient Egyptians."[9] He may have added that the ideas of resurrection and eternal life were unique to Egypt and did not appear in any other ancient culture until the first century of the Common Era.

Osiris was one of the oldest gods of Egypt, perhaps as ancient as Re himself, although Osiris' role as god of the dead evolved much later. The two most obvious elements in ancient Egyptian life were the sun and the Nile, and both, albeit in different forms, came to be venerated as gods. Re personified the sun while Osiris came to represent the everlasting cycles of vegetation wherein plants grow, reproduce, and die to be renewed by the waters of the Nile each year and restored to life again. It is likely, then, that Osiris has his earliest ori-

gins as a god of vegetation.[10] And because the agricultural cycles were familiar to all Egyptians, Osiris' behavior, like the plants of the Nile, was also familiar. Osiris was never a remote god in the sense that Re was remote. From the beginning Osiris was involved in human affairs.

There was, however, another side to Osiris that may have had its roots in historical events. In predynastic times, well before the First Union, Osiris was already regarded as the god of the dead. With the myth of the afterlife not yet fully developed, death was to be feared and the god that presided over it to be feared as well. There were very ancient spells and charms whose power it was to protect the living from the god of the dead. The roots of this fear are ancient. There is a legend, predating the First Dynasty, that speaks of a man who rose from the dead and made himself lord of the dead. We are wholly ignorant of who this person was but he was known for thousands of years to the Egyptians as *Khenti-Amenti*, or he who is chief of the Amenti. Later this legend became associated with Osiris, but we do not know for what reasons.[11] There is another legend that attributes to Osiris the outlawing of cannibalism among the Egyptians. Cannibalism, mostly of the ritual variety where one consumes some part of another person to gain for oneself the best qualities of the deceased, was an old custom in Africa and at some time in the predynastic past may have been practiced by the Egyptians. A text cut into the tomb of Pharaoh Unas of the Fifth Dynasty (2500 B.C.E.) tells of a time when the chief god hunted down the lesser gods to kill, cook, and eat them, which leads Budge to conclude that the Egyptians did practice cannibalism, perhaps much later than we would have expected.[12]

To some the story of Osiris' death rings of cannibalism. After Osiris was murdered, his body was mutilated, his genitals cut off, his organs and bones scattered, and his head severed and buried in a secret place. It is possible, Budge theorizes, that this was a common practice in Egypt before the arrival of the predynastic race whose influence shaped early Egyptian culture. If the king of these foreigners outlawed the practice, the memory of his doing so might remain as a vague folk tale of the god who prohibited the terrible practice and required burial of the dead intact.[13] The legend has a sense of plausibility about it. However, it seems that whatever may have been prohibited by this early king, it was probably not cannibalism. The description of Osiris' death preserved in his myth is more probably a description of the common practice, still extant in Africa, of second burial. Here the deceased is placed in the ground for several months until the soft tissues of the body decay. The body is then disinterred. The remaining flesh is scraped from the skeleton and the bones and skull given to the deceased's relatives or other important personages of the tribe, who valued them as tokens of the deceased's virtue or strength. Second

burial was far more likely to have been practiced in Upper Egypt, where the moist soil of the Delta lands would have encouraged rapid decay of the body. In the desert regions of Lower Egypt, it is far more likely that burial in the desert sands would have produced mummification. If, as some historians believe, Osiris was an actual king of some powerful city of Lower Egypt who defeated a king of a Delta city, it is not unlikely that he would have been appalled at the practice of second burial and outlawed it, in which case he might have ordered that henceforth all bodies were to be interred intact and, as was likely the custom of his native Lower Egypt, that the intact corpse was to be buried in the hot desert sands at the edge of the Nile. Under these conditions natural desiccation of the bodies would have occurred and Egyptians would have come across corpses long dead but whose bodies looked remarkably as they were in life. Breasted suggests that it was this natural mummification that might have given rise to the idea of life beyond the grave.[14]

The Egyptian emphasis upon preserving the body of the corpse, however it began, was soon absorbed into Egyptian theology with important consequences. Egypt's early kings labored mightily to construct their tombs with the sole objective of preserving their bodies for all eternity. Early on the idea took root that eternal life could only be preserved as long as the body, albeit in a beatified state, remained intact in the tomb. The preservation of the body became central to Egyptian theology *even though within that theology there was no explanation of why the body must be preserved*. The injunction to preserve the body rings of a royal command more than a theological argument, perhaps the original command of Osiris himself as a real king. It might be that Osiris' forbidding of second burial (or cannibalism, if Budge is right) resulted in the preservation of the deceased through natural desiccation almost as an accidental consequence. If, when the real Osiris died, he was buried in the manner of his native region, that is, in the desert sand where his body might become naturally mummified, the king's manner of burial may have been widely adopted or even commanded to be so. What began as a royal edict became associated with the burial habits of the king who, we know, was thought to be divine from the earliest times so that they became associated with the burial of gods. When the early priests tried to make theological sense of the practice, it was but a short jump to the idea that the body of a god had to be preserved intact to enjoy the afterlife.

All the foregoing is speculation. What seems less speculative, however, is the attribution of great acts of violence to Osiris as he appeared in his earliest iterations. Chapter 28 of the *Book of the Dead* tells of a great battle that took place at night between the forces of Osiris and the Sebau fiends who were associates of Set. Osiris ordered all the prisoners to be butchered. In another paragraph the story tells of another terrible night when Osiris sat in judgment of prisoners.

He ordered the good separated from the wicked and pronounced a sentence of doom upon the latter, which he ordered carried out immediately. The condemned were beheaded and their bodies mutilated, cut to pieces and burnt. Their spirits and souls were severed from their bodies and their shadows driven away. The skulls of the condemned were battered in and the pieces of bone were cast down into a pit of fire.[15] In these old legends Osiris was always accompanied by a chief executioner named *Shesmu*.[16] What makes these legends seem somewhat real is that later pharaohs practiced much the same thing. Beginning with Narmer the unifier, almost every pharaoh after that was portrayed on his monuments slaughtering his enemies with abandon. A common title associated with these portrayals was the epithet "Shatterer of Skulls." So it might be, then, that the legend of Osiris had its roots in some real dynastic struggle that took place in predynastic times, leaving only faint echoes of ancient royal and theological practices to reach the modern ear.

Christine Hobson argues strongly for the view that the Osiris myth may have historical roots. She notes that in predynastic times there were few major cities along the Nile. One of these cities was Nubt (near modern Naqada), whose priesthood was dedicated to the local god Seth. Nubt was an ideal marketing center standing on the Nile bank near Wadi Hammamat, one of the few routes across the eastern desert and the main road to the gold fields. The other town located south of modern Luxor was Nekhen (modern El Kab). Its local god was the falcon or Horus, a fact that gave rise much later to the Greeks calling it Hieraconpolis or Falcon City.[17] According to some historians, the ancient story of the battle between Horus and Seth that was folded into the Osiris myth was probably a folk memory of a war between these two cities. The victory of Horus over Seth, that is, of Hieraconpolis over Nubt, gave the prince of the former authority over all of Upper Egypt as well as southward to the Nubian border.[18] Further evidence suggests that the attempt to establish a common administration and a common irrigation system led to the conquest by Menes (Narmer?) over all of Egypt. Having brought the country under his authority, Narmer established a new capital at the neck of the Delta and the Nile valley. Originally called *Inbuhed* or City of the White Walls for its whitewashed defensive fortifications, the city later became known as *Mennefer*, which the Greeks called Memphis.[19] It remained the capital of the country on and off for more than three thousand years.

With or without historical roots, by the time the two countries of Upper and Lower Egypt were united under one king (3400 B.C.E.), Osiris had lost much of his fearful quality as a god of the dead and slaughterer of the wicked. He became the god that pharaoh looked to to guide him into the paradise of eternal life, although at this early date the idea that Osiris might guide the com-

mon man to the same destination was still beyond comprehension. Within a few centuries Osiris became identified with the eternal fate of pharaoh himself. Osiris' importance in the Egyptian pantheon was evident in his incorporation into the oldest religious festival in Egyptian history, the *Heb-Sed.*[20] During the ceremony pharaoh impersonated Osiris by assuming the costume of the god, thereby beginning the process of incorporating Osiris into the solar theology of Re himself. It would be many centuries before Osiris would eclipse the influence of Re and bring to the world the solace of the new doctrine that the common man could overcome death. But the idea had begun to take root in the consciousness of Egyptian theologians at a very early date.

The story of Osiris, his death, resurrection, and reward of eternal life has all the characteristics of a dynastic struggle with historical roots that was later infused with theological substance. The legend begins with a conflict between two brothers, Osiris and Set, who because they were kings or, perhaps, aspirants to the same throne, were regarded as sons of god who had taken on a human nature upon their birth, an idea that later pharaohs adopted to explain their own divine origins. Osiris, who was of divine origin, became man, and suffered a human destiny by becoming mortal.[21] Thus he was a god who endured evil, torment, and death as the experience of his humanity and became the only Egyptian god to suffer death and rise again from it, events that make him very different from all the other gods of ancient Egypt.[22] The parallel with the Christian doctrine concerning the human nature of Christ is obvious, but must remain unexplored for the moment. Osiris was married to Isis, who was also his sister, while Set was married to Isis' sister, Nephthys, who was also his sister. Once more we see the ancient practice of the early kings of Egypt marrying their sisters as a way of preserving the blood lineage of the nobility. As noted in an earlier chapter, this practice may not have been of Egyptian origin but introduced by the predynastic race that arrived in Egypt before the fourth millennium. For reasons that are not clear, Set becomes envious of Osiris. Here again is a hint of a dynastic struggle between two brothers. Set murders Osiris and hides his body.

In one version of the myth Osiris was locked in a trunk, drowned, and taken to Nedyt, possibly the area around Byblos in Lebanon, where he was buried in a secret place. In another version that became the more commonly accepted one, Set mutilated the body of Osiris, chopping it into pieces and scattering it throughout Egypt. In this version Osiris or only his head was buried at Abydos, which later became the most sacred shrine to Osiris. Abydos has been venerated from very ancient times as one of the most sacred places in Egypt. It was here on the wide desert plain that the first kings of Egypt were buried, among them all the kings of the First Dynasty and two of the Second. Surrounded by

small stone tombs containing the bodies of servants, dwarfs, women, and other retainers are the graves of Narmer, Aha, Djer, Merneith, Djet, Den Adjib, Smerkhe, and Qa'a, Egypt's earliest and most sacred sovereigns.[23] And since it was believed by the Egyptians that the legend of Osiris referred to a real king, one of the ancient tombs was believed to be Osiris' burial place.[24] By the Middle Kingdom Abydos had assumed the status of Egypt's most sacred place. Powerful nobles wished to be buried there, and it became common practice for the less wealthy to have their mummified bodies transported to the city for a special blessing before returning them to a more local burial place. Every year thousands of pilgrims visited the sacred site and each year a grand play portraying the death and resurrection of Osiris was staged to enormous crowds. In stature and sanctity, the burial site of Osiris at Abydos was equivalent to that held today by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

When news of Osiris' death reached Isis, she and her sister began to search for his body. The two sisters searched the world for Osiris' body, bringing together each piece as they found it. With the help of Anubis sent by the sun god, the two sisters embalmed the body, assembling the pieces by wrapping Osiris in bandages. Here is the first description of the preservation of the body by human action instead of by natural desiccation, a practice that legend tells us was begun by Osiris.[25] From this time forward Osiris was always portrayed as a wrapped mummy. But even in death the life-giving power of Osiris could not be destroyed, and Isis mated with the corpse of her husband. The description of their coupling is dramatic and beautiful. "Isis drew near her husband and making a shadow with her pinions and causing a wind to change with her wings . . . raising the weary limbs of the silent-hearted [the deceased Osiris], receiving his seed, bringing forth an heir, nursing the child in solitude, whose place is not known, introducing him when his arms grew strong to the Great Hall [of the gods at Heliopolis]."[26]

The child that results from this union is called Horus, and Isis knows that Set will try to kill him. Again this is reminiscent of a Shakespearean account of a dynastic struggle between rival heirs for some ancient throne. When Set finds out about the child, he knows that Horus will some day attempt to revenge his father. So Set sets out to kill the child. Isis hides in the reeds where she nurses and raises her child. Portrayals of Isis holding the baby Horus were common images in Egypt for centuries, certainly until the time of the Christian influence, and their resemblance to the Christian images of Madonna and Child are striking. Isis and Horus survive many adventures as Set attempts to murder the child. One of the most poignant occurred when Set convinced the scorpion god to sting the child and cause his death. Horus is stung and suffers near death. Isis petitions the gods to save her son. Once more Egyptians portrayed

the moment in art. Here Isis holds the limp body of her suffering divine son who hovers near death, an image similar to the one that Michelangelo expressed in Christian terms in his famous *Pieta*. But the gods intervene and Horus recovers[27] and grows to manhood until "when his arm is strong" he seeks out and does combat with Set to avenge the death of Osiris. It is a fierce fight in which Horus loses his eye. But in the end Set is defeated. Horus' eye is returned to him by Toth. Horus eventually returns to Abydos and the grave of his father.

Horus offered his eye to his father as a token of filial devotion, a virtue of great value to Egyptians from time immemorial. From this day forward, the eye of Horus cast in stone or metal became the most popular amulet among Egyptians. Because of Horus' devotion to his father, the gods gathered around Osiris' grave and there was wailing and crying. It was Horus, with the help of Anubis, the jackal god of embalmers, and the formulae repeated by Toth, the god of knowledge, who performed the ceremony of resurrection, the first expression of that radical idea in the history of mankind! The Osiran myth describes the great moment: "Horus comes to thee, he separates thy bandages, he throws off thy bonds. Arise, give thou thy hand to Horus, that he may raise thee up. The tomb is opened for him. The bricks are drawn for thee out of the great tomb . . ." And then, "Osiris awakes, the weary god wakens, the god stands up, he gains control of his body. Stand up! Thou shalt not end, thou shalt not perish."[28] Osiris rises from the dead and the radically new idea of resurrection is given its first expression in human myth. From that time to the present, mankind has continued to hope that it, too, may one day, like Osiris, achieve victory over death.

Despite his defeat at the hands of Horus, Set refuses to relinquish his cause and brings charges against Horus and Osiris to be heard by the gods sitting in the Great Hall of Heliopolis. The legend does not reveal the charges, but it is most likely that Set is challenging Horus' claim to the kingdom on the grounds that he is illegitimate, for surely Osiris was dead when Horus was conceived. Isis, therefore, has produced a pretender to the throne or she is a common harlot.[29] Once more the story resembles the tale of a dynastic struggle, this time based on the legitimacy of blood lineage. The assembly of the gods that heard the case in the Great Hall resembles a meeting of powerful nobles or even kings called to decide the merits of the rival claimants. That such an assemblage of nobles should be thought of as gods is not unusual. In the early days of Rome the assembly of the ruling families was commonly referred to as an assembling of the gods. The gods ruled in favor of Osiris declaring him to be *maet kheru*, that is, "true of word" or, as used later, "justified."[30] Set was taken into custody, dragged before Osiris and thrown to the ground whereupon Osiris sat upon

him as a sign of the triumph of good over evil. Set was banished to the Red Land, the foreign countries outside Egypt's borders where over the centuries he became identified with the gods and things of foreigners. Horus was given jurisdiction over the Black Land, which is Egypt itself.[31]

Osiris having demonstrated that he was "true of word" now returned to his divine origins and ascended into heaven. Here he became the god of the dead presiding over the realm of the deceased which, over time, came to resemble an agricultural paradise to which all might aspire. Osiris lived with the gods and came to be the Great Judge, he who weighed the truthfulness of the hearts of the deceased to determine if the ethical quality of their lives merited eternal salvation. By the Sixth Dynasty Osiris was accepted throughout Egypt as the god who became man, who suffered, died, and was risen, and who lived forever with the gods where he sat in judgment of all men.

By the Pyramid Age the Osiris myth had become the central feature of Egyptian religion and Osiris himself a deity second only to Re. The incorporation of the myth into the state religion was the beginning of a process that eventually produced a complete theology of resurrection and eternal life for all men. By the Pyramid Age the Osiris myth contained all the basic elements of a new theological doctrine. Death, resurrection, judgment, and eternal life were all present but only in a primitive form awaiting further theological definition. At this stage of its development, the elements of the myth applied only to the king. Since Osiris was perceived to have been a king as well, it was logical that his fate should be shared by other pharaohs. Over a thousand years Egyptian theologians more fully developed the Osiris myth into a complete theological doctrine connecting its elements by detailed theological reasoning. An important consequence of this was to extend the privileges of Osiris beyond the kings to include all humans. So it came to be that Everyman could hope for justice and eternal life beyond the grave.

The process of theological refinement was not unlike that which occurred within Christianity at the dawn of the modern era. Although the mystical doctrines of Christianity were present in basic form from the very beginning, their articulation as a complete theological system took more than a thousand years to achieve. The stimulus for the theological development of Christianity and the Osiris myth was identical, that is, the need of theologians of both faiths to make sense of the mysteries and explain them to the faithful. The problem was immediate in Christianity and, we may assume, equally so for the theologians of Egypt. Only a few years after the death of Jesus, we find Saint Paul being queried by the Corinthians to explain the promise of resurrection. They inquire of Paul, "How are the dead to be raised up, and with what body do they come?"[32] In the development of their respective theologies, Christianity and

Egyptian religion were compelled first to develop a theory of the human personality whose terms and premises could be used to explain the religious elements of their faiths. The Christians adopted their view of man largely from Greek philosophy. Egyptian theologians, writing two thousand years before the rise of Classical Greece, developed a completely original idea of personhood that, as far as we know, was the first attempt at a written description of human nature.

Egyptian thinking on the human personality was sophisticated and abstract and at least as complex as the later attempts by Greek philosophers, which provided Christianity with many of the concepts to explain its theology. Although reflecting ideas that were first formulated during the Pyramid Age, a complete rendering of Egyptian notions concerning the human personality, resurrection, and eternal life is found in the historically more recent *Book of the Dead*. It is important to recall that this "book" was a collection of prayers, spells, and instructions written on scrolls interred with the deceased to aid in the process of resurrection, surviving the judgment of Osiris, and gaining entry to the afterlife. The Egyptian emphasis on resurrection and eternal life is clearly evident in the title of the book. Its title is not properly the *Book of the Dead*, a title introduced by the Muslims after their conquest of Egypt in the seventh century and carried into the common vocabulary by later archeological use. The proper Egyptian title is the *Book of Coming Into Life* and it was intended as a sacred handbook on how to attain resurrection and eternal life.[33] The Egyptians, like the Christians after them, were at great pains to explain "how the dead are to be raised up" and succeeded in developing an idea of the human personality that made resurrection and eternal life seem possible.

The Egyptians conceived of a human nature comprised of eight distinct elements, each of which shaped the physical and spiritual potentialities of a complete person. These elements were: (1) a physical body, (2) a spiritual body, (3) a heart, (4) a soul, (5) a shadow, (6) an intangible casing or spirit, (7) a form, and (8) a name,[34] each of which provided man with some defining element of his existence and which had to be accounted for in the process of resurrection. The human being's most basic form of existence, and the one that is felt most continually, was the physical body or *khat*. The word itself was connected with something that will decay and thus was transitory. The physical body nonetheless established an important *theological* connection between man and god, for man was akin to Osiris himself in that both possessed a physical existence. No other Egyptian god ever became man or inhabited a physical body or endured a human existence. The fact that only Osiris and humans shared this trait was what made it possible for humans to believe that Osiris would be a merciful judge. For only Osiris, in his human incarnation on this earth, truly knew the

temptations and sufferings that human beings must endure in this life. Christian thinking on the subject of Christ's human nature was strikingly similar. Like Osiris, a divine Christ became truly human and suffered the same way any human would suffer a crucifixion. It is through this human suffering that Christ made it possible for humans to attain eternal life.

Nowhere in Egyptian thinking, however, was there the promise that man's corruptible body would rise from the earth and join the soul in eternal life. As we have seen, the idea persisted that the corruptible body must be preserved as a requirement of eternal life, although the means by which preservation was achieved changed radically over the centuries. In the Pyramid Age the bodies of the pharaohs were sustained by constant rituals performed within their mortuary temples while their embalmed bodies rested securely within sealed tombs. By the end of the Feudal Age these practices had been largely abandoned while embalming, symbolic rituals, periodic offerings, and burying magical amulets, prayers, and inscriptions with the deceased to be used by himself took their place as ways to preserve the body in the tomb. Nonetheless, it seems likely that every Egyptian worried about how his body might fare after he had passed on to the afterlife, for the ancient belief persisted that the eternal soul might cease to exist if the earthly body from which it had sprung was destroyed.

Once embalmed and entombed, the natural body as it existed in life ceased to exist by being transformed into a spiritual body or *sahu*. The transformation was accomplished by means of ritual and prayers, most particularly the ceremony of "the opening of the mouth" whose ritual revivified the body in its new state. This transformation is described in the *Book of the Dead* by such phrases as, "I germinate like the plants," "My flesh germinateth," "I exist, I exist, I live, I live, I germinate, I germinate," and "thy soul liveth, thy body germinateth by the command of Re."[35] The *sahu* was often portrayed as a mummy lying on a bier like the *khat*, but the two entities were quite different. The *sahu* is a body that has been transformed by acquiring a degree of knowledge, power, and glory, which the *khat* or physical body did not possess. The *sahu* is a "glorified" body that had become lasting and incorruptible even as the physical body itself might still decay. In its glorified state the *sahu* had the power to associate with the soul and converse with it. In this form the *sahu* may even ascend into heaven and dwell with the *sahu* of the gods and the righteous previously departed.[36] The idea of a glorified body found its way into later Christian thinking with the notion that the bodies of the deceased would one day be raised from the dead and rejoined with their souls to live eternally in heaven. The raised bodies would be perfected or glorified and live in this glorified state forever.

A third essential element of the human personality was the *ab*, literally the heart of a man. The heart was very important to a person's character and to one's chances for being judged a worthy soul, for the *ab* was the seat of a person's power of life and the fountain of good and evil thoughts.[37] The heart was the seat of the intellect. A good heart was incapable of not telling the truth, and the Egyptian deceased often had amulets buried with them to prevent the heart from betraying them during the last judgment when the deceased were required to swear that they had not performed certain evil acts. It was the heart as the seat of truth that was weighed against a single feather in the final judgment by Osiris to determine its truthfulness. If the heart was true, the deceased was pronounced *maet kheru* or "true of heart" and the judgment was rendered as positive, in which case the deceased was said to be "justified." If the judgment was negative, the heart of the deceased was thrown to the "Devourer of Hearts," a terrible beast with the head of a crocodile, the body of a lion, and the hind quarters of a hippopotamus that waited beside the scales of judgment to be fed. The monster ate the wanting heart on the spot whereupon the deceased suffered the most horrible of Egyptian fates, the second dying, in which the person ceased to exist forever. Egyptian theologians never conceived of a hell of eternal suffering. Evil persons simply ceased to exist.[38]

The perceived importance of the heart in this connection raises another issue. It is puzzling that a people so accustomed to embalming corpses, which required the removal of internal organs, failed to develop a more accurate biology of the human body. Egyptian physicians developed very sophisticated surgical techniques for treating skull fractures, to include means of lifting the crushed skull from the dura of the brain.[39] And yet they attributed no personality function to the brain whatsoever, locating the intellect in the heart instead. During embalming the brain case was entered through the nose with a long-handled, spoon-shaped instrument used to scoop out the soft tissue of the brain, which was then discarded. Egyptian physicians were also aware of pulse and fever but not of circulation of the blood. They believed that veins carried air and terminated not at the heart but at the anus.[40]

In addition to a human's natural and spiritual body, a person possessed an abstract personality or individuality endowed with all his physical, moral, and psychological characteristics. When a person was conceived, Egyptian theologians believed that the god Khnum fashioned the child upon a potter's wheel. At the same time Khnum fashioned an exact double or image of the child called the *ka*. Identical to the person in every way, the *ka* nonetheless had an independent existence. The *ka* could move about freely and even unite or separate itself from the body or even travel to and reside in heaven among the gods. The hieroglyph for *ka* is a pair of upraised arms and its meaning translates as image,

genius, double, character, and even mental attributes. The *ka* could dwell any place and it was common to place a statue of the deceased within the tomb to become the dwelling place of the *ka*. Just as the Egyptians believed that a god "dwelled" incarnate within a statue of himself so, too, might the *ka* of a man dwell within the statue of a person. In this regard the *ka* seems identical to the *sekhem* or image that dwelled within a statue.

From the very earliest time the tombs were equipped with a small chapel (the *ka* chapel) where the *ka* was visited and received offerings. On the wall of the chapel it was common to fashion a false door with a relief of the deceased walking through it toward the viewer. It was here that the *ka* priests or family visitors provided sustenance to the *ka*. The *ka* could consume food and in the Pyramid Age food and drink were placed daily before the *ka* for it to eat. The *ka* did not consume the food, of course, but was said to consume the essence or substance of it. The material remains were then eaten or sold by the priests. Here we find the first example, albeit in somewhat practical form, of the basic philosophical distinction between substance and accident that was so important to later Greek philosophy and that appeared in the Christian theology of the Eucharist, wherein the substance of the god's body and blood was said to be present and consumed by worshippers while the material accidents of bread and wine remained unchanged. The Egyptian idea that the spiritual body depended upon a constant supply of sepulchral offerings took hold during the early Pyramid Age. As the idea of resurrection spread to the common man by the Feudal Age, it was clear that such arrangements were neither practical nor possible so that from this time on the *ka* was said to sustain itself even more abstractly by consuming the essence of the portrayals of food and drink painted and carved on the tomb walls.[41]

The part of man that was believed to be eternal and to enjoy an eternal glorified existence in heaven was the *ba*, a word that literally translates as "sublime" or "noble" but whose theological meaning can be accurately rendered as "soul." The *ba* was not a mere quality. Although it dwelled in the *ka* and was, like the heart, the principle of animated life, it still possessed both form and substance. In form it was depicted as a small human-headed hawk that in many portrayals was shown hovering over the body or exiting from the mouth of the deceased. Portrayals depicting the soul leaving the body in the same manner can be found in early Christian art. The substance of the *ba* is less easily defined and is most commonly said to be "refined" or "ethereal,"[42] terms also used by the Greeks to describe the shades of people cast into Hades. The *ba* possessed an independent existence but was said to "become a soul" only after the body of the deceased had been revivified by prayer and ritual.[43] Once free, the *ba* could move about wherever it wished and could take upon itself any shape. It could

move freely between heaven and the *ka* in the tomb and it could revisit the body and reanimate and converse with it.[44] Along with the *ka*, the *ba* partook of the funerary offerings, and in the Pyramid Age it was thought that the *ba*'s continued existence depended upon its being sustained by food and drink. Later this belief was modified so that, like the *ka*, the *ba* could be sustained by the pictorial representations of sustenance carved on the tomb walls. Once given relief from the material realm by the death and reanimation of the corpse, the permanent dwelling place of the *ba* was in heaven where it would "mingle with the gods and become them."[45] Once more we encounter the idea that the soul "mingles" with the gods in a way strikingly similar to the Christian idea that the souls of the departed join with god and the angels. The *ba* in Heaven was a glorified soul who sits among the gods and eats what they eat, drinks what they drink so that "he thirsts not, he hungers not, nor is he sad." The deceased in Heaven wears the apparel of the gods, white linen and sandals, and "he goeth to the great lake in the midst of the Field of Peace whereon the great gods sit." He eats of the "bread of eternity" and drinks the "beer of everlastingness" and he is washed clean.[46]

It is important to stress that Egyptian theologians appear to have been the first people to conceive of the idea of a soul as an animating principle of human material existence that was, in itself, immaterial in substance and immortal in nature so that its existence persisted beyond the death of the material body. The idea of a soul was among the earliest theological concepts invented by the Egyptians appearing for the first time in written form during the Pyramid Age but having existed for at least a millennium before that in Egyptian religious thinking as contained in the Osiris myth. The idea of an immortal soul did not, however, characterize the theological thinking of any other major Near Eastern or Western culture of the ancient world. None of these cultures—Sumerian, Babylonian, Canaanite, Israelite, Persian, Iranian, Greek or Roman—developed the idea on their own, and none except the Greek and Roman cultures adopted it after contact with the Egyptian culture. Greek thinking about the soul during the Classical Age was, as Karen Armstrong has observed, likely to have derived from the philosophical system of Plato, which drew heavily upon the ancient idea that the material world was but a pale reflection of the divine world perceived by men as through a glass darkly.[47] It was not until the Christian era that the notion of an immortal soul was thoroughly incorporated into another theological system.

Another element of the human personality was the *khaibit* or shadow of the person, which may be compared to the *umbra* or shade of the Romans. Although the *khaibit* can be identified in the earliest Pyramid Texts, its specific role in personhood is not easily established.[48] As with other elements, the

khaibit had an independent existence and was free to move about, visiting the tomb at will and partaking of the funerary offerings like the *ka* and *ba*. Curiously, both men and gods possessed a *khaibit* and it was quite clear that it was associated with the soul and was always near it. Our understanding of Egyptian theology remains incomplete and the function of the *khaibit* remains mysterious. What is clear, however, is that Egyptian thinking about it and the other parts of the human personality was sufficiently abstract so as to be properly called philosophical and that Egyptian theologians must have spent long hours contemplating and discussing just what it was that made a human being human. It is intrinsically true as well that our understanding of their thinking on such abstract subjects is far less complete and less precise than theirs was at the time. While other cultures had their theologies, the depth, breadth, complexity, and level of abstraction of Egyptian religious thinking make it difficult to escape the impression that Egyptian theologians gave the world the first theology worthy of the name.

The *khu* of a person was the shining or translucent intangible casing of the body. The word itself can be translated as intelligence, shining one, or glorious, and, perhaps, aura, but it may be safely rendered as spirit as well. The Pyramid Texts tell that the *khu*'s of the gods lived with them in heaven and the *khu* of the deceased also made its way to heaven as soon as the prayers over the body rendered it animate again, enabling the *khu* to depart. The *khu* is a very mysterious entity and it is best to admit that our knowledge of Egyptian theology is insufficient to truly understand its nature or function. The same may be said of another part of the human personality, the *sekhem*. As Budge notes, the word may be rendered as power or form, "but it is very difficult to find any expression that will represent the Egyptian conception of the *sekhem*,"[49] except that it is always mentioned in connection with the soul.

We are on shaky ground indeed when we attempt to determine which of these elements of human nature possessed a priority of existence or importance in achieving eternal life. Egyptians appear to have believed that all the elements had to have been present for a complete human being to exist and when one was absent something less than a person was left. It was an old Babylonian idea later adopted by the Jews and Greeks that upon a person's death his defining substance, whatever it was, departed, leaving behind a partial or monstrous quasi-human who might continue to exist in some vague way. The Greek idea of a person's shade as being humanly incomplete parallels the type of deformed humans found in the Mesopotamian conception of the *etimmu* or ghost and those who dwelt in the Hebrew *Sheol*.[50] There seems to be no Egyptian equivalent of this idea. With no idea of a tormenting hell, Egyptian theologians could safely ignore what happened to people when they went to such terrible places. The

Egyptian emphasis on life after death led them of necessity to ask how this might be achieved. Egyptian theology preserved a role and function for each element of human personhood in the hereafter just as all the elements were required for a truly human life on earth. Even the body did not merely decay in either a physical or spiritual sense but was transformed into something else. The soul may be the primary entity that is eternal, but it is accompanied, supported, and facilitated by each element in the human personality in the process of becoming and remaining so. Whatever else Egyptian theological contemplation was, on the subject of the soul and its eternal life it was remarkably comprehensive.

The Feudal Age saw a comprehensive theology of resurrection and eternal life emerge from a beginning in the articulation of the ideals of the Osiris myth through to the application of the concepts of the Egyptian psychology of human personhood. This comprehensive theological formulation was accompanied by the expansion of the promise of Osiris and the new faith to include the common man. Once restricted to Egyptian kings, the hope of victory over death was now extended to include all Egyptians. Democratization was already evident in the Eleventh Dynasty where important ritual changes signaled the universalization of the Osiris theology. For the first time it became the regular custom to attach the word "justified" to the name of every deceased, suggesting that the deceased had successfully passed the last judgment and achieved immortality. In addition, the name Osiris was formally inserted as a title before the name of the deceased in all inscriptions, signifying that the deceased had "become one with god." The clearest sign that the former privileges of kings had been extended to the common man was the inclusion of divine symbols upon the coffin lids of ordinary people. Since the deceased was identified with Osiris who was a god, the coffins of the deceased bearing the visage of the corpse were now commonly ordained with the false beard of the pharaoh and the ureaus on the deceased's forehead, both ancient symbols of divinity.[51]

The old mortuary rituals where *ka* priests provided food and prayer offerings for the dead, characteristic of the Pyramid Age, had fallen into wide disuse replaced first by inscriptions of ritual prayer and food on the coffins of the deceased (the coffin texts) and, by the end of the Feudal Age, by the common practice of interring sacred prayer scrolls (the *Book of the Dead*) and magical amulets with the deceased. One of the most beautiful and complete of these scrolls, the Ani Papyrus, provided archaeologists with a vivid and comprehensive hieroglyphic portrayal of the key elements of the new Osiris theology. The Ani Papyrus dates from the New Kingdom when these scrolls were in wide use but it is much older, testifying to the millennium-long efforts of Egyptian theologians to flesh out the ideals of the Osiris myth with a conceptual explanation of how resurrection, judgment, and eternal life were to be achieved.[52]

How ancient that effort might have been is suggested by the fact that some parts of the Ani Papyrus refer to events and subjects that date to before the First Dynasty when the Osiris myth was already evident if only in its application to Egyptian kings. By the beginning of the New Kingdom, the Osiris theology was fully developed and widely accepted so that all the faithful knew "how the dead are raised up and with what body they come."

An Egyptian of Ani's time reading the *Book of the Dead* would have learned that his soul would undergo three separate judgments by the gods as an assessment of his moral worth to merit eternal life.[53] It is likely that these different versions of judgment were originally independent but over the centuries came to be assembled into a single portrayal of the final judgment.[54] The first judgment is explained in the Chapter of Entering the Hall of Truth in the *Book of the Dead*. The chapter explains what the soul can expect when it "is purged from all evil that he has done, and he beholds the face of the god." The deceased's soul begins by greeting the Great God and preparing to assert the soul's freedom from sin. Here we encounter what early archaeologists mistakenly called the First Confession. It must be understood that the term "confession" is inappropriate, for the soul is not confessing at all. Neither Egyptian ethics nor theology had yet developed the concept of personal sin that would come later. What the deceased is doing is testifying to his own character by swearing that he lived a proper ethical life while alive. The list of moral precepts to which the soul must swear is, nonetheless, quite impressive and testifies unambiguously to the depth and breadth of the Egyptian concern with individual and social ethics. By Egyptian standards the Decalogue of Moses is sparse indeed. The affirmation of the soul in the first of the three judgments is as follows.

Behold, I came to thee, I bring to thee righteousness and I expel for thee sin. I have committed no sin against the people. . . . I have not done evil in the place of truth. I knew no wrong. I did no evil thing. . . . I did not do that which the god abominates. I did not report evil of a servant to his master. I allowed no one to hunger. I caused no one to weep. I did not murder. I did not command to murder. I caused no man misery. I did not diminish food in the temples. I did not decrease the offerings of the gods. I did not take away the food-offerings of the dead. I did not commit adultery. I did not commit self-pollution in the pure precinct of my city-god. I did not diminish the grain measure. I did not diminish the span. I did not diminish the land measure. I did not load the weight of the balances. I did not deflect the index of the scales. I did not take milk from the mouth of the child. I did not drive away the cattle from their pasturage. I did not snare the fowl of the gods. I did not catch the fish in their pools. I did not hold back the water in its time. I did not dam the running water. I did not quench the fire in its time. I did not withhold the herds of the temple endowments. I did not interfere with the god in his payments.[55]

The list of correct ethical prohibitions is comprehensive. While there are a few items that refer to personal moral behavior and others dealing with proper ritual behavior, it is noteworthy that most of the precepts deal with proper *social* behavior. Thus one does not cheat one's neighbor by altering the scales or measures or take more than one's fair share of water during dry times. The Egyptians believed that ethics properly understood was at base a public social contract and was not to be confused with personal character or even law, which they recognized to be no guarantee of proper ethical behavior. In the First Judgment of the soul the importance of this view of ethics as social action and restraint is clearly reflected in the preponderance of precepts that exceed personal or ritual requirements.

The soul now passes into the presence of Osiris the Great Judge, who sits at the end of a grand hall accompanied by 42 gods, who assisted him in the judgment of the dead. The gods, each of which probably originally represented one of the 42 *nomes* or districts of ancient Egypt, are terrifying demons possessed of grotesque names like "Shadow Eater that Came out of the Cave" or "Blood-Eater that Came out of the Place of Execution." The soul calls out to each god in turn calling each by name and making a declaration of innocence of some misdeed. In this Second Confession which, again, is not really a confession but an affirmation of innocence, the soul once more swears to its high ethical character. In the Second Confession there appears to be a shift away from social ethics to considerations of personal character and only minor mention of ritual obligations although elements of all three are present. The soul testified to its personal character by such affirmations that "I did not speak lies, I did not make falsehood in the place of truth, I was not deaf to truthful words, I was not avaricious, my heart coveted not, my heart was not hasty, I did not multiply words in speaking, my voice was not overly loud, my mouth did not wag, I did not revile, and I was not an eavesdropper." Along the same lines the soul testified to its proper sexual conduct by affirming "I did not commit adultery with a woman, and I did not commit self-pollution." The Egyptian concern for social ethics is evident in the declarations of the soul that "I did not slay men, I did not rob, I did not steal, I did not rob one crying for his possessions, my fortune was not great but by my own property, I did not take away food, I did not stir up fear, I did not stir up strife and I did not diminish the grain measure." As regards ritual obligations, the soul swears that "I did not revile the king, I did not blaspheme the god, I did not slay the divine bull, I did not steal the temple endowment, I did not diminish the food in the temple, and I did not do an abomination of the gods." With these statements the soul affirms that it is worthy of being accepted into eternal life and says, "Behold, I come to you without sin, without evil, without wrong. . . . I live on righteousness, I feed

on the righteousness of my heart. I have done that which men say, and that wherewith the gods are content."[56]

The soul now moves closer to the end of the great hall where Osiris sits enthroned with Isis and Nephthys standing behind him. Along one side of the hall are arranged the nine gods of the Heliopolitan Ennead, headed by the sun god, an arrangement that indicates the solar origins of the judgment of the deceased but in which Osiris, not Re, has assumed the place of central importance.[57] At Osiris' feet are the scales of justice, "the balances of Re wherewith he weighs truth." The jackal-god Anubis operates the scales while Toth, the scribe of the gods, presides over the weighing of the heart with pen and writing palette in hand to record the verdict. Behind Toth crouches the monstrous Devourer of Hearts. In the Ani Papyrus, Renenet and Meskhenet, the two goddess of birth, stand contemplating the fate of the soul over which they had presided when the soul first came into the world. Standing at the entrance of the hall is the goddess "Truth, Daughter of Re," who ushers the newly arrived soul, Ani, into the hall.

Ani enters the hall with head bowed. At once Anubis calls for his heart represented by the hieroglyph of a small vase, which is placed upon the scale. A single white feather, the hieroglyph for truth, is placed upon the opposing balance. Slowly the scale moves from side to side seeking its center. It is at this dramatic moment that the soul pleads with his own heart not to betray him. "Oh my heart that came from my mother! Oh my heart belonging to my own being! Rise not up against me as a witness. . . . Be not hostile to me before the master of the balances. . . . Let not my name be of evil odor with the court, speak no lie against me in the presence of the god."[58] With this the scale stops showing Ani's heart and the feather of truth to be in balance. One cannot help but wonder whether it was this Egyptian portrayal of the final judgment with scales that produced the image found in the Old Testament that one had been weighed in the balance and been found not wanting. It is not unreasonable to surmise that the image of the judgment of Osiris made its way into Israelite culture along with much of Egyptian wisdom literature.

The soul having been weighed and found true, Toth announces the verdict to the council. "Hear ye this word in truth. I have judged the heart of Osiris Ani. His soul stands as a witness concerning him, his character is just by the great balances. No sin of his has been found." Here we see the joining of the deceased's name, Ani, with that of the god, Osiris, indicating that the soul and the god have in some mystical sense become one. All justified souls, then, become gods or at least god-like. The Nine Gods of the Ennead respond to Thoth's verdict with joy. "How good it is, this which comes forth from thy just mouth. Osiris Ani, the justified, witnesses. There is no sin of his, there is no evil of his

with us. . . . Let there be given to him the bread that cometh forth before Osiris, the domain that abideth in the field of offerings, like the Flowers of Horus." Ani is now led before Osiris by Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, who presents him to the Great God. "I come to thee, Osiris; I bring to thee Osiris Ani. His righteous heart comes forth from the balances and he has no sin in the sight of any god or goddess. Thoth has judged him in writing; the Nine Gods have spoken concerning him a very just testimony. Let there be given to him the bread and beer that come forth before Osiris-Wennofer like the Followers of Horus." Holding the hand of Horus Ani addresses Osiris. "Lo, I am before thee, Lord of The West. There is no sin in my body. . . . Let me be like the favorites who are in they following."[59] Ani kneels before the Great God and presents a table of offerings and is received into the kingdom of Osiris to live forever.

Once underway the inclusion of the common man in the hope of resurrection and eternal life revolutionized the practice of Egyptian religion. Thousands of shrines and temples were constructed to Osiris and the sacred temple to Osiris at Abydos, the mystical site of Osiris' burial, resurrection, and ascension was expanded to accommodate thousands of pilgrims who visited the site to obtain special blessings. The wealthy and powerful sought to be buried at Abydos, and the less well-off had the mummies of the deceased sent there to be blessed before interment elsewhere. The annual "passion play" portraying the death and resurrection of Osiris drew thousands of spectators. Throughout the land priests, scribes, undertakers, and craftsmen became rich through the sale of burial scrolls and magic amulets to be buried with the deceased and facilitate a proper judgment and resurrection. Within a few years the worship of Osiris had become the primary religion of the common man. Until the New Kingdom the official religion of the state had been the worship of the solar Re. During the Imperial Period Re was joined with Ptah and Amun to form a new trinity at the center of state worship. But outside the confines of official ritual the Egyptians worshipped the god that promised them eternal life and justice. Over the next fifteen hundred years, until displaced by Christianity, the worship of Osiris, Isis, and Horus gradually overwhelmed all other Egyptian cults until, by the third century B.C.E., Osiris had superseded even Re himself.

It may be difficult for people in the modern age to appreciate the attraction of Osiris for the ordinary Egyptian. For most people in modern times religion represents but one element of their lives. In ancient Egypt religion was central to a person's life as well as the life of the state, which remained a theocracy of sorts until the end. To be included in the hope of resurrection and eternal life must have excited the common man in ways we can only imagine. Egyptians believed for millennia that their kings lived beyond the grave. Now the common man might do so too. Centuries later Christians would greet the same

news of eternal life with great hope and call it "gospel," or good news. And good news it was for Egyptian and Christian alike. Life in the ancient world was often harsh and unjust and until Osiris there was no escape nor hope of justice. With Osiris came both, and this hope survived to become a central tenet of the major religion of Western civilization. The prospect of a judgment beyond the grave had a profound effect on Egyptian ethics, too, in that Osiris offered yet another incentive for man to behave properly toward his neighbor. It was no accident that the later Egyptian Wisdom Literature made reference to the need for humans to act ethically lest they be "weighed in the balance and found wanting."

The formalization and democratization of the Osiran theology marked the last great theological innovation of Egyptian thinkers and it would become, albeit more than a thousand years later, Egypt's greatest intellectual contribution to the culture of the West. By the middle of the New Kingdom (1552–1069 B.C.E.) the worship of Osiris had assumed paramount importance in the religious life of most Egyptians even as the official state religion worshiped the Ptah-Re-Amun trinity with Amun assuming the dominant position at the insistence of the Theban warrior pharaohs who created the Egyptian empire and wanted a national place for their local god. The national religious establishment created by Thutmose III now threatened the secular authority of the state itself. It was precisely this fear that had led Akhenaten to declare war upon this Egyptian pontificate and to weaken it. But the state priesthood had regained all it had lost under Akhenaten and more, so that by the end of the rule of the Rameside pharaohs (1069 B.C.E.), the Egyptian king yielded the scepter to the head of what had become a state church. The religious establishment led by the high priest of Amun imposed a sacerdotal state upon Lower Egypt while the pharaoh governed Upper Egypt from the Delta capital of Tanis. The sacerdotal state focused upon magic and ritual and in outward form took on the trappings of religious dignity and splendor in all aspects of its existence. It was during this time that some of the most impressive religious architecture in Egyptian history was constructed. Priestly garments and temple interiors were lavish and ritual observance dominated the day. In many ways it was not unlike the period of cathedral building in Europe prior to the Renaissance when priestly rule and public devotion coalesced in great public acts of faith expressed in material ways.

The sacerdotal state was the beginning of the end of Egyptian state religion, which became overly formalized, ritualistic, and intellectually ossified. With the exception of the common faith of Osiris, which continued to spread and remain a meaningful religious commitment for those who adhered to it, Egyptian religion lost its vitality and its inner power of development. The more its

priests clung to their rituals and prerogatives, the less able was the religion to make itself relevant to the everyday life of the ordinary Egyptian. The evidence of this gap was already present in the sacerdotal period when it became common to write the name of Osiris by means of the hieroglyph of the sun disk instead of the usual image of the eye of Horus.[60] The official importance of Amun in the state religion and the increasing unofficial importance of Osiris among the populace logically led to a decline in the importance of Re in religious observance. Osiris gradually absorbed Re until he became "the ruler who occupied the seat of Re," that is, Osiris had become the successor of Re. By the Ptolemaic period in the third century B.C.E. the worship of Re had all but disappeared, replaced by the new trinity of Orisis, Isis, and Horus.[61]

The decline in religious vitality paralleled a decline in other areas of Egyptian national life. It was probably during the sacerdotal period that Nubia, the most Egyptianized foreign territory, was lost to Egypt as a line of powerful kings emerged to direct its own national destiny. Egypt itself suffered through the Twenty-Second Dynasty (945–715 B.C.E.), a succession of eight Libyan mercenary kings who transformed Egypt into a military state and eventually destroyed the sacerdotal regime at Thebes by the tactic of appointing their sons as chief priests of the temple of Amun. While the Libyans paid lip-service to the worship of Amun, their true loyalties lay with the worship of Bastet, the godess of cats. When the Libyan dynasty was finally overthrown by the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (747–525 B.C.E.) of Ethiopian kings, the worship of Amun at Thebes was on its last legs. Before gaining its independence Nubia had been subjected to a millennium of Egyptian rule so that the Ethiopians had become more Egyptian than the Egyptians! The Ethiopian kings considered themselves the true heirs to the Egyptian religious tradition and the worship of Amun. When the Ethiopian king Piankhy conquered Egypt around 730 B.C.E., he took great care to spare the temples and shrines. He unified the country and took pains to attend the old religious services and present offerings to the old gods. Piankhy considered himself an orthodox Egyptian and treated the Egyptian dynasts with scorn.[62]

The Ethiopians set about reestablishing the old Egypt first by giving Egypt a political unity and then through religion, architecture, and art to rekindle Egypt's great past. They chose the Old Kingdom as the model of how things ought to be and for more than a century they supported programs of rebuilding and reanimating the character and ritual of ancient life.[63] In 663 B.C.E. Ethiopia stumbled into a war with Assurbanipal of Assyria, whose armies captured Thebes and laid waste the Theban temples. The Ethiopians retreated to their homeland and never returned to Egypt. With their departure the great Amun of Thebes lost his place in the Egyptian state religion and reverted to his

previous stature as a local god never to rise again. Within a decade a new native Egyptian dynasty, the twenty-sixth (660–525 B.C.E.) arose under Psammetichus I with its capital at Sais in the Delta. The archaizing tendency that had begun under the Ethiopians was continued with great success under the 26th Dynasty and many of the forms and practices of the Old Kingdom were rekindled. During this time the Osiris faith retained its vitality and attractiveness to the common man unhindered by state religious policies. Underneath it all, however, Egypt was weak and the kings of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty were forced to rely upon Greek mercenaries to garrison their frontier fortresses. Egypt's last days as an independent country were coming to an end. In 525 B.C.E., the armies of the Persian king Cambyses II reached Egypt's borders. After sporadic resistance, Egypt was overwhelmed. But apart from stationing their own troops in Egypt and levying an imperial tax, the Persians made no attempt to change the institutions of the country and did not interfere in Egyptian religious life. The influence and popularity of Osiris worship continued as did the decline of both Re and Amun. By the time Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 B.C.E., the worship of Re and Amun was almost nonexistent while Osiris, Isis, and Horus, were firmly established as the trinitarian god.

Alexander's conquest brought Egypt into its first sustained contact with the West and served as the initial mechanism for the transmission of Egyptian theological ideas into the theologies of the West. As we shall see in the next chapter, both Greek and Roman religious traditions were fundamentally influenced by the theological principles associated with the worship of Osiris whose cult was now more widespread and influential than it had ever been in its history. The Osiran theological principles that were passed to the West were precisely those mentioned at the start of this chapter: (1) the belief in a single god expressed in trinitarian form; (2) a cosmology in which all things have a place that can be comprehended by humans; (3) the belief in an immortal soul; (4) the belief in the resurrection of the dead and a life beyond the grave; (5) the belief in a final judgment of the quality of a man's ethical life as a requirement for achieving (6) an eternal life beyond death. *It is important to understand that none of these ideas had yet made their appearance in any other theology of the West or the Near East.* While the theology of the Israelites had by this time incorporated much of Egyptian thinking into the way it viewed ethics, Judaism then (and now) still did not incorporate any of the principles of the Osiris theology. The point is that whenever we discover any of the Osiris theological principles reflected in the theologies of the West, there is no logical source for them except Egypt. Alexander's conquest of Egypt set the historical stage for a theological revolution in the West, one whose influence is still felt more than two thousand years later.

5

Jesus and the Christian Osiris

In the spring of 334 B.C.E., Alexander the Great crossed the Hellespont in search of glory and plunder in his war against the empire of Persia. In May he conquered the satraps of modern Turkey and Lebanon, and in that autumn he defeated Darius at the battle of Issus. With this victory the whole of the western Persian empire fell into Alexander's hands. Alexander turned south and marched down the Mediterranean coast breaking the resistance of the city-states of coastal Palestine until in the autumn of the following year he crossed the Nile and entered Egypt. The Persian satrap Amyntas handed over his authority to the Macedonian king without resistance.[1] That same year the Oracle of Amun proclaimed Alexander the new Master of the Universe and three hundred years of Greek rule over Egypt began. Alexander was dead within a decade, precipitating a struggle for succession among his generals that fractured the empire into three realms. Egypt and the Mediterranean coastal states as far north as Ionia fell under the control of the Ptolemies who, despite their ups and downs, ruled Egypt for three hundred years until the last Ptolemaic queen, Cleopatra, lost the country to Roman ambitions in 30 B.C.E.

The period of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt from 322 to 30 B.C.E. is important to this study because it was during this time that the worship of Osiris completely eclipsed the worship of Amun-Re, becoming for the first time in Egyptian history the official state religion. It was during this same period that personal pietism and a recognition of sin emerged as major characteristics of the Osiran faith, completing the linkage between the individual and a personal god that

had begun almost a millennium earlier. It was a time, too, when Osiris, always the god of the dead, replaced Re as a god of the living, the deity to whom people prayed for divine intercession in human affairs. During this time Horus, the son of Osiris, came to be seen as a primary intermediary between Osiris and men in pleading their cases to his father. At the same time Isis became a central figure in the Osiris cult, emerging as a powerful goddess to be worshipped in her own right. By the end of the Ptolemaic period the Egyptians had given the world the concept of a holy family with Osiris as the father, Horus as the son, and Isis as the mother, all to be worshipped either individually—for they all were seen to promise eternal life—or together in the form of a new trinity. Among the most amazing and important events of the Ptolemaic period was the installation of the Egyptian Osiris trinity as the official religion of a state ruled by Macedonian Greeks, with the result that the cult of Isis spread throughout the Mediterranean world becoming the most popular religion of the age. The cult of Isis, Osiris, and Horus was transmitted to Rome where by the time of Christ it had become the most popular religious faith of the average Roman and the soldiery. The period of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt succeeded, albeit by accident, in preserving and reinvigorating the four-thousand-year-old Egyptian religious tradition and passing it on to the West where it took strong root and flourishes to this day.

Egypt under Greek rule retained her identity until the end of the Ptolemaic period even as her fate became increasingly bound up with that of the Western powers. The problem faced by Ptolemy was how to govern such a large country as Egypt with a small number of Greeks. Greek mercenaries had been living in Egypt for more than two hundred years before Alexander, and Greek traders and immigrants were not an uncommon sight. But Egypt was a country of between seven and nine million people,[2] while the number of Greeks living there during the Ptolemaic period probably never exceeded 500,000.[3] At the time Ptolemy I (322–283 B.C.E.) assumed control of Egypt, the number of Greeks was considerably less. Ptolemy faced the same problem that the Babylonians, Persians, and Alexander had faced in their respective imperial realms and solved it the same way, by leaving the existing politico-social system intact and imposing upon it a new ruling class. Ptolemy retained the old pharaonic system where all land and resources were owned by the sovereign. Ptolemy ruled Egypt as his own property, a personal monopoly governed in his name by a horde of bureaucrats and an additional army of priests, both resting upon the broad base of the Egyptian peasantry.[4] For the vast majority of Egyptians life under the Greeks remained very much the same as it had always been, including the pattern of their religious practice.

The Egyptian bureaucracy and priesthood remained largely unchanged under Ptolemy I except that the vast estates of the priests were now perceived as belonging to the Greek king and not pharaoh. The vast governmental infrastructure, including the legal system, was retained. Ptolemy understood, as Alexander had learned through hard experience, that one could not govern a multicultural empire with the same set of laws.[5] Accordingly, Egyptian law continued to apply to Egyptians while Greek law applied to Greeks. Egyptians had their own judges, courts, and legal procedures that were very different from those that dealt with the Greeks. While Greeks might hold key appointments to keep the system running smoothly, in fact, the Ptolemies were no less dependent upon the old Egyptian bureaucrats and priests to keep the system operating than had been the pharaohs. To make certain that the two systems ran in the same direction, Ptolemy created a national council comprised of Egyptian priests, high-ranking bureaucrats, and his own advisors to work out any problems of jurisdiction and authority.[6] The power of the traditional priesthood was also reflected in its retention of the traditional power of asylum granted to the temples. Since time immemorial mistreated Egyptian workers had refused to work as a means of protesting unjust working conditions, the world's first labor strikes. When punishment was threatened, these strikers could seek asylum in the temples wherein they were beyond the reach of the public authorities. At first Ptolemy curtailed this power of the Egyptian priests but soon relented. Disputes between Greek overseers and Egyptian workers frequently came to involve priests, whom the common man saw as their protectors with the result that the Egyptian priesthood retained the respect it had possessed for generations in the eyes of the Egyptian citizenry.

Under the Ptolemies Egypt thrived. Greek entrepreneurs stimulated trade with the outside world, requiring Egyptian agriculture to produce surpluses for export around the Mediterranean. Although iron weapons had been used in Egypt for centuries, it was the Greeks who introduced iron agricultural implements to the Egyptian economy for the first time.[7] The Greeks also introduced a money economy on the Persian model, replacing the old in-kind payment system. Ptolemy himself took a direct interest in the export of papyrus, which became the most commonly used writing material in the Mediterranean world. Egypt herself must have been among the best customers. At one point the Library at Alexandria alone had 700,000 scrolls in its possession.[8]

The Ptolemies controlled the coastal city-states all along the Mediterranean littoral north to Ionia. These states became key trading ports with the result that the Ptolemies constructed a large navy that controlled the Mediterranean from Ionia and Phoenicia to the Aegean and as far west as Carthage and Sicily. These northern coastal ports were also the termini for the overland trade with

Syria, Iran, India, and for the silk route. The Nile also provided Egypt with a safe and exclusive water route to Africa and the gold fields. To sustain the army Ptolemy needed high-quality trained soldiers, the famed Macedonian hoplites, that could be obtained in Greece but at a high price. Ptolemy enticed many Greek recruits into military service with the promise of land grants. In this manner the Ptolemies managed to meet their military manpower requirements for the next two centuries. Under these buoyant economic conditions Alexandria became a world-class city and center of trade, science, and learning as well as the capital city of Egypt. Within a century of its founding Alexandria was the greatest city of the known world, although Rome later surpassed it. By the time of Augustus what had begun as a small port settlement had a population of perhaps one million.[9]

The socio-economic system imposed by Ptolemy I worked well for about a hundred years until it succumbed to the pressure of Egyptian numbers and the inertia of ancient Egyptian habits and practices. The number of Greeks was never sufficiently large to govern Egypt without a heavy reliance upon Egyptian priests and officials and this reliance only increased as the economy and society became more complex. Greeks preferred to live in Alexandria or the handful of urban settlements, leaving life in the vast rural hinterland and farming estates in the hands of Egyptian officials. The gradual reencroachment of Egyptian practices was already evident in 217 B.C.E. when Ptolemy IV met Antiochus III at Raphia with an army of hoplites comprised mostly of native Egyptians and carried the day. The Greek population of Egypt could no longer provide the military manpower requirements to defend the country and was now dependent upon Egyptian soldiers to keep Egypt safe. Not surprisingly, the battle of Raphia marks the beginning of a nationalist revival in Egypt and a loosening of Greek controls. Official records show that during this time, land grants to Greeks almost came to a stop, replaced with grants to Egyptians or joint Egyptian-Greek tenants. Intermarriage increased, and even the Greek language gave way to barbarizing influences until by the end of the period the official language of Egypt was once again Egyptian heavily influenced by Egyptianized versions of Greek words. Greeks took to the custom of embalming their dead, and the ancient practice of brother-sister marriage, always rare and once confined only to Egyptian royalty, became so common among Greeks as to be embarrassing.[10] So thoroughly had Egyptian culture reasserted itself that by the end of the Ptolemaic period Greeks who had graduated from the gymnasium, that most Greek of all social institutions, marked their graduation with oaths to Egyptian gods![11]

But nowhere was the evidence of Egyptianization clearer than under Ptolemy V, who by 195 B.C.E. had managed to lose much of the old Ptolemaic em-

pire to Antiochus so as to separate Egypt from the rest of the Greek world. Egypt now turned inward with the result that the Greek kings began to think of themselves as Egyptian pharaohs. Ptolemy V, the once proud heir of powerful Macedonian kings, had himself crowned at Memphis in the manner of the pharaohs by Egyptian priests. The kings who followed spent fortunes restoring the old Egyptian temples and built new temples to the old gods at Dendera, Edfu, Kom, Ombo, and Philae even as they took for themselves the traditional royal Egyptian titulature of the pharaohs and spent many of their days in the palace at Memphis. Any pretense of worship of the Greek gods was abandoned and the traditional priesthood once more regained its exalted position as purveyor of the official state religion. Alongside this official worship, as it had been for millennia, the worship of Osiris had sustained itself and become even more popular. When Caesar landed in Egypt, he found a priesthood that was as powerful as it had ever been in the last thousand years and an Osiran faith that was more vigorous than ever. It was a priesthood that was doing what it had always done, acting as a bulwark against the encroachment of foreign religions and influences of the invaders. The Hellenization of Egypt, that great ideal of Alexander and Ptolemy, had failed miserably. When all is said and done, it seems beyond question that the gods, theology, and philosophical ideas of the Greeks made but scant impression upon the Egyptians whom the Greeks governed for three centuries. What had begun as a Greek ruling class in the end had been swallowed up by Egyptian culture so thoroughly that even the descendants of the first Greek kings went to their graves believing that only an Egyptian god, Osiris, could save them from the dust.

The survival of traditional Egyptian theology and religious practice during the Hellenistic period in Egypt was due to a curious turn of events brought about by Ptolemy I himself. From Ionia to Libya the Greek king ruled over an empire of polyglot peoples who had little in common save the presence of Greek garrisons and troops to keep them in line. Within Egypt itself the disparities of Greek and Egyptian culture posed a genuine threat to the Greek ability to govern peacefully. Ptolemy I may have been influenced by Alexander's thinking in trying to come to grips with the same problem when the latter sought to use Greek culture—the things of the *Hellenes*, thus, Hellenism—to bind his multicultural empire together. Ptolemy hit upon the idea of creating a common deity that all could worship and making it the official god and religion of the imperial realm. Thus was born Serapis.

Even before Alexander's time there had been Greek colonies in Egypt comprised of mercenaries and merchants in the service of the Egyptian king. One of the largest of these colonies was at Memphis. The Greeks in Memphis came into contact with the flourishing funerary cult of the Osirified sacred Apis bull

worshipped under the Egyptian name of *Usar-Hape*. The theology of *Usar-Hape* was identical to that of the Osiris faith and the Memphis cult was but a local variant of the worship of Osiris wherein local gods (Apis) were joined with the great god (Osiris) to raise the prestige of the local god. The Greek community in Memphis adopted the Egyptian Osiris as their own god, giving him the Greek name *Osorapis*, a combination of Osiris and Apis.[12] The other deities of the Osiran circle, especially Isis, Horus, and Anubis, were added to the worship of Osorapis. By the time of Ptolemy I, Greek worship of the cult of Osorapis was well established and a large temple had been built in Memphis as the site of his worship.[13] After a visit to Memphis, Ptolemy I chose Osorapis, the Greek form of Osiris, as the common god for the peoples of his empire.

Ptolemy chose a Greek, one Timotheus, and an Egyptian, the infamous Manetho, as theological representatives of each nationality to write the theology attributed to the new national god. Manetho must have wielded the greater influence in this task since the theology of the new god was indistinguishable in its fundamentals from the theology of the Osiran faith, thereby making the official state god of the Ptolemies a thinly disguised copy of the traditional Egyptian Osiris. The Osiran theology of resurrection, eternal life, and a judgment beyond the grave, beliefs already more than two millennia old in Egyptian theology, were attributed to the new national god of the Greeks. Ptolemy gave the new god the name of Serapis and ordered that a statue of him be manufactured. The statue was fashioned by the Greek craftsmen of Sinope on the northern shore of modern Turkey and transported to Alexandria where a new temple, the Serapeum, was constructed for it by the architect Parmeniscus. Later, under Ptolemy III, another larger and more magnificent temple was built. Serapis appeared in the typical form of a Greek god. Seated upon a throne with luxuriant curly hair and a long beard and dressed in a cloak of Greek fashion, Serapis was represented leaning on a long staff which he held in his left hand, while his right hand rested upon a triple-headed Cerberus lying at his feet.[14] The official language of Serapis' liturgy was Greek, although we know that it was written mostly by Manetho,[15] and we may safely surmise that when the liturgy was pronounced in the Egyptian temples it was done in Egyptian. To the Egyptian mind the new god was not new at all but the old familiar Osiris who had always comforted Egyptians with the promise of resurrection and eternal life. In his effort to find a symbol of common loyalty for Egyptians and Greeks, Ptolemy I had established Osiris and his Egyptian theology, albeit in Greek form, as the official deity and religion of the empire. Within a few years a theology that had remained intact but confined to the bor-

ders of Egypt for more than two millennia spread beyond Egypt to the entire Mediterranean world, bringing to it radically new theological ideas.

Isis was now officially established as the consort of Serapis and her cult spread more rapidly and even farther abroad than the cult of Serapis himself. The worship of Isis, who later became the embodiment of the promises of resurrection and eternal life, eventually eclipsed the worship of Serapis and even Osiris himself. Within Egypt the theological developments that had been emerging for a millennium now came to fruition. Osiris, originally the god of the dead, had finally become a god of the living. No longer was Osiris concerned only with the world of the deceased. Now it was Osiris to whom Egyptians offered their prayers for intercession in the affairs of this world.[16] The expansion of the cult of Osiris with its promise of eternal life superseded the worship of Re himself. The personality of the solar Re became more and more absorbed by Osiris until the powers of Re were completely identified with Osiris. Even the name of Osiris was now written within the hieroglyph of the sun disk instead of the usual image of the eye of Horus.[17] In the Ptolemaic period the worship of Re almost disappeared. This, of course, represented the Egyptian tendency toward monotheism evident in Egyptian theology from the beginning even as it was expressed in different forms at different times. Osiris, Isis, and Horus were now one god in trinitarian form, who possessed the responsibility and power to affect men's lives both while they lived and after they died. The old distinction between man living and dead was abandoned in favor of a singular human existence shared by all men and overseen by a single god at all times. By the end of the Ptolemaic period the monotheistic tendencies of Egyptian religion had fully developed into a genuine monotheism albeit in trinitarian form.

Horus, too, underwent an elevation in status and power and a change in function. Horus, the son of god, became more than the good son, the epitome of filial devotion that he had always been in the original Osiris myth. Now that Osiris was the god of the living and could be petitioned by the faithful for help in dealing with the cares of this world, Horus acquired the position of intermediary and intercessor with the godhead, his father Osiris, on behalf of the "children of men."[18] It was Horus who, in the original myth, led the deceased into the presence of his father and urged justice for all "who are true of voice." The idea of the son of god interceding with his father, the godhead, on behalf of the deceased was a new idea in Egyptian theology and was a consequence of the transformation of Osiris into a god of the living. The notion that the common man had a "friend at court" must have been terribly attractive to the average Egyptian, and one can easily imagine him praying to Horus urging his intercession on the deceased's behalf. Christians regularly pray to the son of god for

help in influencing the will of god the father, making the analogy of Horus with Jesus difficult to avoid.

Among the most important developments of Egyptian religion during the Ptolemaic period was the reemergence of the idea that man could achieve a personal relationship with god and that personal piety was an important element in the moral worthiness of the individual. As early as the twelfth century B.C.E. Egyptian theologians had arrived at the conclusion that Re was concerned with all his creatures, no matter how small. By the ninth century this idea has been extended to include the need for man to develop a devotional spirit based in a personal relationship with god. These ideas influenced the broader ethical strains of political and social justice that emerged at the end of the Feudal Age so that personal piety and social ethics were now joined as functions of one another. The result, Breasted notes, "culminated in the profoundest expression of the devotional religious spirit ever attained by the men of Egypt."[19] God and man were now joined in the achievement of moral development in this life. God looked over his flock and expected justice, mercy, and compassion of all men. A prayer written by a scribe of Thebes at this time expressed this sense of moral connectivity.

> Who cometh to the silent, who saveth the poor, who giveth breath to every one he loveth, give to me thy hand. Save me, shine upon me, for thou makest my sustenance. Thou art the sole god, there is no other. Even Re, who dawneth in the sky, Autum maker of men, who heareth the prayers of him who calls to him, who saveth a man from the haughty, who bringeth the Nile for him who is among them, who leadeth . . . for all men, when he riseth the people live. Their hearts live when they see him, who giveth breath to him who is the egg, who maketh the people and the birds to live, who supplieth the needs of the mice in their holes, the worms and insects likewise.[20]

For the first time in Egyptian thought the human conscience was clearly focused and fully emancipated. The moral equation was now complete and prayer became a form of inner revelation, a personal experience through which man reaches and understands what god wishes him to do so that he might become a good person.

It is obvious that an emphasis upon personal piety and prayer as the means of individual theological and moral development could serve to weaken the power and influence of the Egyptian national priesthood that had been established under Thutmose III and had by the tenth century B.C.E. achieved great power over the governmental apparatus. The movement toward personal piety and individual conscience had been restrained by the power of the Egyptian vatican as it imposed a formalistic sacerdotalism upon Egypt that lasted until the coming of the Ptolemies. The idea, however, did not die, and in the tenth

century we find it again, this time in secular writings, by one Amenemope. The *Wisdom of Amenemope* was a treatise on ethics and moral development written by an Egyptian wise man and falls within the two millennia-long tradition of Egyptian "Wisdom Literature." Where others argued that personal piety was virtuous because of the fear of death and postmortem judgment, Amenemope suggested that the consciousness of god and the relationship that man established with god through his conscience and inner piety was decisive in itself for the development of moral worthiness. Amenemope expands further on other ethical themes such as the uncertainty of life, the perishability of worldly goods, and the need to lead a good life as an end in itself. For Amenemope, the inner voice that man hears in prayer is his conscience and listening to it is essential to living a morally worthy life. The empty ritual, magic, and ceremony that marked the Egyptian sacerdotal state were of little value to the development of one's moral conscience.[21]

The widespread acceptance of the idea of individual conscience achieved through personal piety would have to await the end of the sacerdotal state during the Ptolemaic period. In the meantime Amenemope's ideas spread beyond Egypt where they found acceptance in Israel. The *Wisdom of Amenemope*, we can be fairly certain, was translated into Hebrew early on, most probably before the Bible itself was compiled,[22] and its main themes are clearly reflected in the famous Hebrew work the *Book of Proverbs*. It seems likely that while the idea of individual conscience remained unexploited in Egypt for almost a millennium, it may have affected the development of ethical thinking among the Jews of Israel during that time. It is also likely that it was the stimulus of these ideas, along with the independent contributions of Jewish thinkers, that provided the impetus for Jews to move away from their traditional Mosaic apodictic concept of ethical responsibility toward one that was more casuistic in nature.

The adoption by Ptolemy I of a native Egyptian religion, albeit in Greek form, as the official religion of the empire had the effect of breaking the institutional power of the Egyptian sacerdotal priesthood of Amun-Re and focusing religious worship upon the theological doctrines identified with Osiris. At the same time the ethical thinking of Greek philosophy was given full sway with the consequence that when the Egyptian priesthood regained its power a century later, there was no turning back to the sterile ritualistic expressions that had come to characterize Egyptian religious practices over the previous centuries. Instead the priests abandoned Re and affirmed Osiris as the one true god and endorsed his theology! The idea of personal piety as the means to a life of moral worth made most sense within the context of the Osiran doctrines of resurrection and judgment, and the old ideas burst forth with new life. The for-

malization of the Egyptian religion under Ptolemy provoked a widespread turning toward personal piety that soon spread all over the Hellenistic world and "had implications of world-historical importance."[23]

The cult of Isis, who had now come to be seen as the goddess most responsible for resurrection and ensuring a fair judgment, spread quickly. The attraction of this old theology in new form can be explained on two grounds. First, the "new" religion possessed the power to do what no Greek or Roman religion of the time could do—the power to console. The gods of the Romans and Greeks, as well as those of the other cultures of the Near East, promised man nothing. The gods did as they wished with men with little regard for justice, mercy, or compassion. Human fate was completely out of human hands. Isis, by contrast, promised life eternal and a fair judgment of the accounting of men's moral lives as the way to achieve it. To be sure, man often was forced to endure injustice in this life. But even the lowest peasant or craftsman could hope that one day justice would be done for him. Just as Osiris had comforted the lowest of Egypt for millennia with these same promises, now it was Isis who promised justice and eternal life to the peoples of the Mediterranean. Second, the ability to establish a relationship with god and to guide one's life by the insights learned through prayer appealed strongly to the Greek and Roman sense of both personal and social ethics. For in the end, personal piety meant that man was ultimately responsible for his own moral fate and, by implication, the good or injustice of a society was the proper work of man. The fact that eternal life required a life of ethical conduct on this earth was extremely popular with Greek philosophers and Roman ethicists, who had always argued that proper conduct was vital to man's human development. It was, then, the idea of a personal god and man's relationship with him when tied to the idea of an afterlife and a fair ethical judgment beyond the grave, that was so appealing to the Greek and Roman world. The power to console supported man's need to hope and together they gave life on this earth meaning, something that no other religion of the day could do. When this idea was expressed in the form of another "new" creed, Christianity, it conquered the Western world.

There is evidence that the first worship of Isis outside of Egypt preceded its formal adoption by Ptolemy I. The first trace of Egyptian gods being worshiped in Greece is found near the end of the fourth century B.C.E. in Pireaus, where Egyptian traders visiting Greece on business established a small shrine to Isis. Other mention of the worship of Isis in Aegean towns occurs in the first years of the reign of Ptolemy I.[24] By the fourth century B.C.E. Athens itself was the center of the worship of Egyptian religion in Greece, where many public and private shrines to Isis were established. The coins of Malta in the second and first century B.C.E. bear the figures of Isis and Osiris, suggesting that the

worship of these gods was known on that Mediterranean island at this time.[25] The Ptolemaic connection with Sicily introduced the worship of Isis there early on. From there it spread to the other Hellenized cities of southern Italy. Monuments in the city of Catania in Sicily suggest that Catania may have been the center of Isis worship on the island. There were many temples to Isis in southern Italy, and by the second century B.C.E. these temples could be found in such important cities as Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Petueoli, suggesting that the worship of Isis was at least as common as that of native Italian gods.[26] A group of Isis' priests was installed in Rome during the time of Sulla. Despite attempts to repress the cult, it continued its spread in Rome and beyond. Augustus, for example, tried to remove the cult from Rome because Isis had been the goddess of his enemy, Cleopatra. In 19 C.E. Tiberius deported the Isis priesthood from Rome due to some scandal, but the cult was not hindered elsewhere in the empire where its spread continued. From the time of Claudius onward, Isis was regarded as the supreme foreign god of Rome, and Caligula, Domitian, and Caracalla all built magnificent temples to her. Isis became a particular favorite of Roman soldiers, who carried her cult and established temples to her to the edge of the empire. Temples to Isis established by the legions of Rome have been found in the Danube region, Germany, and along Hadrian's Wall in Britain.[27] In Alexandria, the center of Isis worship in the Greek world, there were no fewer than 42 temples dedicated to her worship.[28] Unlike the gods of other nations, whose formal worship was confined to specified feast days throughout the year, Isis was the only god of the ancient world to require *daily* worship rituals. Daily worship of the gods was an ancient Egyptian practice and its continuation in the form of daily worship of Isis suggests strongly that the substance of the ritual remained Egyptian and had not become Hellenized. Even the ritual and myth remained unchanged[29] through Roman times. It seems correct to say that while other gods came and went in fashion, only the worship of Isis-Osiris persisted and flourished until the very end of paganism itself.[30]

The vital consequence, then, of the three-century-long Ptolemaic rule of Egypt was not only the preservation of the ancient Egyptian theology associated with Osiris, Isis, and Horus, but the establishment of that theology as the official religion of Egypt and the Ptolemaic empire. Freed after a millennium from the stranglehold of sacerdotalism, Egyptian theology was reinvigorated under the Ptolemies. The long-repressed doctrine of piety based in the individual's personal relationship with a just and caring god reemerged and strongly influenced ethical thinking even as it was added to the ancient promises of resurrection, judgment, and eternal life that were associated with the worship of Osiris-Isis. The attraction of this theological perspective for both Romans and

Greeks was its promise of consolation, ethical guidance, and the eventual reward of eternal life, elements missing in the native religions of the West. The Isis theology spread throughout the Hellenistic and then the Roman world, exposing large populations to the ancient Egyptian faith for the first time. So widespread and so popular was the cult of Isis by the first century B.C.E. that anyone alive in Palestine and almost anywhere else in the West at that time could hardly have been unaware of its existence, its temples, its rituals, and, perhaps most important, its theological principles. This would have included, of course, that small band of Jewish reformers who became the world's first Christians.

There is no evidence of the presence or worship of Isis and Horus in Palestine until the sixth century B.C.E.[31] when it was probably brought there by Egyptian soldiers and merchants. It might be well to remind ourselves that the primary cultural influence on Palestine for the previous thousand years was Egyptian so that it is not surprising that some of the major Egyptian theological ideas should been well known in Palestine. We have already seen that from the earliest times Egyptian Wisdom Literature influenced Hebrew thought. Even so, there is no evidence that Isis was worshipped by Jews or that Jews converted to her cult in any numbers. Indeed, Cerny has noted that there is not a single documented instance where an Egyptian god ever was adopted by the native Jewish population.[32] But that is not the point. It remains a reasonable assumption that the worship of Isis and her theology was known within Palestine during this time and this seems quite plausible on the face of it. Jewish religious writings of the time, it will be recalled, are full of references to the *gillulim*, which Yahuda has shown refers to a fear of the "enwrapped one," that is, the embalmed corpse of Osiris. Running through these writings, most particularly in Ezekiel, the *gillulim* are referred to in the most opprobrious terms, leading Yahuda to conclude that it was precisely the fear of the idolatry of Osiris that was so fiercely combated during these periods of Jewish history.[33] It might be reasonably concluded, then, that by the time of Christ the Egyptian theology of a single god, an immortal soul, resurrection, judgment beyond the grave, and eternal life, all ideas associated with the worship of Osiris for more than two thousand years and now associated with the worship of Isis, was clearly in evidence in Roman Palestine and worshipped there by more people, Greeks and Romans, than perhaps had ever been the case.

Ptolemy I acquired Judea in 301 B.C.E. along with the cross-current of religious influences and beliefs that swirled through Israel at this time. Jews were a minority within Palestine, and in Samaria and the north Jews were hardly present at all. Sargon II of Assyria had carried off the more prosperous citizens of the area in 721 B.C.E., the famed "lost tribes" of Israel, leaving the area under-

populated. What worshippers of Yahweh were left there were quickly submerged in a tide of Canaanite immigration and intermarriage. These same forces affected Judah as well, although not to the same degree. Two hundred years after Sargon the Babylonian king Nebuchadressar II destroyed Judea and carried off its population into Babylonian exile.[34] Only a small number of these exiles returned a half century later and found that many of those left behind had had their faith diluted by pagan practices. The returning Jewish community under the influence of Ezra and Nehemiah carried out a reform of Judaism by codifying its legal and religious tenets, which helped reestablish Judaism in the south as a stable religious entity. By the time of Ptolemy I, Samaria had reverted to paganism with little evidence of Jewish influence remaining and Judaism was largely confined to the south. Elsewhere Palestine was thoroughly pagan.[35]

Judaism also had to confront the seductive influence of Hellenism that was sweeping the Mediterranean world; Hellenism and Judaism were doctrinally at odds. The "gods" of Hellenism could be reached through reason while the god of the Jews could only be approached by revelation, ritual, and the study of the torah. Moreover, the reasonable "god" of the Greek philosophers—Aristotle's Unmoved Mover—was, like Newton's Master Clockmaker, scarcely relevant to human affairs whereas the god of the Jews was deeply involved in the moral life of men. Despite the efforts of such Jewish Hellenists as Philo Judeaus of Alexandria (30 B.C.E. to 45 C.E.), the fundamental tension between the two perspectives remained.[36] Hellenism spread quickly through Palestine but remained mostly confined to the towns. Even in Galilee, otherwise a hotbed of paganism and, a century later, the locus of a fundamentalist form of Judaism, Hellenism strongly established itself in the cities and towns. With Hellenism came the official state religion of the Ptolemies, with the effect that the cult of Isis and Osiris must have been as well established in Galilee as it was in the other cities of Palestine.

The cultural intercourse between Egypt and Israel had been continuous for more than a millennium, and it continued without interruption during the time of the Ptolemies. As early as the fifth century B.C.E., a group of Jews, who had originally been mercenaries in pharaoh's armies, settled in Elephantine. They established a temple to Yahweh whom they worshipped along with the goddesses Aschima and Anat, they swore by the Egyptian gods, and they spoke Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Persian empire.[37] A large colony of Jews was also established at Memphis. Under Ptolemy I Jews came to Egypt in large numbers and some were granted the privileges of Greeks. We hear of Jewish-Egyptian marriages during this time and there were Jewish generals and officers in the military service of the king.[38] By the first century Alexandria

possessed the largest Jewish colony outside of Palestine and it may have numbered almost a million. So frequent was the contact between Hellenes and Jews that Hebrew fell into disuse for all but liturgical purposes and was replaced by Greek and Aramaic.[39]

Within Israel itself the Jews were besieged by corrosive cultural influences that threatened to undermine their religion. Jews in Asia Minor and Persia, the descendants of those who did not return after the Babylonian Exile, began to adopt pagan rituals and other gods. Given the rich pagan mix of the population, it was not surprising that the same thing occurred on some scale within Israel itself. This was of course Hellenistic syncretism at its best. But it also demonstrated that Jewish resistance to pagan ideas and practices was not strong within Israel. Among the intelligentsia, resistance to Hellenism remained strong and the fight against it in intellectual circles continued. The result, as Tarn has noted, was a paradox. "Judaism by the first century was offering the strange spectacle of a system which refused to accept Greek thought while it opened its doors wide to the infinitely lower influences of the east—astrology, demonology, magic; because of these it hoped to make handmaidens for it own spirit [Yahweh], while the Greek spirit could be no handmaid."[40] This tendency toward the magical and pagan within Judaism grew stronger during the first century of the Roman occupation of Palestine so that when " . . . the east came flooding back on the west in one great stream of astrology and magic, the Jew played a conspicuous part; Jewish magicians were reckoned second to none, and the Jewish exorcist was a familiar figure for centuries. The Jews had their own books of magic formulae."[41] The important point for this study is that no area of Palestine was spared exposure to the many cults, religions, rituals, and philosophies that swept over the Hellenistic world at this time. There were all sorts of cultural and religious influences on Judaism during this time, making it a far less clear intellectual and logical creed than what the Greek influence on history has led us to believe. There was plenty of opportunity for a man like Jesus to become familiar with the ideas of these foreign cults. For example, given the popularity and thorough dispersion of the cult of Osiris-Isis, it would be strange if he was not aware of it.

One consequence of the stress of this cultural and religious assault upon Judaism was the emergence of a body of Jewish apocalyptic literature that reached its apex in the first century B.C.E. As if to confirm Samuel Eddy's observation that "resort to prophecy is a universal response of beaten men,"[42] Jewish apocalyptic writings promised a form of mystical liberation of the Jews through the hand of god. Although some Jewish messianic texts predate this period, it was during this time that the idea of a messiah who would come and free Israel from its oppressors gained wide acceptance for the first time. Some-

times the messiah was divine, at other times he was not. Much of this literature seems like nationalist propaganda designed to have wide popular appeal and rooted in some version of a heavenly prophetic vision. It was strongly influenced by the magic of the East and contained elements of numerology, astrology, philosophy, and symbolism, often offering magical formulas for mathematically calculating the date of the apocalypse and recognizing the portents of its coming.[43] The *Book of Daniel, Enoch, The Apocalypse of Moses*, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and the *Psalms of Solomon*, along with the books of *Ezra* and *Baruch* were all written during this period.[44]

Jewish resistance to Hellenism took another form, that of reasoned intellectual resistance by the Jewish intelligentsia led by the Jewish community of Alexandria. When Manetho, in his history of Egypt written for Ptolemy II, had proclaimed that Moses was a renegade heretic who led a band of lepers from Egypt, it was the Jewish scholars of Alexandria who responded by translating the Bible into Greek, which was quickly replacing Aramaic as the language of the Mediterranean world. Philo Judaeus (30 B.C.E.-40 C.E.) tried to argue in his writings that the doctrines of Hellenism and Judaism could be reconciled through the Platonic idea of the soul. Philo laid great stress upon the transcendence and incomprehensibility of god but maintained that through god's grace man could be united with god in a mystical communion, which he described as ecstasy, a sort of divine frenzy enjoyed by the prophets but more joyful and serene. Achieving this ecstasy was but a stage toward the soul's complete liberation from the body and reascension to god.[45]

One consequence of Jewish intellectual resistance in Egypt was the introduction of the synagogue, which later became almost synonymous with Judaism. The earliest synagogue known to us from anywhere in the world appears in the second century B.C.E. in the town of Schedia, 14 miles from Alexandria. The origins of this religio-secular institution are shrouded in uncertainty, but it is probable that it came about during the later Hellenistic age. These houses of learning may have originated within the Jewish communities outside of Israel, who were cut off from the Temple and its rituals. The synagogues quickly became the focus of Jewish spiritual, intellectual, and national life and they soon spread to Jerusalem and Palestine despite the priestly elite who opposed them.

In the end, both the apocalyptic and intellectual efforts failed to save Judaism from erosion. But it was the struggle itself, first against Hellenism and then against Rome, that set the stage for revolt. And when revolt came, it did so in both nationalistic and religious forms. Judaism diverged into two streams: the strict Sadducee tradition that stressed ritual purity and religious temple observance and the Pharisee tradition, more Hellenistic in tone and content, that preached a religious universalism understandable through teaching and study

of the law. Both traditions vied for dominance for more than two centuries until consumed in the nationalist revolt of the Second Jewish War in 70 C.E. The consequences of the Jewish defeat were catastrophic. The Sadducees lost the temple itself. With the center of sacrifice destroyed, ritual purity never again played the important role it had since the time of Moses. As for the Alexandrian Judaism that was the more inclusive and universal strain of Judaism and had attempted to reconcile itself with Hellenism, it was largely destroyed with the Diaspora. The result was that the field of Jewish religious loyalty was left to the ascendancy of an exclusive Levite Judaism, which turned Judaism in upon itself, and for a millennium Judaism once more became the enclave religion it had been at the beginning.[46]

By the coming of the Romans, Palestine was a maelstrom of religious and philosophical cross-currents that buffeted Judaism mercilessly and threatened to destroy it. The Romans were less interested in religion and philosophy than the Greeks and more interested in peace and prosperity. They did not feel hostility toward the Jews whom, indeed, they thought more ethical and religiously observant than the Greeks. The Romans knew that Judaism was a religion of great antiquity and respected this. Jews had a reputation as ethical people among the Romans and were granted full religious liberty. In fact, many Romans became "God-fearers," that is, practitioners of Judaism observing all precepts except some *mitzvot* and circumcision. There is even some evidence that one of the Flavian emperors may have converted to Judaism even as Constantine later converted to Christianity.[47] Even in Palestine where foreign rule was resented, relationships between Romans and Jews were generally good. Elsewhere in the empire, relations were excellent. One tenth of the population of the imperial realm were Jews, and in Alexandria as much as 40% of the population may have been Jews.[48] After the Second Jewish War when Rome deported much of the population of Israel, it did so without brutality. Jewish families and whole villages were deported together so as not to break them apart and were settled in cities throughout the empire that already had significant Jewish populations, thereby making it possible for Jewish communities to survive intact.[49] The Jewish population of the Roman empire increased after the Diaspora. In the first century C.E., Palestine contained about two million Jews, Egypt one million, Syria about 750,000, and Babylonia about one million. At the end of the first century C.E., there were about eight million Jews in the world, about half living within imperial borders and the other half in client states.[50]

Even granting that the influence of Hellenism, in general, and its support of the Osiris-Isis theology, in particular, were well known in the cities, if we are to argue that these ideas influenced the thinking of early Christians, then we must

inquire if these ideas were readily available in Galilee where Christ was born and grew to adulthood. Was it likely that Christ was exposed to the Osiris-Isis theology while living in Galilee? When the Seleucid monarch Antiochus Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.E.) tried to impose Hellenism on Palestine, he found a receptive audience only in the cities. In the towns and villages, however, there was a fierce reaction that produced an upsurge of native religious feeling. It is from this time that we find the tendency to name Jewish children after the great prophets and religious leaders of the Bible as an expression of religious devotion and pride.[51] Judaism in Galilee had to live side by side with a strong pagan majority ever since Sargon II deported the 10 tribes so that by the time of Christ the people of Galilee had not been Jewish for long. It was only under the Maccabeean ruler of Judea, John Hyrcanus I, at the end of the second century B.C.E. that Galilee and the north had been detached from the Seleucids and joined with the homeland of Judah. It was Hyrcanus who issued a proclamation officially converting the peoples of the north, including Galilee, to Judaism.[52] Probably less than half the population was affected by this action, and Galilee remained heavily paganized until long after the time of Christ. To the devout Jews of Jerusalem, Galilee was referred to derisively as "Galilee of the Gentiles," a reference to the Jerusalem Jews' perception of their co-religionists of the north as ritually impure country bumpkins given to blasphemous thinking and strange behavior.

As with all new converts, the Jews of Galilee saw themselves as fiercely devout and more pious than the Jews of Jerusalem even as they adopted rituals and ideas from the East that were clearly pagan. The Galilean Jews were often at odds with the religious establishment in Jerusalem as a result. The Galileans' puritanical outlook led them to produce a rich crop of wandering holy men, who claimed an intimate and direct familiarity with god and who operated as exorcists, healers, and miracle workers.[53] Like Hanina ben Dosa, a younger contemporary of Christ, these sages claimed to be on personal terms with the Almighty, performed miracles, cured the sick, heard the voices of Heaven, and forewarned of the coming kingdom of god. When Christ did these things he was acting within the tradition of these holy men and it was hardly a new experience for the people of Galilee.[54] Such behavior was seen as curious at best and blasphemous at worst by the Jewish establishment.

The Jewish community of Galilee at the time of Christ was radical and puritanical and surrounded by the hostile influences of Hellenism and its syncretic cults, including that of Osiris-Isis. Hengel in his *The Hellenization of Judea* makes the point that Galilee at the time of Christ was heavily "Hellenized" because it was encircled by major Hellenic cities. To the west and northwest lay Ptolemais, Sidon, and Tyre; to the northeast, east, and southeast were Panias,

Caesaria Philippi, Hippos, and Gadara; and in the south were Scythopolis and Gaba, military settlements founded by Herod the Great. All these cities were bilingual in that both Greek and Aramaic were commonly used.[55] Michael Grant notes as well that Galilee was among the least isolated areas of Israel in that besides the Roman cities of Seiporis and Tiberius, Galilee was criss-crossed with highly traveled roads that led everywhere. Grant concludes that the Galileans "had more intercourse with the external heathen than either the Judeans or the Samaritans."[56] Quoting Andrew Overman on a demographic analysis of Lower Galilee, John Crossan notes in his *Historical Jesus* that Lower Galilee, an area approximately 15 by 25 miles, included many urban centers and large villages so as to make the area "one of the most densely populated regions of the entire Roman empire."[57] One was never more than a day's walk from anywhere in the Lower Galilee. Unless one was a hermit, which Christ was not, it would have been almost impossible to live in a village in Lower Galilee and escape the influences of urbanization and its accompanying Hellenistic and Roman ideas. So it was, then, that "life in Lower Galilee in the first century was as urbanized and urbane as anywhere else in the empire."[58]

Just why Galilee should have acquired the reputation of being an isolated wilderness as though it gave full expression to what Marx called "the idiocy of rural life" is puzzling. Perhaps it was because Nazareth, the likely town of Christ's birth and certainly the town where he was raised, is not mentioned in traditional sources. The Old Testament, for example, provides a list of villages given to the tribe of Zebulon, but does not mention Nazareth. Josephus, who was responsible for military operations in this area during the Jewish War, does not mention Nazareth while giving the names of 45 other towns in Galilee. The Talmud refers to 63 towns in Galilee but does not mention Nazareth. The evidence from tomb design suggests that Nazareth may not have existed before 200 B.C.E.[59] Small village or not, Christ lived in the shadow of a major urban administrative center in the middle of a densely populated area criss-crossed by highly traveled roads leading to other nearby major towns and cities,[60] all sources of Hellenistic influence and its syncretic religions. Eric Myers notes in this regard " . . . the isolation that often is associated with the Galilean personality is . . . quite inappropriate when we speak of Jesus of Nazareth, who is growing up along one of the busiest trade routes of ancient Palestine at the very administrative center of the Roman provincial government."[61] It is almost beyond imagining, then, that Christ could have lived in the Galilee all his life and not been exposed to Hellenistic ideas. Given the popularity of the Osiris-Isis cult with both Greeks and Romans of the time, given the evidence of widespread construction of shrines and temples to Isis throughout the Mediterranean world, given the popularity of Isis with Roman soldiers whose garrisons

were scattered throughout Israel, and given the official support of the religion by the Roman political apparatus, one can be as certain as one can ever be when dealing with such matters that Christ was aware of the theology of Isis-Osiris. Indeed, it would have required a most remarkable effort of self-imposed isolation for him not to have been.

Considerable effort has been expended thus far to make two simple points: One, that the Egyptian theological tradition as expressed in the principles of the Osiris myth had existed without major interruption for more than three millennia by the time Christ was born and, as a consequence of the Ptolemies and Hellenism, was thriving as a theological system with a wide following inside Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean world, including the Palestine in which Christ was born and raised. Two, for a variety of reasons it is almost a certainty that Christ would have been aware of and exposed to the theology and rituals of the cult of Osiris-Isis as demonstrated by their practice in Palestine. If the arguments offered in support of these two propositions are sufficiently convincing, then any fundamental similarities found to exist between the theological systems of Osiris-Isis and Christianity may, in the absence of any other source from which the similarity may otherwise have been derived, be reasonably attributed to a knowledge of the theological system that is prior in time (Egyptian) as possessed by the formulator of the belief system, that came after it (Christianity). Simply put, the theological similarities between the cult of Osiris-Isis and Christianity may reasonably be explained as a consequence of Christ's adopting basic tenets of the cult of Osiris-Isis into his new belief system which later developed into Christianity.

Which brings us to Christ himself. John Crossan in his *Historical Jesus* says that recent historical research into the life of Jesus has become something of a scholarly joke. In recent years, Crossan says, academic researchers have offered us no fewer than *seven* different interpretations of Christ and his life. There is Jesus as a political revolutionary offered by S.G.F. Brandon (1967); as a magician by Morton Smith (1978); as a Galilean charismatic by Geza Vermes (1981); as a Galilean rabbi by Bruce Chilton (1984); as a Hillelite proto-Pharisee by Harvey Falk (1985); as a genuine Pharisee and Jewish faith reformer by Hyam Maccoby (1985); as an Essene by Harvey Falk (1985); as an eschatological prophet by E. P. Sanders (1985); and most recently by Michael Grant as a historical personage, an interpretation largely shared by Crossan himself.[62]

Crossan notes with a candor rare for academics that "this stunning diversity is an academic embarrassment. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography."[63] This study hopes to avoid the pitfalls of

Jesus research by not attempting any historical analysis of Christ at all! The hypothesis that Christ incorporated many of the tenets of Egyptian Osiran theology into Christianity does not rest on any particular interpretation of Christ's life. The hypothesis can be tested regardless of which life of the ones noted above Christ led. What is required is merely the affirmation of the following propositions that no Jesus scholar ought to find unacceptable.

The first of these is that Christ existed; that is, someone to whom history attributes the founding of Christianity existed. Second, Christ lived and died some time during the first half of the first century C.E. during the Roman occupation of Palestine. Third, Christ was some sort of religious activist or holy man who ultimately came to preach a new creed that diverged significantly from traditional Judaism. As a holy man Christ was acting within the long-established tradition of Galilean sages by claiming a special intimate relationship with god, even describing it as filial. Whether or not Christ thought of himself as divine, his description of his filial relationship with god was such as to allow the interpretation by the powers of the Jewish religious establishment that he was claiming to be divine and the "son of god." Such a claim might reasonably be seen as an attack upon the central Jewish belief in a monotheistic god. The further interpretation that as the son of god Christ could forgive sins, a power reserved by Jewish theology to god himself, could easily be interpreted as rank blasphemy. Fourth, for these and other reasons Christ ran afoul of the Jewish religious establishment and was put to death by Roman executioners in the manner of crucifixion. Fifth, Christ's life and teachings became the sources of a new theological system that was refined by others over the centuries but whose fundamental principles were already evident during Christ's lifetime or shortly thereafter. While the next chapter will examine some elements of Christ's life and teachings that seem drawn from traditional Egyptian religious practices and rituals, the focus of the present chapter falls upon the major premises of Christ's belief system as portrayed in the Gospels and Pauline Letters insofar as they may be reasonably demonstrated to be similar, if not identical, to the premises of the theology of Osiris-Isis. The method of analysis is to compare the similarities and differences of the major premises of each theological system and then inquire if the similarities could reasonably have come from somewhere else. Other sources of theological ideas in Christianity besides Egyptian sources are Greek philosophy and the beliefs and rituals of pagan religions extant at the time.

Let us begin with the proposition that it is not unusual that we should look for the origins of Christianity *outside* the teachings of Christ. On the face of it, the Christian notion that Christ was a god who became man, who enjoyed a complete human nature that permitted his suffering and death to be experi-

enced as a genuine human person, who died and was resurrected, and who came to sit at the right hand of the godhead where he assessed the moral worthiness of men after death as a prerequisite for eternal life is so starkly similar to the myth of Osiris as to be identical in its fundamentals. It is equally obvious that this story could not have come from Judaism; and yet, beginning with Saint Paul, Christians have gone to great lengths over the centuries to demonstrate the Jewish roots of Christianity. Maccoby suggests that this was initially because Judaism enjoyed considerable prestige among the Romans and others as a creed of great antiquity whose people lived ethical lives.[64] Later the doctrine was developed by Christian theologians that Judaism was the "older brother" of Christianity because its history and theology prefigured the life of Christ and the coming of the new creed.[65] The validity of such a claim cannot be tested by the historian, who is more likely to regard a reinterpretation of Jewish history in light of Christian theological precepts as an exercise in poetry rather than research. Saint Paul, who seems not have been very curious about these difficulties, appears to have missed the similarities enjoyed by early Christianity with the pagan beliefs and practices of his day even while generations of Christians continued to see them very clearly.[66] Some early Christian writers like Julian and Tertullian viewed these similarities with great alarm and tried to explain them away. But the Pauline emphasis on Judaism as the precursor of Christianity effectively precluded any recognition of other sources for Christian doctrines with the result that these writers had no explanation to offer and had to content themselves with the less than convincing argument that Satan had maliciously concocted the pagan forms in the image of Christianity to lead souls astray![67] The suggestion is offered here that there is another explanation, namely, that some principles of Christian theology, among them fundamental beliefs, were borrowed from other extant sources, most particularly from the Osiris-Isis myth.

In the early stages of development religions do not seek to express a precise theology as much as they attempt to strengthen the ties of belief and communion and win the struggle for existence. This was surely the case in the early days of Christianity when Palestine was a cockpit within which Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Oriental deities and Hellenistic philosophies appeared side by side as they jostled one another for attention and survival. Some "leakage" of ideas from one belief system to another was inevitable. Any study of Greek and Egyptian papyri of the time reveals "that Christian and Jewish prayers, quotations, and sacred names appear cheek by jowl with their Egyptian, Greek, and Babylonian counterparts."[68] The magical papyri reveal similar spells and rituals, the basic difference being nomenclature so that Christian magicians healed by invoking the name of Christ while Jewish magicians did

the same by invoking the name of Yahweh. It is only after the battle for survival is won that the new cult attempts to form itself in a precise manner—creating a theology that specifies precisely its beliefs and how they render the religion unique. The aim is definition and the mechanism of its achievement is the creation of a distinct terminology through which beliefs and rituals are logically expressed. In a strict sense, then, the Christian creed of Christ's time was not a proper theology but a set of core beliefs that came to define the believer's acceptance of the new faith.

We should not, then, expect to find these core beliefs expressed in complete form during the early days of Christianity's existence. It would require centuries, as it did for Judaism and Egyptian religion, for Christian theologians to produce a more definitive theology. If the analysis is to compare Christian with Egyptian, Jewish, Babylonian, and Hellenistic ideas extant during the first century C.E., it must compare those Christian beliefs *as we can determine them to have been commonly understood then* rather than *as they came to be understood* after a millennium of theological embellishment by Christian theologians. It is, moreover, pointless to debate which of these early Christian beliefs were espoused directly by Christ or which were attributed to him by his followers after his death. What is important is not what Christ said or meant, but what early Christians *came to believe he said or meant*. It is clear enough from Paul's letters to the Corinthians, less than 30 years after Christ's crucifixion, that the key principles of the new Christian faith were already sufficiently clear among the faithful for them to inquire of Paul what they meant. It is, then, a reasonable assumption that we can enumerate the fundamental principles of the new faith in the same basic way that the early Christians did.

The fundamental principles of early Christianity are the following: (1) Christ is a god who became incarnate as a human being; (2) the godhead is expressed monotheistically but in trinitarian form; that is, as three distinct persons, equally divine, in one god; (3) man is possessed of an immortal soul; (4) after the death of the body, the soul rises again and lives on somehow; (5) the moral worthiness of a man is judged by god after his death; (6) those who pass this judgment are granted eternal life. It is the hypothesis of this analysis that each of these basic Christian beliefs was adopted from the beliefs of the Egyptian cult of Osiris-Isis because they are virtually identical in both systems and, most important, could not reasonably have come from any other source—Judaism, Greek theology or philosophy, or the Oriental religions—for the simple reason that these beliefs did not exist within any of these other sources at the time they were first evident in Christianity. And since it ought to be clear from the previous chapters that these same beliefs originated and were developed within the body of traditional Egyptian religion millennia before the birth of

Christ, it follows that the direction of influence must have been from Egyptian theology to Christian belief and not vice versa. The remainder of this chapter examines each of these beliefs with a view toward testing the hypothesis.

Among the most compelling ideas of Christianity is the idea that Christ was a god who became man. The incarnation of god in genuinely human form requires, to say the least, a dramatic change in the existential form of the deity and is carried out in a manner similar to creation in which the word of god (*Logos*) became flesh (*sarx*).[69] Through this creative process the god comes to dwell completely in the body of a human being, thus being incarnated, literally "made flesh." In human form the god possesses all elements of human nature, *including the ability to die*. This latter is of central importance to Christianity since the suffering and death of Christ in a manner identical to how any human being would have suffered under similar circumstances is what gives a redemptive quality to Christ's agony. Through incarnation the death of the god is given a historical quality as well, that is, it actually occurred, rather than leaving the idea of an incarnated god solely in the realm of myth. The prospect that the incarnation and death of a god actually occurred in history provided Christianity with a powerful attraction, as did the fact that the event was held to have been witnessed by others. The purpose of the incarnation of the god was to atone for the sins of the human race. Incarnation was required to attain this because the magnitude of the human offense against a perfect god required that the redeemer be a member of the human race that had committed the sins and that he suffer as humans would.[70] The central feature of Christianity, the redemptive death of Jesus, would, therefore, be incomprehensible without a concept of incarnation to bring about the existential change from god to man.

Incarnation is a very sophisticated concept and unlikely to have been developed independently and out of whole cloth by a Jewish holy man living in rural Galilee in the first century of the Common Era. Christ's Judaism would have been of no help since there is no hint in the Judaism of his time (nor since, for that matter) of the concept of incarnation. Greek philosophy, too, in its Hellenistic form, did not contain any such notions. Other religions of the day held that the gods could walk among men and interfere with their fates. But none thought that the gods could assume a true human nature and subject themselves to the risk of dying or being slain by men or other gods. They changed form superficially (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), that was all. The only source that could have provided early Christian thinkers with the idea of incarnation was the Egyptian theology of Osiris-Isis.

Egyptian thinkers developed the concept of incarnation more than two millennia before Christ and it became a central principle of Egyptian theology from at least 3000 B.C.E. onward. Incarnation was the natural corollary of the

manner in which the Egyptians viewed creation itself. The earliest compilation of the Egyptian version of creation occurs in the *Memphite Drama* of about 2700 B.C.E., but is commonly thought to contain ideas that were much older. Wallace Budge notes that at this time the "priests of Ptah had arrived at the highest conception of god which was ever reached in Egypt . . . They evolved the idea of god as a spirit, a self-created, self-sustaining, eternal, almighty mind-god, the creator of all things, the source of all life and creation, who created everything that is merely by thinking . . . the Word which gave expression to the thought that 'came into his mind.' "[71] In Egyptian theology god creates *ex nihilo* and he does so by thinking about what he wishes to create and then uttering the name of the thing; "what the heart thought and the tongue commanded."[72] We find this notion of creation again in the Logos doctrine of the New Testament in the Gospel of John where he says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."[73] In the Egyptian view all things are made by god through incarnation, that is, by the spirit of the thing entering into it and giving it life. The gods themselves also enter into their images and are genuinely present within them. Thus, " . . . So the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay."[74] Even the creator could become incarnate. The Memphite cult of Ptah worshiped him in the form of the sacred Apis bull that, in the Egyptian view, was Ptah himself as he appeared to men on earth. In the same sense that god was incarnate in Christ and his human nature, so it was that the Egyptians believed that Ptah was incarnate in the Apis bull and its nature. It was the same with all Egyptian gods. They were present and alive within their images not symbolically *but in the flesh* in a manner that seems identical to Jesus inhabiting, or indwelling, or assuming a human body and nature.[75]

Purely as an idea, then, incarnation has its roots only in Egyptian theology and religious tradition, appearing nowhere else in the Near East or in the West until it makes its appearance in Christian doctrine in the first century C.E. What lends further credence to the suspicion that the Christians adopted the idea of incarnation from the followers of Osiris-Isis is the parallel manner in which each religion *applied* the concept to its own theology. Thus, Christ becomes man and dies, as did Osiris before him. Christ's possession of a human nature is precisely what gives his death a redemptive quality while it is Osiris' human nature and his horrible death that is the basis of Osiris becoming a sympathetic judge of human behavior, for only a god who has been truly human can understand how difficult it is to behave properly. Of all the gods, only Osiris became human just as the Christians affirm that Christ is the only god to

have become human. Christ's presence on this earth was affirmed to be an historical event in the same way that Egyptian theologians affirmed that Osiris' sojourn in this life was an historical event of great antiquity. Finally, Christ's life, death, and resurrection purchased the possibility of eternal life for all mankind just as in Egyptian theology it was the life, death, and resurrection of Osiris that purchased the possibility for eternal life for all men. The similarities between the manner in which the concept of incarnation is *applied* in both the Osiris-Isis and Christian theologies suggest the possibility that the central drama of Christ's incarnation as human and his death may have been adopted almost completely from Egyptian sources. At the very least, it is unlikely that the idea of incarnation found in early Christian theology was entirely a product of original Christian thinking.

Among the Jews of Christ's day perhaps the most controversial of Christian theological ideas was the notion that the godhead was comprised of three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each equally divine even as they together constituted at the same time a single unified god. The doctrine of the trinity took centuries to define and clarify officialy. Among the most authoritative early works on the subject by a major Christian theologian was Anselm of Canterbury's (1033–1109 C.E.) treatise, *Cur Deus Homo* or *Why God Became Man.*[76] During the earliest days of Christianity, however, the doctrine of the trinity was not present in such complete and specific form. However, its major postulates were sufficiently evident at least to Jewish theologians of the day to permit a charge of blasphemy to be brought against Christ for his claim that he was the "son of god." Christ's ministry paralleled that of other Galilean holy men and like them he claimed a special intimate relationship with god. That he portrayed this relationship as filial, namely, like that of a son to his father, is evident by his frequent use of the word *Abba*, a word that means father in the most intimate sense.[77] We are unclear as to what Jesus meant by this. We cannot tell whether his consciousness of an intimate relationship with a supreme god amounted to a belief in his own mind of his own divinity or not. It is obvious, however, that many of those around him *believed* Christ to be divine, that is, the son of god in a literal sense, or else believed him to be claiming to be divine even while they believed he was not. The claim attributed to Christ that he could forgive sins bolstered the conviction that he was also claiming to be divine since in Jewish belief the forgiveness of sin is a power reserved to the singular god. It was on these two grounds, polytheism and forgiveness of sin, that Jewish theologians saw Christ as blasphemous. When charges were brought against Christ, the Pharisees tell Pilate, "We have a law; and by that law he ought to die, because he has claimed to be the son of god."[78] It is important to note the seriousness with which other religions regard the Christian claim of a

trinitarian god. To this day Jewish and Muslim theologians do not regard Christianity as a monotheistic religion in the strict sense, seeing in the affirmation of a trinitarian god the continued practice of polytheism.

Christ's invocation of the paraclete or Holy Spirit also provoked fears among Jewish theologians that he was affirming yet a third person within the godhead. The belief in a single omnipotent god had precluded the Jews from developing a doctrine of evil. From the time of the *Blessing of Moses*,[79] the Jews had believed that Yahweh alone was responsible for all things, including the evil that befell man. There was no god of evil in traditional Jewish thought. To be sure, Yahweh could employ devils, demons, and spirits to do his bidding, but such creatures were mere hirelings with no independent power. When the Jews returned from their exile in Babylon (fifth century B.C.E.), however, they brought with them the Babylonian idea of a supernatural being hostile to man, who causes evil. They called this being "Satan" from the root word "to oppose." Satan was not yet regarded as an opponent of Yahweh and could only act with Yahweh's permission. By the time of the *Book of Chronicles* (250 B.C.E.), however, the attribution of evil to Satan became well established within the apocalyptic literature of Jewish thought if not the traditional mainstream.[80] The perception of Christ's theological enemies that he spoke of the Holy Spirit as an entity co-equal with the father and son was horrifying in that it appeared to be incorporating a powerful evil spirit within the godhead.

In the affirmation of a trinitarian god by the Christians, we once again see the incorporation of a theological idea that is found nowhere else except in the traditional religion of Egypt. Judaism was rigidly monotheistic and the paganisms of the day were eclectically polytheistic so that neither of these religious influences produced the theologically radical concept of trinitarianism. Nor can Hellenistic philosophy have been the source. Hellenistic religious syncretism permitted the idea that there was an apparent theological unity in the world, that is, behind the differences all people were essentially worshipping the same single god. But this was not trinitarianism. The idea that there might be a tripartite entity united in a governing singularity was first broached in Greek philosophy by Plotinus (205–270 C.E.) in the second century in his affirmation in the *Enneads* of the existence of "three divine hypostases," which he identified as the One, the Intelligence, and the Soul. But this idea was advanced to explain the natural more than the theological universe and, in any case, came too long after Christ's death to have been an influence on early Christian thinking.

The only place where the notion of a trinitarian god is found at the time of Christ is in Egypt where it had been invented and in evidence within theological thought for more than two thousand years. The idea of a trinitarian god-

head emerged as an answer to the Egyptian perception that behind the complexity of the world there was a unifying singularity to which all existence could be attributed. The cults of many gods from time immemorial were only variations in the worship of a single god, who often hid himself from mankind. Egyptian theologians conceived of the trinity as a way of incorporating the worship of many gods into the reality of a single god without threatening the ancient validity of local gods. In this way the greatest gods of Egypt were often assembled in trinities that incorporated the traditional god of a major city or region. The oldest known Egyptian trinity is that of Ptah, Osiris, and Sokaris, the latter being the local god of Memphis.[81] In an Egyptian trinity, like the Christian trinity, the unity of the parts constitutes a genuine singularity, that is, one god. Each of the "persons" within the Egyptian and Christian trinity has an independent existence, is distinct in nature, is equally divine, and has its own powers even as, at the same time, each is part of the singular monotheistic unified god.[82] The genuine singularity of the unified god was reflected in Egyptian semantics where the godhead was always referred to by the singular pronoun, "He", taking the majestic form.[83]

Over the centuries the incorporation of a different local god with the major deity would occur. During the New Kingdom, for example, the power of the warrior princes of Thebes elevated their local god, Amun, to inclusion into the trinity of Re-Amun-Osiris. Anyone visiting a temple of Isis in, say, the Roman city of Seiporis during Christ's lifetime would have found the trinity of Serapis-Isis-Horus being worshipped there. Not only had the Egyptian idea of a trinitarian god survived into the time of Christ but its ritualistic expression was a common, indeed daily, occurrence within the Palestine of Christ's life. Had the early formulators of Christianity wished to incorporate trinitarianism into their theological beliefs, it would have been an simple thing to do and, interestingly, those familiar with the Osiris-Isis cult would immediately have understood the idea. The point is that trinitarianism was not likely to have been an original theological innovation of early Christian thinkers but an adoption of a very ancient Egyptian theological idea that was readily available for the taking during the time in which Christ lived out his ministry.

The Christian idea of the soul is closely bound up with resurrection and eternal life since it is the soul, not the earthly body, that rises after death and lives forever. The central attributes of the Christian soul are that it is the animating force of human life and is of divine origin, immaterial, and individually immortal. In other words, the soul constitutes the inner self or essence of a human personality. Over the centuries these concepts became much more refined and elaborate as the result of theological analysis by Christian thinkers. At the time of Christ, however, this level of sophistication and refinement was not yet

present. Even when expressed in its simplest forms, the followers of Christ had some difficulty grasping the idea. No less a salesman than Saint Paul had great difficulty convincing the Corinthians (again!) of the immortality of the soul. At its most basic, however, early Christians believed that the soul was of divine origin and was immortal. Brandon describes this Christian perspective. "Belief in the soul's superiority to the body, by virtue of its divine origin and intrinsic immortality, thus became a fundamental tenet of Christianity. It was basic to the whole scheme of salvation; and it inspired the abiding Christian disposition to asceticism, whereby the soul is exalted and the body despised."[84] In searching for the source of the Christian idea of a soul, the key concepts are the soul's divine origin and personal immortality. Virtually all religions of the Near East understood that there was some principle of animation that breathed life into all creatures, man included. But only one perceived the soul as a purposeful creation of god that was individually immortal.

Babylonian religions recognized that humans possessed a principle of animation, which they called *napistu*, whose origin was attributed to nature and not god. Mesopotamian theologians did not see this soul-like entity as being immortal. Yet, they maintained that the principle of life did not disappear entirely at death. They recognized that death brought a terrible change to the living person and transformed him into some sort of ghost or *etimmu*, a mere shade or insubstantial wraith of the person's former self. These entities dwelt in the *kurnugia* or land of no return "where dust is their food and clay their substance . . . where they see no light and dwell in darkness," as the *Legend of Gilgamesh* tells us.[85] It is important to understand that this is not the equivalent of Hell for all men—great and small, good and bad—ended up here. This quasi-human dreary afterlife is merely the description of a natural process that all living creatures undergo as a consequence of their material natures. The central qualities of the Christian soul, divine origin and personal immortality, were therefore completely absent in the Babylonian religions of Christ's time and before.

Had Christ turned to his native Judaism for the concept of an immortal soul, he would have found that Jews had never entertained the idea from the very beginning. The Jewish idea of the soul is strongly parallel to that of the Babylonian religions, and since Moses was silent on the issue, it is at least possible that Jewish post-Exile thinking on the subject may have been shaped by the Jews' exposure to the theologies of Babylon during the Exile. The Hebrew notion of the soul is first mentioned in *Genesis* where God creates man and breathes life into him so that Adam becomes "a living soul." *Genesis* is a legend of Mesopotamian origin and was not incorporated into the Bible until about 800 B.C.E., thus accounting somewhat for the Babylonian influence on Jewish

thinking on the subject. Soul in Hebrew is *nephesh* and connotes the joint physical and psychic elements in man. It is close in meaning to the Babylonian *napistu* and its physical character can be seen in its association with the blood, the life substance, that was thought to drain away from the body at death. The possession of *nephesh* does not in any way define or distinguish a man from other humans or from other creatures, for all living things possess *nephesh*. Once again the parallel with the Babylonian *napistu* is evident. There is in Hebrew thought absolutely no sense that the soul of an individual man is special in any way and certainly not that it is of divine origin or immortal.[86] Although Elijah used the term "*rauch*" to describe the soul, the term does not mean soul at all, but rather a sense of one's breath or spirit. As in Babylonian theology, Hebrew theology thought death brought with it a separation of the body from its life principle. Probably during the Exile the idea occurred that the person's shade or shadow lived on underground in a partial existence of his former self. Death was a natural event for the Jews, nothing more. There is no sense that personality or any part of man's existence was able to continue forever.

By the time of Christ the influence of Hellenism among the intellectuals of Alexandria moved some, like Philo, to accept the vague Platonic idea that the soul might live on beyond the grave. But such speculations of an intellectual elite in a foreign city never fully developed the idea within the context of Jewish theology,[87] so that whatever influence they may have had on early Christian thinkers, is impossible to discern at least from this distance. Even when such ideas mingled with the apocalyptic Jewish literature of the period, no doctrine of the divine origin of the soul and its immortality emerged within any body of Jewish theological thought. "The old Semitic tradition prevailed. The immortality of the soul alone was never deemed sufficient, and Jewish eschatology could only envisage a satisfactory after-life as the restoration of the whole people . . ."[88]

Because of the influence of Greek philosophy upon the *later* development of Christian doctrine, it is sometimes thought that the Christian notion of the soul was taken from the ideas of Greek philosophers, most notably Plato, that had spread through the Mediterranean world on the wings of Hellenism. But, as we shall see, Hellenism offered no notion of a divine and personal immortal soul that could have been adopted by early Christians. From Homeric to Hellenic and even Graeco-Roman times, the Greek idea of a soul was strikingly similar to the Babylonian and Hebrew concepts. The first expression of the Greek idea of a soul is found in the Homeric poems. The individual is seen to be comprised of three parts, the body, the *psyche*, and the *thymos*. The *psyche* was the life-giving principle and was located in the head while the *thymos*, located in the lungs (*phrenes*), was identical with the mind or consciousness or

personality. At death the *thymos* perished while the *psyche* survived, whereupon it was transformed into the *eidolon*, an insubstantial shade or shadow of the former living person.[89] The idea is poetically presented by Homer when Odysseus meets his dead mother, Anticleia, in Hades. He tries to embrace his mother's shade only to have his arms pass through it. Odysseus cries out, "is this but a phantom (*eidolon*)?" Anticleia replies, ". . . this is the way with mortals when they die: the sinews no more hold together the flesh and bones, but they are overmastered by the force of the strong burning fire, as soon as the life (*thymos*) has left the white bones, and the shade (*psyche*) hovers like a dream and flits away."[90] By Plato's time this idea had changed only slightly when the *psyche*, not the *thymos*, came to be regarded as the essential self, the seat of both consciousness and the life principle.

Plato (428–348 B.C.E.) attempted to devise a new idea of the soul. He affirmed the existence of a divine, unchanging reality that existed beyond the realm of the senses, a world of ideal forms that could be reached by the operations of the mind. Plato's theory of perfect forms is very old for it is little more than the ancient pagan myth of the existence of a divine world of the gods where everything is perfect while the material world is but an imperfect "participation" of this ideal world.[91] Plato's idea is a "rational" version of this mythical divine order where, paradoxically, an old pagan myth is put to the service of monotheism. One can see at a glance, however, how attractive this perspective would become to later Christian thinkers. The existence of a divine world of perfect forms knowable through reason became crucial to Christian monotheists as they struggled to express their conception of a singular god. The idea that ideal forms were to be found within the minds of men implied that the objects of thought were genuine realities that were active within the mind of the person who contemplated them. In this way man could possess a knowledge of god. Thus, it is thinking that permits man to reach or even become the divine.[92] In Plato's view the soul existed in an elevated ethereal state. Some souls could not sustain themselves in this manner but sank down to find a resting place within men or animals of the material world where they became contaminated and trapped. The body in which the soul finds itself is as a tomb. When the body died, the soul moved on to another body, trapped in a perpetual cycle of rebirth.[93] In this sense, then, the soul might be seen as immortal, but its immortality appears to be nothing more than a philosophical "fact" for its immortality has no implications for humans that are not shared by animals, nor any that are shared by the gods, and has no implications for the divine. It is more correct to say that Plato's soul is *indestructible* rather than immortal in that it moves from one individual or thing to another in a manner that is eerily similar to the Hindu doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

The popularity that Plato's idea later acquired among medieval Christian theologians for the reasons mentioned above was not evident either during Plato's lifetime or later Hellenistic times. The idea of an immortal soul was never a view held by more than a handful of minor Greek philosophers during the Hellenistic Period. The majority view of the soul remained pessimistically Homeric. There were no implications of genuine divinity or personal immortality that could be imputed to the soul from any of the extant Greek philosophical doctrines of the Hellenistic period, including Plato's. Leading philosophers of the Graeco-Roman period did not believe the soul to be immortal. For example, Lucretius in his *De Rerum Natura* offers no fewer than 28 Epicurean arguments against the idea of an immortal soul. The Stoics were materialists, which makes the idea of an immaterial soul difficult, and the Skeptics, too, thought the idea foolish. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that early Christian believers adopted the idea of an immortal soul of divine origin from the Hellenistic thinkers of the day. It was only in Egypt, most particularly in the theology of the Osiris-Isis cult, that Christians could have discovered their conception of the soul. From time immemorial Egyptian theologians had affirmed that the soul was of divine origin, that it was fashioned by god "on the potter's wheel" and then infused into man at birth. It was only in Egypt that Christians could find the idea that the individual soul was immortal and lived on after death to make its way back to its creator for judgment and eternal life. Neither of these concepts adopted by early Christian thinkers can reasonably be attributed to any other source at the time when they were first adopted. The reasonable conclusion, then, is that they were adopted directly from the Osiris-Isis theology.

The most important idea of the new Christian doctrine, one requiring belief in personal immortality, was resurrection, the belief that man would rise from the dead and continue to live forever. While stories about Christ's resurrection began appearing almost immediately after his death, the first written statement of the new Christian belief appeared about 20 years after the crucifixion in a letter by Paul to the Corinthians. In trying to explain what Christians believed in this regard Paul says " . . . that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised to life on the third day, according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and afterwards to the Twelve."[94] Because Christ gained salvation for all men with his death, Christian resurrection was available to all people as individuals. It was, moreover, immediate, that is to say, it did not require some apocalyptic final judgment to bring it about. The words attributed to Christ during his crucifixion to the thief next to him that "on this day you will be with me in paradise" seem to imply that when people died they were resurrected immediately. Dur-

ing Paul's time the idea of resurrection was strongly held to mean that the body would be resurrected as well. To Babylonians and Hebrews, who believed that death destroyed the human personality leaving only a disfigured partial self, such an idea was incomprehensible. As Morton Smith has remarked, the idea of resurrection could not have been derived from rabbinic Judaism because "no such belief is known to have been held by any rabbi of this time."[95] It was an idea that Hellenistic Greeks found equally outrageous. *Acts*, xvii, 16–24 tells of Paul being mocked by the Greeks in Athens when he attempted to explain the Christian promise of resurrection to them. In Greek the phrase "resurrection of the dead" is *anastasis nekron* or literally, "standing up of corpses."[96] The Greeks believed the soul to be imprisoned in the body as in a tomb. The thought of keeping the soul trapped within a body for eternity was ridiculous to the Greek mind. Once again we see early Christianity adopting an idea that could not have been drawn from the Babylonian or mainstream Hebrew religions of the day or from the Hellenistic influences that swirled around the new Christian cult.

Only in Egypt do we find the idea of resurrection after death based on personal immortality, where it had already become a central tenet of the Osiris-Isis cult more than two thousand years before the birth of Christ. Indeed, resurrection is among the earliest principles of Egyptian religion dating at least from the third millennium. Resurrection was held by the Egyptians to be the logical consequence of incarnation. Ptah, for example, was incarnated in the material form of the Apis bull. When the Apis bull died, the soul of Ptah left the body and was incarnated in the next Apis bull. That death was followed by the continuation of life was clear from the tombstones of the graves of the sacred bulls, which read "Apis the Living." The same idea is found in Christian practice whenever a petitioner prays to Christ as "the living god."[97] As we have shown in the previous chapter, over the centuries the privilege of resurrection gradually was extended to include all humans and became a core belief in the theology of Osiris-Isis. Both Christianity and the Osiris-Isis theologies are inexplicable without it.[98]

There is, however, another source that might have provided some notion of resurrection to the early Christians and that is the tradition of apocalyptic Judaism. By the time of the Maccabean Wars (165 B.C.E.), some Jews came to believe that the dead, complete with their bodies, would rise again once god had returned, judged the world, and punished all but the righteous. These righteous Jews, called the Remnant, would then enjoy eternal life. This idea is the closest that Judaic thought ever came to a notion of resurrection and it has its roots in the eschatological literature of the second century B.C.E., most particularly the *Book of Daniel*. This body of radical and nationalist literature was a re-

action to the long suffering of the Jews under foreign rule and conceived the idea of a messiah who would one day come to cure the evil of this world. The messiah was to be a great man, but in no sense was he thought to be divine. His coming was an indication that the end of the world was near through God's judgment. It is only after the messiah completes his earthly work and frees Israel from her enemies that God comes to earth and wreaks havoc upon the unjust, saving only the Remnant of devout Jews. At this time those virtuous Jews already dead would, by God's action, be brought back to life along with their physical bodies. Where they went is unclear. But the sinful either were slain or went to the old *Sheol* which, as described in the books of *Enoch* and *Ezra*, had now been transformed into a place called *Gehenna*, originally the actual site of the city dump of Jerusalem, that is, a place of flaming torment having various divisions to which the dead are assigned according to their deserts.[99]

The idea of resurrection by apocalypse is first found in the *Book of Daniel* written in 167–164 B.C.E. by an unknown author in Aramaic and Hebrew. It is a collection of popular legends about a Jew named Daniel attached to the Babylonian court at a time before the Jews returned from Exile. Daniel introduces the idea of the coming of god who will liberate the Jews and punish their enemies.[100] Daniel's contribution to the onset of Jewish thinking about resurrection is found in the following passage: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and some to the reproach of eternal abhorrence."[101] Along with the apocalyptic vision this idea in one form or another can be found, often only implicitly, among other books of the apocalyptic literature. The books that are closest in time to Christ are the *Testament of Moses* dating from Maccabean times, the *Song of Solomon* written around 48 B.C.E., and the *Book of Enoch* written some time in the last half of the first century B.C.E..[102] Is it likely, then, that the early Christians, themselves Jews, obtained the idea of resurrection from their own apocalyptic literature?

Probably not, for the simple reason that the apocalyptic idea of resurrection is quite different from the Christian concept. The apocalyptic resurrection of Daniel is *communal* and does not apply to *individuals* per se. Resurrection is not connected with the destinies of individual persons but with the destiny of a nation where only the Jewish devout are freed from the gentiles by God. Apocalyptic resurrection embodies an idea of national salvation and vindication occurring as a singular act of god's power and justice and does not constitute a theology of individual justice, morality, judgment, or salvation. Apocalyptic resurrection requires the end of history; the judgment of the dead and living is a singularity, not a continuous reality.[103] By contrast Christian resurrection, like Osiran resurrection, is about individual salvation, not national salvation, and does not require the eschaton or the coming of god. Christian resurrection

is immediate and personal, not apocalyptic and national. And it is promised to all men, not just a religious elect.[104] The differences between the apocalyptic and Christian versions of resurrection are sufficient to disqualify the former as the source of the latter in early Christian thinking. Moreover the *Book of Daniel* was not adopted into the Hebrew theological cannon of the Prophets in Christ's time because the prophecies contained within it were considered by some, mostly Pharisees, to be dangerous and bordering upon the heretical.[105] Some biblical scholars reject this view, arguing that Daniel is the precursor of Christian thinking on the idea of resurrection, pointing to Paul's affirmation that the dead will be "gathered up" or Matthew's assertion that "nations" not individuals will be judged as evidence that early Christian views of resurrection were communal and not immediate. The arguement, in my view, is unconvincing.

One idea that may have been adopted from *Daniel*, however, is the notion that the previously righteous dead would somehow be included in resurrection. In the Christian version Christ descends into Hell for three days prior to rising from the dead. This is interpreted as extending the promise of resurrection to the righteous dead who, until the crucifixion, had no hope for it. On the face of it, the idea seems to have been taken from Daniel. There is, however, a much older source and it is Egyptian. It is very similar to the ancient belief that Osiris and Re descend into Hell each day at the setting of the sun to tend to the souls in the underworld and lead the righteous among them to eternal life.[106] Later, Christians adopted the apocalyptic notion of a Second Coming, although given resurrection and judgment as immediate occurrences upon one's death it is unclear what purpose a Second Comming would serve.[107] If it is argued, nonetheless, that the Christians adopted resurrection from apocalyptic Judaism, one could still inquire as to how such a radical idea found its way into the apocalyptic literature in the first place. In this regard it may be helpful to remember that the Egyptian influence on Jewish religious and ethical thinking was of long standing with much of Egyptian wisdom literature eventually making its way into Jewish texts. The emergence of the apocalyptic texts coincides with a general increase in Jewish-Egyptian cultural contact. During this time a number of Jewish colonies are established in Egypt, the Jewish intellectuals of Alexandria are already famous, Jewish immigration to Egypt has increased, and many Jews are found in the service of the Egyptian government, including soldiers and generals. Under these conditions it would not have been unreasonable for Egyptian ideas on immortality and resurrection to have had some influence upon the apocalyptic authors. It is almost beyond comprehension that Jewish thinkers would have developed the idea of resurrection completely on their own, an innovation that would have required the

abandonment of Jewish ideas about death and the soul maintained since the time of Moses. However it came about, the apocalyptic notions of soul and resurrection are further from the Christian conceptions than are the ideas of soul and resurrection found in the theology of Osiris-Isis. The similarity of *meaning* and *application* argues for the source being Egyptian.

The Christian belief in judgment after death as a prelude to eternal life necessarily depends on a belief in the prior theological tenets of an immortal soul and resurrection. Without these there is nothing to assess that might merit eternal life. And so it follows that the Christian belief in a postmortem judgment of man's ethical worthiness that might merit eternal life could not have been derived from Greek, Hebrew, or Babylonian sources, none of which affirmed a concept of the individual soul's immortality or its resurrection. As the writer of Ecclesiastes put it, "All go unto one place; all are of dust, and all turn to dust again."[108] Nor can apocalyptic Judaism have provided the idea to early Christians. The Christian judgment applies to individuals, not an entire people or nation as in the apocalyptic view, and final judgment is rendered to all men, not just the members of the nation. As with so many other fundamental tenets of Christianity, there is no other source for Christianity's belief in a postmortem judgment and eternal life than the traditional religion of Egypt.

Brandon points out that the idea of an afterlife can be found in Egypt as early as 3,500 B.C.E., and by 2,800 B.C.E. it had become closely connected with the notion that the individual could merit eternal life by living a morally worthy life on this earth.[109] To be sure, proper ritual requirements had to be observed. But the radical idea that man could earn life everlasting is among the oldest, most remarkable, and most impressive theological innovations in the history of man. That it was an Egyptian innovation is beyond doubt for it is not found in any other theological system of the ancient West or Near East from its inception until it reappears within early Christianity. It is precisely the idea of eternal life that possessed the power to console, the reason to hope, the gospel or good news, that was at the center of Christianity's attractiveness just as it had been the attraction for Egyptians for the previous three thousand years. In both creeds the need to live a life of moral worthiness upon which a favorable judgment might be rendered did much to stimulate the casuistic development of ethical thinking in both faiths. Unlike the Egyptians, however, the Christians felt compelled to punish those upon whom an unfavorable judgment had been rendered and adopted the notion that these sinners went to a place of fiery torment. This vision of Hell seems to have come directly out of Jewish apocalyptic literature, most likely from the book of *Ezra* or *Enoch*.[110] By inventing a place of *eternal* torment Christians stood the concept of eternal reward on its head. If, as theologians were to argue later, man cannot truly merit eternal life, then it

is difficult to see how his sins might merit eternal damnation. Egyptians settled the issue by holding that those judged not to be "true of voice" simply suffered "the second dying," that is, they ceased to exist on the spot! To Christianity's great credit, however, the promise of eternal life was not bound by race, nationality, or ritual. Among Christianity's great achievements was its extension of the promise first made by Egypt's universal god that His salvation applied to all men.

In the attempt to hear the echoes of Egyptian religion across the millennia, this chapter has examined the theologies of the Osiran and Christian faiths to determine which, if any, Egyptian beliefs made their way into early Christian thinking and, if so, how this might have come about. The argument offered is that the principles of the Osiran faith were readily available and easily understood during the Ptolemaic period and Christ's lifetime, having survived more or less intact after four millennia of Egyptian theological and historical development. For three centuries before and continuing until the end of Christ's life and beyond, the Osiran faith underwent a strong and powerful revival that made it the official state religion of Ptolemaic Hellenism and the most popular and widely worshipped religion in the Mediterranean world until Theodosius put an official end to paganism in 380 C.E. These powerful influences were felt within the Palestine of Christ's lifetime, even more strongly in Galilee because of its geographic location and demographic characteristics. These factors and others mentioned herein strongly support the supposition that it is unlikely that Christ and his early followers could have remained ignorant of the beliefs and rituals of the commonly present practice of the Osiris-Isis cult. The argument suggests, therefore, that the linkage between Egyptian religion and Christianity, as an historical association occurring in time, cannot be reasonably rejected.

If it is likely that Egyptian religion was the historical source of early Christian beliefs, then the fundamental theological principles of both religions ought to be very similar and, if the direction of influence is correct, the similarities between Christian and Egyptian religions must be shown to have been unable to be acquired from other sources, cultural or religious, extant at the time. The analysis presented in this chapter compared each of the fundamental principles of early Christianity with the relevant principles found in the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Judaic religious traditions and of Greek Hellenism. In every case except the Egyptian, fundamental Christian principles were either not found in the other religions and philosophies or were found in a form that was radically different from those principles as understood by early Christians. When compared with Egyptian sources, however, the following Christian beliefs were found to exist within the Osiris-Isis theology—not only in identical

conceptual form but also in the manner in which they were theologically *applied*. The conclusion offered here is that the Christian principles of (1) an incarnate god; (2) a godhead expressed in trinitarian form; (3) the individual human's possession of an immortal soul; (4) resurrection; (5) a postmortem judgment; and (6) the promise of a reward of eternal life may have been adopted by early Christians from the original source, that is, from the traditional theological doctrines of Egyptian religion that had existed for more than three thousand years before Christ.

6

Ritual and Magic

The thrust of the argument to this point has been that both Judaism and Christianity derive major premises of their theological belief systems from a common root, the Egyptian religious tradition, that predated both by millennia. But religious belief as intellectual adherence to a set of theological propositions that taken together are said to "make sense" is most commonly characteristic of theologians. For most people, religious faith involves much more than intellectual assent, including belief and participation in ritual and magic. This is even more the case in the formative period of any new religion. Over time, all religions add rituals and magic to their repertoires so that the rite and belief come to reinforce one another and, in some cases, become indistinguishable. In this sense ritual and magic can become equal in importance with a religion's core beliefs in the eyes of the devout beholder so that initiation in and continued adherence to a new faith can come to depend more heavily upon its rituals and magic than upon its intellectual appeal. This chapter continues the search for the memory of Egypt in Judaism and Christianity by inquiring into the origins of some rituals and magical rites of both religions to determine if they have their roots in Egyptian magical and ritual practice.

While most of us are comfortable with the words "rituals" or "rites" when used within a religious context, to the modern ear the use of the word "*magic*" in a similar context might seem offensive. I do not mean it to be, for I agree with John Crossan that there is nothing inherently pejorative in describing certain religious practices as magical. After all, religions themselves affirm that

god is present during their services and employ ritual prayers to call upon him to do things for the assembled congregation. Magic, when practiced by a religious institution, aims at making divine power present *indirectly through communal ritual*. When the same objective is sought by an *individual*, that is, the magician, the god's presence is achieved *directly through personal miracle*.[1] Magic in this sense of the term is essentially more a question of means than ends. In his excellent study of magic within a social context, David Aune makes the following observations. Magic and religion are so closely intertwined that it is virtually impossible to regard them as discrete socio-cultural categories. One man's magic is another's act of faith. Magic is a phenomenon that exists within the matrix of most religions, that is, it has a part to play within them that is defined by the institutions and values of the religion. Thus asking for the help of angels is good magic while calling upon demons is bad magic. It is the *context of magic*, i.e., its practice within acceptable institutional boundaries and values, rather than *magic per se* that assigns it a positive or negative quality. Magic appears to be "as universal a feature of religion as deviant behavior is of human societies."[2] All religions, Judaism and Christianity among them, are possessed of magical rites and rituals whose practice and exposition reinforce the believer's faith in the theological premises of the faith, and to inquire into the sources of ritual and magic need not imply anything pejorative.

Two magical traditions are of most importance to this analysis, the Judaic tradition evident during the time of Christ and the much older Egyptian tradition that was thriving as an integral part of the Osiris-Isis cult at the same time. The Judaic tradition had been most influenced by the Atenist Egyptian tradition until the time of the Babylonian Exile and return (fifth century B.C.E.), at which time Judaism became heavily influenced by Babylonian ritual magic. The influences of the East—astrology, demonology, ritualistic conjuring, and so on—all made themselves felt within the Judaic tradition so that Jewish magicians came to be held in very high esteem and were particularly valued for their role as exorcists.[3] In both Greek and Egyptian magical papyri of the time, Yahweh is mentioned repeatedly for his usefulness in magic. In these pagan documents it is noteworthy that the name of Yahweh as a magical charm outnumbers the name of any other deity by three to one.[4] By the end of the first century Jewish magicians had codified their magic in the *Sefer ha-Razim* (the *Book of Secrets*), a magical text that gave directions for manipulating the major and minor demonic powers by prayers and sacrifices.[5] There was nothing new about Jewish magic, for Jews had practiced ritual magic since the beginning when Moses fashioned the bronze serpent to cure the affliction of his people. Even Solomon, perhaps the most prestigious figure in Jewish history, was a great master of demons, which he controlled with a secret amulet, a seal en-

graved with the name of Yahweh, that had been given him by "the Lord, the highest god, Sabaoth." It was out of a branch of this magical tradition that Christ emerged.

The northern (Samarian/Galilee) Jewish magical tradition from which Christ came was different from the southern (Judean) tradition. In the south prophets and magicians were honored for their words and deeds as instruments of god. The northern tradition was much more radical and constituted a special brand of prophetic tradition going back to Elijah and Elisha, in which oracular political prophecy and popular individual magic manifested through spells and miracle cures were central.[6] Within this tradition the magician and holy men were revered not just for their words and deeds but for their claim that they possessed a private and personal relationship with god that transcended the usual priestly structure and ritual of the community. The magicians combined prophecy with magic and became magical prophets.[7] These magicians summoned god directly through personal miracle, bypassing or even rejecting the usual means of summoning god indirectly through communal ritual. In the northern Jewish magical tradition, the magical prophet was a type of wonder worker, who operated with certain and secure divine authority unmediated by or dependent upon the usual forms, rituals, and institutions (the priesthood and temple sacrifice) through which divine power was legitimately seen to usually operate.[8] Under these circumstances conflict between these magical prophets and the established religion was inevitable.

These Jewish magicians were usually men of the people and peasants or at least walked among them and claimed to be of them. This gave them a very different perspective on the world from the elite priesthood who opposed them, and often included terrible visions of destruction for a social order they regarded as unjust, that is, a peasant apocalypticism. They wandered from place to place performing miracles and administering cures to common people. The Gospels record examples of Christ's magic during his wanderings, noting that he performed 6 exorcisms, 17 healings, and 8 nature miracles. Jesus never touched individuals who were possessed by demons, driving them out with gestures and authoritative commands. He did, however, touch those who were suffering from illness, a common technique of magicians. The sociology of Christ's healings and exorcisms makes sense in terms of peasant needs. There were no hospitals in antiquity and the sick were often left to suffer until they died or recovered naturally. Sickness and death were omnipresent in the ancient world. Probably a third of all live births were dead by the age of six. By age 16 something like 60% of all live births would have already died. By age 26 that number would have increased to 75%, and by age 40 90% of all live births would have been dead. Very few, perhaps not more than 3% of those born,

lived to see 60.[9] Doctors were rare and expensive and usually unavailable to the poor. One can imagine the popularity of Christ or any magician who cured the sick and did so without charge. Further, there were no asylums for the mentally ill, who were often turned out by their families to wander like animals in the countryside and towns. Magicians sometimes could cure these disturbed individuals, providing them with the only treatment available to them. Some of these magicians went a step further and claimed that they could forgive sins by touching or incantation. This represented a threat to the religious establishment, which claimed that only expensive temple sacrifice could successfully beseech god to forgive sins.[10]

It is likely that these magical prophets were more common than the surviving historical records suggest. Within the first 70 years of the first century C.E., including Christ's lifetime, history has left us as historical examples of the prophet magicians of northern Israel the names of Ben-Dosa, Christ himself, Judas the Galilean, Simon of Perea, Anthronges of Judea, and a very curious fellow known only as "the Egyptian," who gathered several thousand followers at the Mount of Olives in expectation of the Messiah's arrival before being arrested by the Romans.

The Judaic magical tradition, then, was comprised of two main streams, the Babylonian described above and the Egyptian, the older and probably the more significant of the two. As noted earlier, the Egyptian influence was the most profound cultural influence on Judaism from the beginning, and even though the Babylonian influence was strong during the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods, it by no means completely eclipsed the Egyptian influence. Some of the rites and practices of the Jewish magicians during this period and after have strong parallels in Egyptian practices of the same period. While it is likely that some Egyptian magical practices had been associated with Judaism for a long time, it was only after the return from exile in Babylon that these practices were officially codified within Judaism itself. Other practices current in Egyptian magic at that time were probably included as well. It is likely, then, that the Jewish magical tradition contains both very old and comparatively recent (fifth to fourth century B.C.E.) borrowings from the Egyptian magical tradition. For example, the use of the *tefillin* as representative of the pharaonic *ureaus* probably dates from the days of Akhenaten while the design of the Ark of the Covenant as described by Ezekiel may only date from the period immediately after the return from Babylon.

Like the Osiris-Isis theological tradition, the Egyptian magical tradition persisted in an unbroken line from time immemorial until it was forcibly liquidated at the hands of the Christian emperors in the fourth century C.E. The Egyptian magical tradition was a profound influence upon both the Judaic and

Christian magical traditions right to the end. The magician was a very powerful figure in Egyptian society. The great magicians were recognized by pharaoh himself as the official directors of religious and magical ceremonies and were given the title of *Kher heb.*[11] Egyptian magicians were widely regarded as important men even in Israel where to this day Egyptian magical amulets are a common archaeological find.[12] The Egyptian magician could recite spells, incantations, prayers, and other magical formulae often with terrifying effects. For example, Greek writers of the period record that Egyptian sorcerers could send horrifying dreams to men and women to steal their minds and senses. Such magicians could cause lust in a person, or sickness, and even death. Raising the dead was said to be a common occurrence, as was the ability of Egyptian magicians to assume animal forms or make themselves invisible.[13] Other texts tell of Egyptian magicians' ability to foretell the future, explain auguries and portents, interpret dreams, diagnose illnesses, declare the names of the spirits of the dead, concoct potions and medicines, and recite the secret names of the gods.[14] The influence of Egyptian magic upon Christianity was evident early on when Christian "holy men" performed some of the same magical feats as Egyptian magicians but in the name of Christ. Early texts note that Macarius changed a woman who had been turned into a mare back again by sprinkling holy water upon her. Paul the Simple, an early monk, was said to have cast out a devil that had taken the form of a "mighty dragon 70 cubits long." Another monk, Po Apollo, cast a spell upon a group of people worshipping a pagan image, immobilizing them on the spot so they could not escape the heat of the blazing sun. And one Petarpemotis was said to have made a dead man speak.[15]

Having established that an Egyptian magical tradition existed alongside Judaism and Christianity during their formative periods and, in the case of Judaism, for almost a millennium thereafter, the question remains can any Egyptian magical ideas, rituals, and practices be found within each religion confirming the common influence of Egyptian magic on both religions? Not surprisingly in light of the previous analysis, one does not have to look far to discover examples of Egyptian magic within the rites and rituals of Judaism and Christianity.

Beginning with Judaism, a number of magical parallels are evident. Among the Judaic magical amulets that are almost certainly of Egyptian origin are the phylacteries or *tefillin* worn by observant Jews during daily morning prayer. The *tefillin* are two small leather boxes each containing a scroll upon which quotations from the *Pentateuch* are inscribed. When worn, one box is fixed around the forehead so that it perches outward while the other is worn usually on the left arm held in place by leather strips wrapped around the arm. In an-

cient times the *tefillin* were probably worn throughout the day, not just during prayer, and were used to provide divine protection from hostile forces and from pollution understood in a ritual sense.[16] The origins of the *tefillin* are almost certainly found in the Egyptian *uraeus*, the coiled cobra worn on the brow of the pharaoh's crown since time immemorial. The worship of serpents as magical creatures is very old in Egypt, predating the dynastic age, and the center of snake worship was the Delta. The origin of the *uraeus* is uncertain. Gardiner suggests that it may originally have been the symbol of royal power of the predynastic Libyan kings of the Delta and was adopted by the early Egyptian conquerors as a symbol of their own power in the same manner in which early Egyptian pharaohs adopted the lion's tail, also probably of Libyan origin, as a symbol of royal power.[17] Whatever its origin, the *uraeus* had become the official symbol of Egyptian royal power by the early dynastic age. Like the later *tefillin*, the *uraeus* was a magical amulet that demonstrated god's power to protect the king against hostile forces. The image of an erect cobra coiled to strike, worn on the pharaoh's forehead to protect him, was symbolic of god's power and divine protection. That the *tefillin* are likely of Egyptian origin is evident from the similarity of its magical form and function to the *uraeus*. Further evidence lies in the fact that the leather strap holding the leather box to the left arm is ritually wound in seven coils. If one examines the number of coils with which the cobra of the *uraeus* is usually portrayed, on the funerary mask of Tutankhamen, for example, it is striking that the number of coils, seven, is precisely equal to the number of coils with which the leather scroll box of the *tefillin* is secured to the arm.[18] If, as I have suggested earlier, Moses transported the religion of Akhenaten to his own people, it would not be unusual to transport some of the more important symbols along with it as well, in this case the symbol of the protection of god himself.

It has been suggested by some scholars for a long time that even so important a magical artifact as the Ark of the Covenant may have had Egyptian origins. Early in this century G. Hancock was struck by a carving he had seen on the western wall of the Luxor Temple's colonnade. The carving had been ordered by Tutankhamen to commemorate the festival of Apet, a celebration of the annual inundation of the Nile. Hancock caught the detail of a boat suspended from poles carried on the shoulders of the priests in a manner similar to that in which the Ark was usually portrayed. Hancock knew that the Ethiopian word for Ark was *tabot* and believed it to be derived from the Hebrew *tevah*, which means a box-like chest containing sacramental vessels or the dead. Another Hebrew scholar, Solomon Mandelkern, affirms that the Hebrew *tevah* is identical in meaning to the Hebrew *aron*, the word used in the Bible to describe the Ark.[19] A few years later Hancock's hypothesis found further support in the

work of Kenneth Kitchen, Professor of Egyptology at Liverpool University. Kitchen suggested that the caskets in the tomb of Tutankhamen may have been prototypes for the design of the Ark of the Covenant. At the very least, Kitchen argued, "they prove that wooden boxes lined with gold were standard artifacts of the religious furniture of the period and that Moses would therefore have had the technology and skills at his disposal to manufacture the Ark."[20]

Other scholars, while agreeing that the Ark probably was copied from an Egyptian funerary chest, argue that the copying did not occur during the time of Moses but happened much later. Still other scholarship suggests that many Jewish and Christian rituals and artifacts have their origin in Canaanite and Babylonian sources, including the Ark. Julian Morgenstern, writing in 1928, argued that the Ark's origins were not Egyptian but were the "tribal cult-object and palladium of the tribe of Ephraim."[21] Accordingly, its origins are proto-Canaanite or Semitic, not Egyptian. The original Ark was brought to Jerusalem by David and ensconced in his tent sanctuary from where it was later moved to Solomon's temple. Some time before or during the temple's destruction by the Babylonians, the Ark disappeared. After the Jews returned from Babylon, the temple was rebuilt. It was during this time, Morgenstern asserts, that the Ark was redesigned. What had begun as a box-like cult artifact was transformed into a golden throne upon which Adonai sat in majestic solitude within the Holy of Holies, wherein no mortal other than the high priest was permitted to enter.[22] Given the description of the Ark provided by Ezekiel at this time, Klein has concluded that the model for the Ark's redesign was an Egyptian funerary chest of the kind routinely buried with Egyptian kings and nobles.[23]

Klein goes to great lengths to describe the similarities of the Ark and the Egyptian funerary chest, including the identification of the seraphim described by Isaiah with the four Egyptian guardian goddesses of Isis, Nephthys, Neith, and Selket.[24] He then compares the description of the funerary chest with the vision of the Ark beheld by Ezekiel, leading to the conclusion that the designs are the same. Klein suggests that the artistic rendition of the four goddesses on the Ark are accomplished in the artistic style of the Amarna period, wherein the "rule of frontality" had been replaced by a more natural portrayal of human figures. The more natural portrayals on the Ark suggest to Klein that they are a memory of the Amarna period carried perhaps unconsciously by the Jews throughout Exile until the time came to redesign the Ark for the new temple at which time Jewish artists used the Egyptian funerary chest of the Armana period as a model.[25]

All this is the speculation of which academic discourses often consist. While there is no agreement as to *when* the Ark was constructed, there is sufficient

agreement that its design bears strong similarities to some form of Egyptian coffin or chest. If Moses, as the Bible says, wished to construct some form of vessel to carry the stone tablets of Sinai for a wandering people, one likely model for such a vehicle might indeed have been an Egyptian funerary chest. *Exodus* records that when the Jews left Egypt, they did so carrying the *embalmed* body of Joseph with them.[26] Joseph was an important governmental official and was buried in the usual Egyptian manner. This implies that his internal organs were removed and placed in canopic jars carried in the usual funerary chest bearing the likeness of the four goddesses of Isis, Nephthys, Selket, and Neith. These chests were routinely covered with hammered gold and were carried by ropes attached to shoulder poles. The funerary chest was typically carried behind the coffin in the funeral procession and interred with the body in the tomb. The Bible makes no further mention of what happened to Joseph's body once the Israelites left Egypt with it. But it is a reasonable assumption that if the Israelites took Joseph's coffin with them, they would have taken along the important funerary chest as well. What happened to the coffin is unknown. But from the time of the Exodus onward, the Israelites are always found in the company of an "ark" of some kind, an ark that strongly resembled the funerary chest of an Egyptian official. And if, as the Bible says, Moses ordered Betzalel the artist to construct the Ark, it is not unreasonable that the artist would have utilized a design with which he was already familiar from the funeral paraphernalia that the Israelites brought with them when they carried the coffin of Joseph into the wilderness.

One of the more interesting artistic expressions of Akhenaten's new religion was the portrayal of the power of his new god as rays emanating from the sun disk reaching down to the earth. These rays were usually portrayed as spindly arms with a hand, quite literally expressing the power of the "right hand of god." In a number of portrayals the outstretched right hand is shown offering the *ankh*, the Egyptian symbol of life, to the nostrils of the royal family. This power of the Egyptian god as symbolized by the outstretched right arm and hand, Klein argues, is precisely what the authors of *Exodus* were alluding to when Moses says that god took the Israelites out of Egypt through "the power of his mighty right hand and his outstretched arm."[27] The Egyptian roots of this magic symbol are further reflected in the survival of the *yad*, literally "the hand" in Hebrew, as a religious artifact used in Judaic services. When biblical books or other holy scrolls are read in public, a synagogue officiant usually guides the eyes of the reader with a silver or wooden pointer. The pointer is called the *yad* and is shaped as a thin spindly outstretched arm ending in a right hand wih a finger pointing forward, an exact replica of the spindly arms emanating from the sun disk of Aten portrayed in Egyptian reliefs thousands of

years ago. Long after the Egyptian origins of this religious instrument have been forgotten, its physical shape and use continue to be a faint echo of the Jewish experience in Egypt.

Among the most important magical elements of Judaism is the claim that the people of Israel were the only people chosen by god to receive the one true religion. The notion of a "chosen people" implied that the Jews were *kadosh*, that is to say, a holy people *as a people* separate from others. It was this claim to holiness that separated the Jews from all others in the eyes of god, separated from everybody else to be the servants of Adonai. The claim to holiness expressed as separateness bestowed by god was the distinguishing character of the chosen people and not, as is often mistakenly assumed to be the case, an ethnic or racial characteristic. Jewish identity was based on the idea that the true god manifested himself only to the *kadosh*, the separate community of holy people, who were therefore especially loved by the true god. The idea of a people as chosen by god has deep historical roots in Egyptian culture and history and, as far as we can determine, may have originated in Egypt, there being no evidence of its presence in the one other culture, the Sumerian, that was contemporaneous with Egypt. Adolf Erman describes the Egyptian idea of a chosen people.

> It is well known that the Egyptians considered themselves an indigenous people, free from any foreign taint. Were they not the peculiar people, specially loved by the gods? Did not the great gods first manifest themselves in Egypt, where the sun-god ruled and fought as a king, and where his descendants still sat on the throne? Therefore the Egyptians alone were termed "men" (*romet*); other nations were negroes, Asiatics, or Libyans, but not men.[28]

It is not difficult to see how such an idea might have received even greater emphasis during the time of Akhenaten when the followers of the heretic king proclaimed that only they were worshipping the one true god, Aten. When Moses adopted the major principles of Atenism for his theological system, it would have been natural for him to claim for his own people the same special status in the eyes of god that the Atenists, from whose theology much of the Mosaic theology was drawn, claimed for themselves.

Magic is conservative and tends to persist in *form* long after the *substance* that gave rise to it has been forgotten. One has only to witness the modern festival of Halloween in the United States or examine the recent fad by which people believe in the power of angels to grasp the validity of this proposition. The United States is almost the prototype of a rational, secular, democratic, postindustrial society, a place where science and empiricism are powerful forces in shaping many elements of American social life. And yet each year Americans spend millions of dollars on costumes so that they may dress as crea-

tures returned from the dead and walk about the earth for an evening of ghoulish celebration. Few of the participants recall the superstitious origins of this holiday and even fewer believe in the demonic creatures that their costumes and celebration represent. In other words, the *form* of the original magic persists even as the substance has been long forgotten. So it often is with the rituals and magic of religions. In the case of Judaism one is able to point to a number of magical artifacts that have persisted throughout history, whose forms survive and have come to be thought of as peculiar characteristics of Judaic religious belief and practice when, in fact, their origins can reasonably be argued to have been Egyptian.

Charges of magical practice within Christianity arose almost immediately after Christ's death as his enemies sought to discredit his life and teaching. One of the more common accusations was that Christ had spent time in Egypt where he gained knowledge of Egyptian magical practices. The attempt to discredit this accusation, Morton Smith argues, explains why the story of Jesus' flight to Egypt occurs only in the gospel of Matthew. Matthew has Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt shortly after Christ's birth to avoid Herod's wrath over the rumor that a new king had been born among the people. Like any good propagandist Matthew sets out to discredit the charge by admitting to part of it while discounting its substance. That is, Matthew admits that Jesus had gone to Egypt but had done so as an infant, making the charge that he had learned Egyptian magic there untrue.[29] The charge that Jesus was an Egyptian magician would have been of no consequence to Greeks and other peoples who might, given the high repute in which Egyptian magicians were held, have seen it as a compliment. But to the orthodox Jewish religious establishment, the charge of Egyptian magic, nothwithstanding their own complicity in it as noted above, would have been a powerful counterargument to the claim of Christ's followers that he was "the son of god."

Despite Christ's followers' attempts to discredit the accusation that Jesus practiced Egyptian magic, the charge never really disappeared. Matthew's story about Jesus' Egyptian sojourn remains for some scholars unconvincing to this day as it must have for critics contemporaneous with Jesus. The problem is the "hidden years" in Christ's life. The Gospels are silent about the first 12 years of Christ's life. After his birth we do not encounter him again until he is found, as Luke says, "teaching in the synagogue" at 12 years of age. In the modern era we are used to thinking of a 12-year-old as still very much of a child. But in antiquity a 12-year-old was already an adult. It was the age at which a boy was permitted full participation in Jewish religious rituals. In Egypt the average age of marriage in the New Kingdom was between 12 and 13 and Egyptian women usually gave birth to their first child by 14. A youth of 12 would have already

completed his formal education in an Egyptian House of Life where he learned to read and write and studied the arts of his trade or profession. In the process an Egyptian youth would have become thoroughly familiar with the principles and beliefs of the Egyptian Osiris-Isis religion. If we combine Matthew's account that Jesus was taken by his parents to Egypt with his absence of 12 years, we might reasonably surmise that Jesus remained in Egypt for that time where he might have been exposed to Egyptian magic as a matter of course.

The virtue of Christ's hidden years to researchers is that they are hidden and may thus be filled with any number of explanations. What follows is no less an unproven speculation than many others. It is interesting nonetheless to speculate about what Jesus' time in Egypt could have been like. When Joseph and Mary left Israel for Egypt, as Matthew says they did, they would most likely have sought out relatives if they had any or one of the many Jewish communities that had been established within Egypt during the Ptolemaic period. These communities were most commonly located within the cities or larger towns. Here Joseph might have found employment and Jesus would have found the opportunity for an education. Any Egyptian town of any size would have a temple to Osiris-Isis to which would likely have been attached a House of Life, the scriptorum where Egyptians educated their children. Nor would it have been unusual for such a town to have a Greek *gymnasium*, a sort of primary-high school equivalent where Greeks educated their young. By Christ's time the *gymnasium* had been heavily Egyptianized in terms of curriculum and rituals. For example, Greeks matriculating from the *gymnasium* in Egypt often swore their oaths to Egyptian gods. If, as some assert, Jesus was literate and spoke Greek, he could have learned both skills at the *gymnasium* while a boy in Egypt.

To remain in Egypt for some time might have appeared attractive to Joseph and Mary for other reasons. The rumors of infidelity that must have surrounded Mary's pregnancy were absent in Egypt and presented no barrier to the advancement of their son as they would have in Israel. In the normal course of things, the charge of Jesus' illegitimacy would have presented no real barrier to the young man as orthodox Jews define a Jew as a child of a Jewish mother. The child's paternity is of no religious consequence. But in Mary's case the charge was far more serious. Mary was charged with conceiving a child by marital infidelity. This was a very different matter from illegitimacy and involved religious implications. In Jewish tradition the child of an adulterous relationship is called a *mamzer* in Hebrew and is denied participation in Jewish religious rituals. A *mamzer* is a social and religious outcast and the discovery of a *mamzer* in a village often resulted in him being driven away. Such outcasts wandered from village to village all their lives, having whatever stability in their

lives disrupted whenever the villagers discovered their origins. In Egypt no such fate would have befallen Joseph's son. There Jesus would have had the opportunity for an education whereas his questionable lineage might have made it difficult for him to receive even a rudimentary synagogue education in Israel. In any case this would have consisted in little more than learning to read Jewish religious texts. Egypt offered much greater opportunities. In either the House of Life or the *gymnasium*, the boy could study subjects—medicine, the trades, law—not available to him in Israel while becoming literate in Greek and Egyptian. Judging from the intellectual activity of the Jewish community in Alexandria, Jews apparently were able to avail themselves of both Greek and Egyptian educational opportunities with little difficulty. Had Joseph and Mary stayed in Egypt for the 12 hidden years it might have been simply to provide themselves and their son with a better life than they would have had in a small town in Israel. This was the case for almost a million Jews who had already settled in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period and by the time of Christ had been there almost four generations. A Jewish family living in Egypt at the time would have been most unremarkable.

Spending his youth in Egypt would have provided Jesus with plenty of opportunity to become familiar with Egyptian magic. Magic was such a fundamental part of Egyptian life and magicians, soothsayers, and sorcerers so common that it would have been more remarkable if Jesus had been able to remain unaware of their activities. Apart from this, is there any evidence of Egyptian magic in Jesus' personal behavior and religious rites? As Morton Smith has argued in his fascinating work, *Jesus the Magician*, the circumstantial evidence is strong that Jesus was familiar with Egyptian magic and practiced it. Among the more interesting evidence is the possibility that Jesus himself may have carried the tatoo marks of the Egyptian magician. Tattooing charms, sacred signs, prayers, and spells upon one's flesh was a common practice for magicians, including Egyptian magicians. Directions for doing so are given plainly in the *Greek Magical Papyri* and other magical books of the period.[30] The evidence for Jesus having magaical tattoos comes from both Jewish and Christian sources.

The rabbinic tradition of stories about Jesus begins about the same time that Josephus wrote *Antiquities* or the last half of the first century of the Common Era. One of these rabbinic stories recounts the arrest of a distinguished rabbi named Eliezer (70–100 C.E.?), who as an old man was arrested by Jewish authorities on the suspicion that he was secretly a Christian.[31] During the trial Eliezer enters into a discussion with another rabbi over whether or not a man who cuts tatoos or letters in his flesh on the Sabbath is in violation of the sabbathic law. The other rabbis argue that the man is innocent. Eliezer argues for his guilt, in effect saying that in other cases people who did this were found

to be guilty. Eliezer says, "But is it not [the case that] Ben Stada (Christ) brought magic marks from Egypt in the scratches on his flesh?" The other rabbi replied, "He was a madman and you cannot base laws on [the actions of] madmen."[32] One deduces from this ancient transcript (1) that magical tatoos were a well-known phenomenon; (2) that it was commonly *believed* among the rabbis that Christ was himself tattooed in the manner of Egyptian magicians; and (3) that Jesus obtained these tatoos in Egypt before returning to Israel.[33] Smith argues that the Eliezer record is important and probably accurate. The story does not, as with other accounts, appear in the polemical literature but seems to be a straightforward account of a legal proceeding. Eliezer tells the story as part of the larger case at issue. It is offered as a passing reference to prove only a minor point. It is clear, however, from the reference that the other rabbis knew immediately who Christ was, believed that he was tattooed, and that he had obtained these tatoos in Egypt. Smith concludes that "the antiquity of the source, type of citation, connection with the report that he was in Egypt, and agreement with Egyptian magical practices, are considerable arguments in its favor."[34]

The charge that Jesus was tattooed with magical marks receives additional support from Christian sources, most pointedly from Saint Paul. In Galatians 6:17 Paul seems to be claiming that he bears special marks on his body similar to those carried by Jesus. Paul says, "From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body." This statement has puzzled Christian scholars for a long time who, Maccoby says, have resolved the dilemma by suggesting that Paul was claiming to possess the stigmata of Christ.[35] But there is not a single piece of evidence anywhere in any source that points to an awareness on the part of anyone that the stigmata were known during the time of early Christianity. The onset of the stigmata would have astounded both Christian and pagan alike and would surely have resulted in some record of its occurrence somewhere.

The first recorded instance of the stigmata occurred during the Middle Ages when Francis of Assisi (1182–1226 C.E.) was said to have manifested the wounds of Christ upon his body.[36] During this time the Christian Church entered a period of enhanced mysticism in which a number of magical manifestations were brought forward. Besides the stigmata the Church now emphasized the crucifixion rather than the resurrection as a central redemptive event and Jesus was commonly portrayed as suffering on the cross. Early Christians had heretofore not used the cross as a symbol of Christ until the fourth century, being appalled by an artifact that portrayed the death of God in the manner of a common criminal. When the cross was finally used, it was either a bare cross or else it was most common to portray Christ not pinioned to it but standing be-

fore it with upraised arms, the very symbol of resurrection. It was during the Middle Ages that the Christian Church affirmed for the first time that the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist was physically real and not just symbolic or transcendent. The affirmation by Pope Innocent III in 1215 came after an outbreak of a series of seemingly miraculous incidents in which the bread host used in the Eucharistic ceremony began to bleed when broken as part of the ceremony. R. J. Doyle and Nancy C. Lee, two microbiologists, have studied these events and concluded that the bleeding incidents can be reasonably attributed to the presence of a common breadmold, *serratia marcescens*, which produces a red fluid as a consequence of its own biological activity within the thick bread hosts used at the time.[37] When the hosts were broken as part of the Eucharistic ceremony, the fluid escaped giving the appearance that the host was bleeding. After numerous reports of this same event, Pope Innocent III proclaimed the doctrine of transubstantiation and affirmed that the bread and wine used in the Eucharistic ceremony were physically the body and blood of Christ.[38]

If not the stigmata what, then, could Paul have been referring to when he claimed to bear the "marks of Jesus" upon his flesh? One possibility favored by some biblical historians is that Paul is referring to the scars he received from beatings and stonings that he endured during his apostolic work. Another is that Paul wore the brand of the slave. It was not uncommon for slaves to be branded or tattooed to show to whom they belonged. But there is no evidence that Paul had ever been a slave nor, indeed, that Christ bore such a slave mark. Another possibility is that Paul bore a mark indicating a previous allegiance to some pagan god. In commentary upon Paul's claim, *The New American Bible* notes that devotees of pagan gods sometimes had marks of identification burned into their flesh.[39] Paul came from the city of Tarsus where there was a temple to the pagan god Attis. Given Paul's proclivity to change religions in his life and to embrace each with equal fervor, it is not impossible that he could have been a follower of the Attis cult. But as far as we know, the cult did not require tattooing. Some of the cult members emulated their god by castrating themselves, but this is a far cry from tattooing.[40] And even if Paul did bear the mark of Attis, it strains credulity that he would have been able to pass it off as a mark also possessed by Christ. It is possible that Paul was claiming to have the same "scratches" or tattoos that the rabbinic tradition claims Jesus possessed. The important point is that in mounting his own claim, Paul seems to be confirming that Jesus indeed possessed some marks or tattoos of which others were aware, as the rabbinic tradition affirms. If Jesus did not possess them, and they were fabrications of Jesus' enemies, then why did Paul claim to possess them if the story was false? One reasonable conclusion is simply that Jesus did in fact

carry the tattoos of the Egyptian magician, tattoos that the rabbinical tradition says he acquired as a young man in Egypt.

Jesus' introduction of the Eucharistic sacrifice is the most magic-soaked ritual of Christianity and is most likely of Egyptian origin although elements of it can be found in other pagan rituals. The central idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice is that Jesus transformed bread and wine at his last supper with his apostles into his own body and blood, which were then consumed by the apostles as a way of joining them with Jesus. All four writers of the Gospels present some version of this story. For example, Matthew tells us that "while they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, Take and eat; this is my body. Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins."[41] The idea of transforming bread and wine by magic into the magician's body and blood so that the food becomes endowed with magical powers and then sharing it with another person who by eating it becomes united with the magician is an old ritual and one that was routinely practiced by Egyptian magicians of the day.[42] Who eats of the magical food becomes united in love and identified with the magician. If, as in some cults, the magician is thought to be a god, then the subject is united with the god as well. Jesus' magic ritual was designed to bond his apostles to him in the same manner any Egyptian magician might use the ritual for the same purpose.

The sense of magic in Jesus' use of this ritual is appreciated if we remember that the Last Supper was not the only occasion where Jesus is said to have used it. He employed it again in other contexts, suggesting that consuming flesh and blood as votive food was a commonly known and employed magical rite as indeed it was among pagan magicians. John records that on the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves at Capernaum, Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."[43] The message is clear that all who eat the magic foods will be bound for eternity to the magician-god. Jesus goes on to say, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *remains in me and I in him*." (italics mine)[44] Thus it is that the god comes to dwell in the subject through magic and the subject comes to dwell in the god. It is difficult to avoid the impression that what we have here may be a common magical application of the old Egyptian doctrine of incarnation in which the gods come to dwell in things, in this case individuals who partake of the ritual. In any case, the Eucharistic rite understood as transformation of body and blood was suffi-

ciently common and known to be used in contexts beyond any idea of a special singular occurrence at the Last Supper. In this regard it is like all other magic.

Morton Smith suggests that accounts of the Eucharistic ritual found in surviving magical texts "have their closest parallels in Egyptian texts."[45] Smith draws upon the material contained in the *Demotic Magical Papyrus* for examples of eucharistic rites that are similar to the text of the Eucharist.[46] The *Demotic Magical Papyrus* (DMP) was written in the third century C.E. but its contents are much older. The first writing of the text cited here was most probably around the time of Christ. Written in both demotic and hieratic, the text is a collection of spells and invocations and contains examples of rituals using vessels and various fluids including animal blood. Smith offers the example of one such Egyptian ritual. The magician mingles various ingredients in a cup of wine and pronounces the following words over it.

> I am he of Abydos . . . I am this figure of one drowned that testifieth by writing . . . as to which the blood of Osiris bore witness . . . when it was poured in this cup, this wine. Give it, blood of Osiris that he gave to his Isis to make her feel love in her heart for him . . . give it, the blood of (magician's name) to . . . (recipient's name) in this cup, this bowl of wine, today, to cause her to feel a love for him in her heart, the love that Isis felt for Osiris . . .[47]

The ritual seems designed to cause a woman to feel love for a man. But that is beside the point. What is important is that the magical methodology is identical to the Eucharistic ritual in which the magician-god gives his own body and blood to a recipient who, by eating or drinking it, will be united with the magician in love and life. The ritual is surely Egyptian in practice if not in origin (which is lost in any case) and, if Jesus had learned Egyptian magic, would have been as familiar to him as to any other Egyptian magician.

John notes that the ritual caused great concern among the Jews who heard Christ preach at Capernaum. Hearing Jesus offer his body and blood, John records them saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"[48] and they might well have thought Jesus mad. Christian theologians have made much of the claim that the Eucharist pronounced at the Last Supper has its roots in the Jewish Passover meal. To be sure, eating is as common to Jews as it is to Christians. But by no stretch of the theological imagination can the Eucharist be regarded as having its roots in any Jewish religious practice known to Jews then or since. First, the notion of drinking blood—symbolic or otherwise—is anathema to Jews and has been since the time of Moses. It is among the most ancient Judaic taboos. The very idea of touching, never mind drinking, blood would be thought of as a ritual atrocity, even an abomination. This aspect of the Eucharistic rite is completely non-Jewish in origin and practice and by no rea-

sonable argument can it be made an extension of Jewish ritual practice. As Morton Smith so candidly puts it, "To try to derive them [the Eucharistic rituals] from the passover ritual or any other Jewish rite is ludicrous. Strange as some rituals of Judaism might be, they do not include eating people."[49] Nor can the *central idea* of the Eucharist be reasonably derived from Judaic religious practice. The notion that by eating the body and blood of the god one can become one with the godhead who is divine and died for our sins is so obviously Osiran as to be almost beyond reasonable question. Moreover, the idea of a blood sacrifice of a human was anathema to the Jews for it amounts to a reinstatement of human sacrifice, which the Jews had long since abandoned and which was forbidden by Jewish law.[50] The two central elements of the Christian Eucharistic rite, then, are clearly of pagan origin, mostly likely Egyptian, and would have been well known to any Egyptian magician of the time.

Baptism is the most fundamental Christian rite insofar as one must first be baptized to become a full participant in the rituals of the Christian faith. Over the centuries baptism came to represent both the initiation of the person into the Christian faith and the forgiveness of sin. With the introduction of infant baptism in the modern period, the emphasis was placed upon a person being brought into the faith rather than upon the forgiveness of sin although Christians maintain that baptism removes the "original sin" of the infant. Its use by John the Baptist, however, was the reverse. John used baptism as a ritual means of forgiving sins. In antiquity sickness and sin were often equated, illness being often seen as a divine punishment for the sinner's transgressions. When the Baptist (and later Christ) cured people by ritual and baptism, he was also forgiving sins.[51] This was subversive of the Judaic religious authorities, who held a monopoly on the forgiveness of sin by requiring expensive temple sacrifice as the means of beseeching God to forgive the sinner. It is only with Christ's baptism that the ritual acquired the implication of an initiation rite, of being made fit to be brought into the presence of the religious community and of God, indeed, to have God enter and dwell within the person. Over the centuries the meaning of baptism as initiation superceded its importance as a means of forgiving sins. Sins were still "washed away," but the primary value of being "born again" was to be made ready to join the community of believers and to enter the presence of god by permitting god to "enter one's heart."

The origins of baptism are most probably Egyptian although it is not necessarily likely that John the Baptist, who seems to have introduced the rite to Christians, obtained it directly from this source. Crossan suggests that "archaic water-rituals of purification" were transformed by John into "a magic ritual that saves."[52] In explaining John's practice of baptism, *The New American Bible* notes that various forms of ritual washing by various groups were common in

Palestine between 150 B.C.E. and 250 C.E.[53] and John may have copied the washing ritual from the purificatory washings of the Essenes in Qumran.[54] If we separate the ritual of baptism into its two elements—ritual washing to forgive sins and transformation of the individual to receive God with consequent reception into the community—then it is reasonable that John copied the ritual washing from elsewhere for it was not a common Jewish practice, whereas Christ through his baptism established the transformation element later. But if we regard the two elements as ritually inseparable, then the only place where both elements are found in a similar ritual is in Egypt, in what Gardiner calls the rite of "baptism of pharaoh."[55]

The Egyptian baptismal rite has its origins in the Heliopolitan worship of the sun early in the Pyramid Age. The Egyptians believed that each morning the sun passed through the waters of the ocean before being reborn, emerging purified and revitalized. The ritual baptism of the pharaoh each morning symbolized this event and renewed the life and vigor of the recipient.[56] At the start of each day, pharaoh entered the temple called the House of Morning where he prepared to make himself worthy to greet the sun god. Two priests representing the gods Thoth and Horus sprinkled him with water brought from the Sacred Lake of the temple. This water was believed to possess special properties for it was believed to be the body fluid of Osiris himself.[57] Although the ritual was of solar origin, by the time of the New Kingdom Osiran elements came to play a major role in it. The officiating priests, for example, wore the masks of Thoth and Horus, both of whom had prominent roles in the Osiran myth. It was these gods who performed the ritual of resurrection over the corpse of Osiris. New life was brought to Osiris' limbs and body by washing, clearly linking washing with magic water to rebirth.[58] As if to ensure that observers understood that the king was being transformed and reborn by the ceremony, portrayals of pharaoh's baptism show a water jug held over his head with water pouring from it. Moreover, the water is depicted not with the hieroglyph for water, but with the *ankh*, the hieroglyph that is the symbol for life.[59] So important was the ritual of baptism to the Egyptians that some form of it, purification or offering of a libation, became an essential rite in all important religious and state rituals. It even appeared in the funerary liturgy where the daily ritual was repeated in the washing of the dead.

Although baptism as ritual washing to cleanse oneself is an old rite in Egyptian theology, it is important to understand that its origins and meaning *do not lie in the forgiveness of sin* as they seem to have for John the Baptist. Egyptian baptism was meant to prepare the recipient to enter into the presence of the god or, as later when the Osiran doctrine of personal piety and sin moved to the forefront of Egyptian religion, to prepare the recipient to receive the god

within him. Thus it was that through baptism one was "reborn" or made god-like or made worthy of union with the god. Such an idea is not very different from the idea that baptism conferred a "state of grace" necessary to enter into the presence of the god. Gardiner recognized the similarity between the Egyptian and Christian rites. "The analogy of our rite (Egyptian) to that of Christian baptism is close enough. . . . In both cases a symbolic cleansing by means of water serves as initiation into a properly legitimized religious life."[60] Gardiner suggests that the meaning and significance of this baptism is brought out by an inscription of a wall scene in the great hall at Karnak. The scene portrays Sethos I being purified by the water of life. The accompanying words read, "I purify thee with life and dominion, that thou mayest grow young, like thy father Re, and make a jubilee-festival like Atum, being arisen gloriously as prince of joy."[61]

The Egyptian rite of baptism in its emphasis upon transforming the recipient so that he is pleasing and acceptable to god is almost identical in meaning to what Christians attribute to Christ when he was baptized. Both rites are also quite different from John's use of baptism primarily as a mechanism to forgive sins. Even John seems to have recognized this. When Jesus came to be baptized, John tried to dissuade him for surely Christ had no sins to be forgiven. It was not merely an issue of which man was superior in stature in God's eyes. It was rather the relevance of baptism at all to a man who had never known sin. Christ's baptism was *not* about forgiveness of sin but about establishing his divinity in the eyes of men and receiving the presence of the godhead within him. Matthew describes the event with the same drama an Egyptian priest might describe the baptism of pharaoh. Matthew recounts, "After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"[62] In explaining this event *The New American Bible* asserts "The baptism of Jesus is the occasion on which he is equipped for his ministry by the Holy Spirit and proclaimed to be the son of god."[63] Through his baptism Christ is reborn in that like the Egyptian king his divinity is reaffirmed (Egyptian kings were thought to be the divine children of the sun god), and his special powers drawn from god (Egyptian kings were believed to possess their royal authority from god) are confirmed once again. Neither Christ's baptism nor Egyptian baptism was about washing away sins or seeking forgiveness for them. Both were about divinities reaffirming their divinity through ritual and preparing themselves for the special tasks that that divinity conferred upon both. Seen in this light, John the Baptist's puzzlement on the banks of the Jordan is understandable. As a wandering hermit-like ascetic who saw visions, it is

unlikely that John would have known about the rites and meaning of Egyptian baptism. If Christ had knowledge of Egyptian religion and magic as practiced by the Osiris-Isis cult in Palestine, he might have known both its ritual and meaning. If Christ were seeking to lay claim to a special relationship with the godhead (Christ called him *Abba* or father) as well as to special divine powers, he could hardly have a chosen a ritual more appropriate than Egyptian baptism.

This still leaves the question of baptism as a mechanism for the forgiveness of sin. Given that such forgiveness was not an integral element of the original Egyptian ritual, how did John the Baptist come to use it as such? It is possible that, as Crossan says, he adopted it from the Essenes at Qumran, but that leaves open the question of its origin since Jews usually did not practice ritual washing for that purpose. Ritual washing in one form or another had probably been around in many cultures for millennia. But ritual washing *specifically to forgive sin* is another matter and requires some idea of sin that transcends purely ritual offenses and includes unacceptable personal and social behavior for which the individual feels responsible. It was the Egyptians, it will be recalled from the previous analysis, who began to develop the idea of sin in conjunction with the evolution of social ethics and the democratization of the Osiran myth before the New Kingdom. The idea of personal responsibility for sin had to await the turning inward to personal piety and a personal relationship with god that developed after the ninth century B.C.E. By Ptolemaic times the idea of sin and personal responsibility for it had reemerged full blown in conjunction with the Osiris-Isis religion and found a receptive audience among Greeks, Romans, and Jews, the latter of whom were beginning to develop a casuistic sense of ethical thinking. It was probably during this period that Egyptians began to regard ritual cleansing as a means of absolving oneself from sin even as the original significance of the washing was based in the ancient doctrine of reaffirming the solar-divinity of the king.[64] Once established in Ptolemaic Egypt, the idea of baptism as a means of forgiving sins might easily have made its way into Palestine where the Essenes, John the Baptist, and others might have adopted it. Even so, this would not account for baptism as a ritual understood by early Christians to transform them in a manner in which they could "live" in the god and the god "live" in them. It was a meaning that would have been incomprehensible to a Jew, Roman, Babylonian or Greek, but one that would have been instantly recognized by an Egyptian magician.

It is worth repeating that there is nothing necessarily pejorative about exploring elements of magic and ritual within the context of Judaism and Christianity, and nothing pejorative is intended by this analysis. Magic and mystery seem required by the human intellect, including that other form of modern

magic called "reason," to make sense of one's human existence. Reason serves to provide us with the ability to "make sense" of our existence in terms of facts and material evidence, but almost any attempt to derive human meaning from this kind of evidence requires magic and mystery as alternative ways of knowing and experiencing the great human adventure. Magic, ritual, and mystery provide us with another way of knowing about things that seem to defy material definition, another way reaches beyond the confines of reason and permits the intellect to comprehend events that are important to us by making a transcendent, if not divine, power present to us.

It is not only that man's cerebral cortex renders him capable of imagination and conceptualization, both of which can in a strict sense be interpreted as functions of reason. Beyond that we possess a remarkable ability to endow these images and concepts with meaning that transcends any objectively rational assessment of their nature or worth. And so while it is reason that tells the devout believer that the Eucharistic host is but material bread and wine, it is the transcendent ability to endow these artifacts and their accompanying rituals with meaning beyond evidence that informs the heart that the body and blood of god are nonetheless present. The second element of the experience overcomes the first, magic triumphs over reason and generates an interpretation of events that proceeds beyond the material evidence. Our need for what might be called the *transcendent imagination* appears sown in the very nature of this marvelous creature called man, an inbred desire that cannot be ignored lest we cease being human, and one that in one way or another must be fulfilled if man is to remain the special creature he is. That the transcendent imagination often operates within a religious context as magic and mystery does not detract from its value as a uniquely human endowment that makes life meaningful to those who possess it. Nor does a religious context render magic a proper object of ridicule by those who, in their own celebration of the triumph of reason, merely search for magic and mystery elsewhere.

7

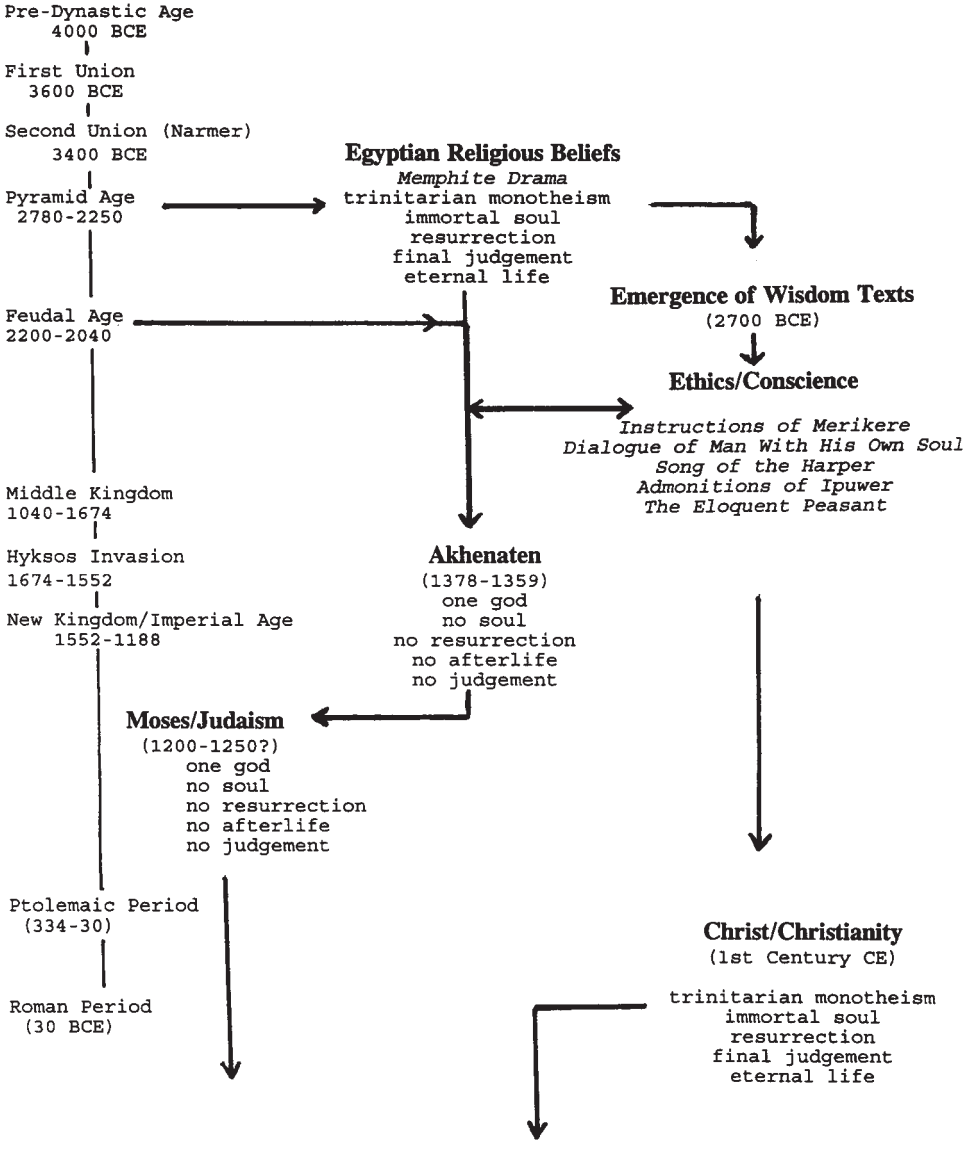
Final Thoughts

This book marks the end of a long personal journey that began more than a quarter century ago when as a young professor teaching at a Catholic college I began my studies of the ancient world. My entrance into the world of ancient history was marked by an emphasis upon the military capabilities of ancient Egypt, Sumer, and Assyria and the social structures (what was then called military sociology) that gave these armies shape and direction. The religions of these ancient states held no fascination for me and I paid them scant attention even as I continued my academic career within an institution whose very existence and purpose were thoroughly influenced by its adherence to its strong religious beliefs. Eventually, it struck me that ancient societies emphasized religious beliefs so strongly in their everyday lives that no aspect of social life, including military life, could escape their influence. This led me to reexamine my previous analyses of the ancient world, most particularly Egypt, from this new perspective. This required a period of study lasting several years, in which I turned my attention to the religious institutions and theologies of ancient Egypt. The works of Gaston Maspero, E. A. Wallis Budge, and James H. Breasted, which still form the basis for most modern historical analyses of Egypt, were the foundations of my education while the contributions of more modern Egyptologists like Nicolas Grimal, Sir Alan Gardiner, Cyril Aldred, Rosalie David, and Donald Redford helped me construct a more solid platform from which to continue my explorations of Egyptian religion.

Somewhere in the middle of this dark wood I began to realize that a number of religious beliefs, which heretofore I had associated with my own Catholic faith, bore a remarkable similarity to those held by Egyptian theologians more than two millennia before Christ appeared on the stage of history. I was astounded to learn of the remarkable degree of intellectual integration with which Egyptian priests thought and wrote about such subjects as creation, resurrection, judgment beyond the grave, and eternal life. In many respects Egyptian thinking on these subjects was theologically indistinguishable from the beliefs that formed the core of my own religious faith. I had almost reached this conclusion when my studies led me to an examination of the most recent research on Akhenaten, the Egyptian heretic king. Akhenaten's theology broke completely with traditional Egyptian religion, setting in its place a notion of god and man that was radically different from anything Egypt had witnessed previously. Remarkably, the principles of Akhenaten's new theology bore a strong resemblance to the theological principles of Mosaic Judaism which, like Christianity, declared itself to be a revealed faith with no historical antecedents. To a person of great faith, this discovery might not have presented much of a problem. Any similarity between Christianity and Judaism, both revealed by God to different audiences, must be due to divine contrivance and without historical meaning. But to those of us of lesser conviction, the problem remained a nagging one. It bordered on the absurd to assert that the core religious precepts of two antithetical ancient Egyptian theological systems were to be found preserved and distinct within the West's two great religions and conclude that this was mere accident while at the same time affirming that these largely incompatible sets of precepts came directly from the hand of God through revelation. Was it possible that the early Christian and Jewish theologians, ignorant of the true historical sources of their respective religious creeds, substituted the idea of revelation as an explanation instead? It was at this point in my thinking that I began my search for the memories of Egypt that lay at the roots of these two religious faiths.

The purpose of my research was to investigate whether or not there was sufficient evidence for the proposition that a common source or root for both Christianity and Judaism lay undiscovered within the theologies of ancient Egypt. I have argued throughout this book that the principles of the Osiran theology and Christianity are virtually identical in *content* and *application* as are Akhenaten's radical beliefs with those of Mosaic Judaism. The thrust of the argument presented herein is portrayed graphically below in Table 1 entitled Theological Genealogy of Judaic and Christian Beliefs. One can dismiss the argument on the grounds that the similarities of theological principles are merely accidental and their presence in history millennia before these same principles

Table 1
Theological Genealogy of Judaic and Christian Beliefs



was ostensibly revealed directly by God is of no theological relevance whatsoever. Such an argument proceeds from faith and involves a form of reasoning that cannot be addressed by the historian. Nonetheless, the historian is still at liberty to inquire why it might have been that divine revelation was made evident to two different groups of believers at two different times and in a manner that cast each set of revealed principles as contradictory to the other.

It was not my purpose in carrying out my research to mount a challenge to any faith, which, in any event, may be an intellectual impossibility. My purpose was to inquire of the available archaeological and historical evidence whether the principal beliefs of Judaism and Christianity could be discovered in Egypt millennia before either faith claimed them as their own, and whether these core beliefs were conceived and developed by Egyptian theologians long before there were any such things as Jewish or Christian theologians. But even a very close similarity between cultural artifacts, in this case remarkably similar theological systems, does not make a *prima facie* case that one was derived from the other. The boomerang, for example, seems to have appeared almost simultaneously within three cultures but the physical separation of these cultures by oceans and continents makes it unlikely that the artifact had a common source. The fact that Egyptian civilization was prior in time to both Judaic and Christian societies makes a stronger case for cross-cultural transfer, but it is by no means convincing by itself. That is why I have attempted to demonstrate that as Judaism and Christianity each arose, there existed *contemporary* theological equivalents in Egypt, which renders the idea of the transference of these ideas between cultures more certain. Mosaic Judaism seems to have emerged very closely to the events of the Atenist revolution or shortly thereafter. Christianity emerged at a time when the Osiran theology was well known and commonly practiced both in Palestine and throughout the Roman world. In both instances these new theologies arose within a cultural context where the Egyptian theologies which I hypothesize influenced them were powerfully apparent and even dominant in the religious thinking of the day. The influence of the Egyptian theologies can therefore be shown to be contemporary with the emergence of Judaism and Christianity, making it likely that any similarities are more than accidental. The argument comes to rest on two propositions: First, that the pairs of theologies—Atenist-Judaic and Osiran-Christian—are identical in the content and application of their respective core principles and, second, that the new Jewish and Christian theologies emerged at a point in history where the influence of each theological predecessor can be shown to have been pervasive. Under these circumstances the historian may legitimately assert that both the new theologies are cultural artifacts that developed much like any other cultural artifacts, in which case there is no longer any reason to sustain the as-

sumption, probably invented by early adherents of the new theologies as a consequence of their own historical ignorance, that they are revelatory and not historical in origin.

All intellectual inquiry begins with assumptions about the nature of the subject being examined and, as Aristotle warned, it is always a good idea not to ask of a thing that which it cannot give. History and theology are no exceptions to this principle. If we begin with the assumption that the origins of Judaism and Christianity lay within divine revelation, then a wide range of questions are *ab initio* placed beyond further analysis. If the biblical tale of the events on Sinai is held to be true, for example, we shall never inquire into the tantalizing proximity of Moses to the Atenist revolution. If Christianity is seen as the inspiration of God, then we might never ask what to make of the stark theological similarities between it and Osirism. It is always possible that these and other questions prove to be worthless inquiries, but even this we shall never know unless we are permitted to pose them. And that is the point.

The analysis offered here is not, as some will no doubt have it, an assault upon religion, and not a single word has been offered as to the truth or falsity of any examined religious precept or belief. Neither is the analysis theological, and no conclusion is offered as to the validity of any theological proposition. The analysis is most properly viewed as a treatment in the history of theology, which offers but another methodological perspective from which the scholar may examine the origins of Judaism and Christianity as *artifacts of history* rather than as *artifacts of faith*. If the subjects were pottery shards or ancient documents it is unlikely that anyone would object to the form of historical analysis offered here. One might imagine as well that the elements of evidence utilized would be more easily accepted as a method of proof if the subject were any other ancient artifact save religion. Beyond this, one is left with little to defend one's work except to state clearly once again that the subject of this book resides in the domain of history, not in the realm of faith.

The interesting thing about unasked questions is that they are likely to remain unanswered for a long time, especially if the archeological and historical evidence to address them is insufficient or unavailable. If, as at the end of the nineteenth century, the social power of organized religion made it difficult to even raise the question of the historical origins of Judaism and Christianity, the lack of evidence the answer might have required made the task almost impossible. Egyptology is a very young historical discipline with its origins reaching back less than 150 years if we consider the work of Jean-Francois Champollion to be its foundation. In 1822 Champollion published a method for deciphering hieroglyphics, making it possible for scholars to begin the task of analyzing the corpus of material gathered by Napoleon's expedition to Egypt and trans-

lating the sketches and squeezes of monuments gathered by others. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the discipline had amassed sufficient material to begin its systematic examination, and it was only at the turn of the twentieth century that universities and museums began to create the libraries, collections, and research organizations to sustain the discipline in its activities. Much of the research material remains to be exploited and some of its more exciting elements, that dealing with Akhenaten, for example, have only been systematically addressed in the last two decades.

Before Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphics, so little accurate information about Egypt or its religion was known that even in the nineteenth century the most common guidebook used by European visitors to the country was by Herodotus! Under the early Roman emperors Egypt had been a prized possession of the emperor himself, its culture respected, its history known, and its Osiran religion the most popular faith of the empire. Christianity penetrated only slowly into the Egyptian culture, perhaps because it seemed to Egyptians to be a pale copy of the dominant Osiris cult. Walter Bauer notes that for the first two hundred years after Christ, we have no history of Christianity in Egypt, suggesting that it did not possess a very large following.[1] Gradually this changed and by the middle of the third century C.E. a thriving Christian community had arisen in Egypt and with Anthony and Paul the Egyptians had given rise to the ascetic movement that produced the world's first Christian monasteries. This movement produced a remarkable literary genre of parable and folk wisdom strongly reminiscent of the Wisdom Literature of the ancient Egyptian priests, which was widely read in Europe. Peter Brown notes its importance for the future development of monastic Christianity when he says, "There is hardly a saint in medieval Europe whose temptations are not modelled on those first described in connection with Anthony on the outskirts of an Egyptian village."[2] By the beginning of the fourth century C.E., Egyptian Christianity—later called the Coptic church—justifiably claimed historical and religious primacy in the Near East and produced a rich and more popular church, "which was a far cry from the religious cannons of the period."[3] Eventually, this led to religious wars with the orthodox Christians with the persecutions eventually resulting in the decline of the Coptic branch to permanent minority status within Christendom.

By the middle of the fourth century C.E. Christianity was well established in Egypt but still possessed only a minority following. The old pagan cults with their ancient system of temples and priests continued to thrive. Rome was now ruled by Christian emperors and as Christianity spread throughout the empire pressure increased to deal decisively with the old pagan cults. Christianity was becoming the majority religion of the empire and was ready to assert itself as

such. The spark was provided by the monks of the ascetic movement, who were ready to launch a campaign of liquidation against the pagans. In 356 C.E. Constantius II had ordered the Egyptian temples closed and forbade the use of hieroglyphics as a pagan language. In 380, Emperor Theodosius declared that Christianity was the state religion and all pagan cults were forbidden. These edicts were devastating to Egyptian culture and religion since both had been preserved from one generation to another over millennia through the language and writing systems of the Egyptian priests. In 391 C.E. the patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, summoned the radical monks to purge the city of the great shrine of Serapis, the Serapeum. The Egyptian priests were taken into custody and massacred. The ferocity extended to pagan intellectuals, and the Egyptian intellectual elite of Alexandria, Memphis, and the cities of the Theban region were massacred and their temples and libraries destroyed. The institutional structure of Egyptian religion, then more than four millennia old, was violently demolished in less than two decades. The wave of religious terrorism that swept Egypt for 20 years seemed to some Egyptians to herald the end of the world. "If we are alive," one wrote, "then life itself is dead."[4] Philae, the last temple to Isis where the liturgy was still pronounced in Egyptian and hieroglyphics were written, was closed in the mid-sixth century. From that time onward a veil of silence was drawn over Egyptian history, leaving only legends in the memory of the West.

The Arab conquest of 640 C.E. further confused our history of Egypt. Arabic gradually overcame Coptic as the popular language, expunging the last linguistic link with the ancient world. The Arabs settled down to stay for more than a thousand years in which time the West's knowledge of Egyptian culture and religion was lost to scholarship. It did not appear again in useable form until Champollion's great effort to unlock the secret of the ancient Egyptian language. It is only in the last century or so that it has been possible for researchers to expand their list of scholarly subjects to investigate and have a reasonable chance of finding the materials to successfully complete their investigations. And so it is that a book addressing the Egyptian origins of Judaism and Christianity could not have been written much sooner than it was because the detailed information concerning the nature of Egyptian religion along with the historical knowledge of events in Egypt leading up to and following Akhenaten were simply unavailable.

It does remain puzzling, however, that one finds only a small number of works that address, albeit often indirectly and then only in passing, the tantalizing similarity between the theologies of Judaism and Christianity and those of ancient Egypt. James H. Breasted's ground-breaking research presented in the Morse Lectures at the turn of the century, his publication of *Development of*

Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt in 1912, and his *The Dawn of Conscience* in 1933, all offer a richly detailed examination of Egyptian religion. And yet Breasted does not address the similarities between Egyptian religions and any others, preferring instead to concentrate on the development of Egyptian ethical thinking as it can be argued to be the antecedent of Hebrew ethical thinking. Jaroslav Cerny's brilliant work, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, first published in English in 1952 addresses briefly what he calls the "parallels" between Christianity and Egyptian religion, but offers no systematic comparative analysis of their respective theologies, suggesting only that "it is extremely likely that the Egyptian religion had its share in the formation of a common cultural background and the fertile soil from which Christianity rose and spread."[5] Siegfried Morenz's work, *Egyptian Religion*, published in 1973, also turns sharply away from any systematic investigation of the connection between Egyptian religion and the major religions of the West, pleading that "admittedly, the path of contact with Christian theology has not yet been explored."[6] For whatever part Egypt may have played in Christianity's development, Morenz offers only that "all this entitles us to the opinion that Egypt played its part in the efforts of Christians to achieve an understanding of God and his works, which are eternal."[7]

As this work has attempted to demonstrate, even a passing familiarity with the theologies of Judaism, Atenism, Osirism, and Christianity reveals stark similarities in content and application that are sufficient to arouse the attention of any scholar willing to heed them. One can honestly ask, therefore, why it is that three of the most influential scholars of Egyptian religion did not devote serious attention to these obvious theological similarities if only to debunk the notion that Judaism and Christianity might have had historical antecedents. It is difficult to believe that such learned men were unaware of these similarities. The answer most likely is that they saw them but chose not to emphasize them in their writing.

There were sufficient reasons why scholars at the turn of the century chose to turn their interests to safer topics, reasons that persisted until at least the end of the first half of the twentieth century. Organized Christian religion during this period was a far more influential and institutionally powerful force than it is today. All the great universities of Europe maintained close ties to the major organized Christian denominations, which in many cases exercised considerable influence on faculty appointments. Some of these universities had their origins in religious affiliations while others were little more than educational arms of one church or another. Religious denominations maintained close ties with the secular governments of the day which, in exchange for religion's help in keeping their populations obedient, were often responsive to requests to em-

ploy secular authority in support of religious interests, especially in the area of education. The period from the turn of the century to the Cold War was a time when religious loyalties were taken more seriously and expressed more openly within the academic communities. The shock of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and the rise of scientific rationalism prompted the conservative academies and their faculties to respond with a ferocious defense of organized religion and its beliefs, even as the Catholic Church declared a war against the French modernists in an attempt to wrest control of French schools from the state. It would have taken a scholar of exemplary bravery or incredible foolhardiness to question the historical origins of Christian belief in this atmosphere. Many scholars were devout believers themselves, a circumstance sufficient to place the question beyond inquiry. To challenge the very foundations of Christian belief placed one's career and academic future at great risk, and the ferocious reaction might have crushed the young discipline of Egyptology before it was out of its infancy. Some of the research institutes, like the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, were founded by powerful families of strong religious faith. Others depended upon generous benefactors, who would have been troubled by such research. Besides, there was much other important work to be accomplished, all of it of a less controversial nature but important nonetheless, as the great contributions of such men as Breasted, Budge, Morenz, and Cerny have quite clearly demonstrated.

It is perhaps difficult to imagine what academic life was like during this time, a time when academic freedom and tenured faculty were still in their infancy where they existed at all. In American universities at least the Cold War witnessed the triumph of secular concerns over religious ones as parochial colleges and universities sought to demonstrate their patriotism and contributions to the crusade against atheistic communism. The rise of academic professional associations and unions to give effect to the institutionalization of tenure and academic freedom also created a more conducive atmosphere for research of a controversial nature. The post-Cold War period, slightly more than a decade old at this writing, has witnessed a partial return to more stringent influence by religious colleges and faculties on scholarly research. One has only to read Alan Wolfe's "The Opening of the Evangelical Mind" to grasp the degree to which religious tests are applied to faculties of conservative Christian colleges and universities.[8] Catholic institutions, too, seem poised to return to a time when religious authorities supervised academic research with a view toward censorship. The recent Vatican instruction, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, requires that Catholic theologians be licensed by their bishops to teach, a grant of authority that is subject to revocation without explanation. Expressions of opinion contrary to Church teaching, no matter how sincerely held, are to be

offered only in private to appropriate religious authorities, and faculty are to be subject to removal if they fail to act as proper moral role models for their students. How strongly local bishops will enforce the instruction remains to be seen. But the threat of enforcement could have a seriously limiting effect on Catholic theological and philosophical scholarship as scholars censor themselves out of fear of possible enforcement.

Such threats to academic freedom and research are not confined to religious institutions. Many secular universities have become hotbeds of secular political correctness in which faculty are hired or fired, tenured or let go on the basis of their expressed loyalty to one ideology or another in their teaching and research. Threats to free inquiry come in many forms and professors have special responsibilities to their professions to find the courage to resist the threats and promises of those who would prohibit the search for truth on the grounds that they already possess it. If we cannot find the courage, then the way to oppression is open once more. Albert Einstein, who had witnessed first hand the destruction of academic freedom under the Nazis, gave voice to the fear when he wrote:

Es wiederholt sich immer wieder
In dieser Welt so fein und bieder:
Der Pfaff' den Poebel alarmiert,
Der Genius wird executiert!

It happens time and time again
In this very civilized world:
The priest arouses the rabble,
And the scholar is put to death!

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. I have taken the title of this chapter from James H. Breasted's ground-breaking work of the same title. I have relied heavily upon the translations of various materials such as tomb inscriptions, papyrii, etc., presented in his work that Breasted himself translated from the originals. I have not cited the original papyrii from which they were taken; Breasted himself provides these citations. See James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1947).

2. Breasted, 342.

3. Ibid., 340.

4. Richard A. Gabriel and Karen Metz, *From Sumer to Rome: The Military Capabilities of Ancient Armies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 3–9.

5. Rosalie David, *The Cult of the Sun: Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 21.

6. Ibid., 12.

7. Helene J. Kantor, "Further Evidence for Early Mesopotamian Relations with Egypt," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 11 (January-October, 1952), 250.

8. Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 35.

9. Breasted, 24.

10. Rosalie David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 14.

11. Breasted, 18.

12. E. A. Wallis Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 263.

13. Breasted, 35.

14. *The New American Bible* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing House, 1992), see Section II, The Gospel of Saint John, 144.

15. Budge, vi.

16. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 273.

17. Breasted, 129.

18. The list of Ptahhotep's maxims is from Breasted, 134.

19. Ibid., 135.

20. David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 19.

21. Breasted, 122.

22. Ibid., 395.

23. *Everyday Life Through the Ages* (London: Reader's Digest Association Ltd, 1992). 28.

24. Morenz, 125.

25. Ibid., 113. For a discussion of the abstract terms in the Egyptian language as they pertain to ethics, see Sir Alan Gardiner, "Notes on the Ethics of the Egyptians," *Ancient Egypt*, vol. 2 (1914), 55–58.

26. Ibid., 115.

27. Thomas Aquinas argued, for example, that freedom did not incompass the right to choose wrongly and the good state was not required to permit such perverse notions of choice. True freedom, he argued, consisted in the ability to choose only the right course. It is an argument that tyrants have repeated ever since.

28. Morenz, 119.

29. Ibid., 123.

30. For an account of Yahweh's rampages against his people during the Mosaic period, see Jonathan Kirsch, *Moses: A Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998).

31. Morenz, 132.

32. The Egyptian idea of man as caretaker of his environment and the animals he shares it with almost as an equal stands in stark contrast to the Israelite and Christian view that God granted man "dominion" over the things of this earth.

33. Morenz, 124.

34. Breasted, 45.

35. Ibid.

36. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 18.

37. Breasted, 71.

38. David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Relgious Beliefs and Practices*, 33. Just when cannibalism may have been practiced in Egypt is difficult to say, but no doubt it was before predynastic times and, most likely, even before the Mesopotamian influence. To the south, however, in the Sudan, it is likely that this practice, along with secondary burial, continued until much more recent times.

39. Breasted, 87.

40. Christians, in portraying the soul in art, often showed it as a nude infant emerging from the mouth of the deceased and rising toward heaven.
41. Breasted, 48.
42. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 14.
43. Breasted, 97.
44. Budge, 265–266.
45. Morenz, 131.
46. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 46.
47. Gardiner, 105–106.
48. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 124.
49. Breasted and David disagree, for example, on when the *Admonitions* appeared. There is almost no consensus among Egyptologists as to dating of events. I have found the chronology offered by Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1992) to be most useful in attempting to resolve conflicts of dates.
50. Breasted, 154.
51. Breasted, 157.
52. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 123.
53. Breasted, 169.
54. Ibid., 171–176, for the complete text of the *Dialogue*.
55. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 123.
56. David places the *Admonition* in the Sixth Dynasty while Breasted places it considerably more recent.
57. James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 210–213. This is an important book, first published in 1912. All subsequent studies of Egyptian religion and thought are indebted to Breasted's truly original study.
58. During the Middle Kingdom when the cedar wooden coffin came into wide use, the old pyramid texts were inscribed on the inside of the coffins. These texts were changed to be more relevant to the common populace as the original pyramid texts were designed to be used by the king and nobility. Production of these coffin texts became lucrative business for the temples and they were soon written down as scrolls to be interred with the dead. These scrolls became known as the *Book of the Dead*. It should be noted, however, that there was no such book (and, indeed, it is not the Bible of the Egyptians!) per se. Whatever scrolls were interred, depended upon the sales ability of the priests. As such, there is no formal and complete collection that could reasonably be called "a book."
59. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, 239–240.
60. Ibid., 240.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 241.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 242.
65. Ibid.

66. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 221.
67. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 153.
68. Ibid., 156.
69. Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

1. There is a valley in the eastern Delta, the present-day Wadi Tumilat, that runs through the biblical land of Goshen and leads straight from the heart of the Delta to the break in the chain of the Bitter Lakes. It was probably here, at the break in the natural defensive perimeter, that Taru was located, the great fortress called the Gate of the Barbarians. It was part of a larger system of fortifications called the Wall of Princes comprised of fortified bridges and strongpoints blocking the way across the isthmus of Suez.

2. The Egyptians referred to all peoples resident in what is now Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon as *Asiatics*, a term of derision and scorn.

3. Likewise with the Nubians, whom they called the "vile Kush."

4. For an analyis of the influence of the new Mesopotamian military technology on the military capabilities of the armies of this period, see Richard Gabriel, *The Culture of War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), Ch. 3.

5. I have accepted Nicolas Grimal's date for the beginning of the *Hyksos* invasion of Egypt. Other historians place it much earlier, still others a bit later. See Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 392.

6. For a brief history of the life of Thutmose III, to include his military exploits, see Richard Gabriel, *The Great Captains of Antiquity* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), Ch. 2.

7. James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 319.

8. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 45.

9. Adolf Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 299.

10. Hatshepsut has become a recent favorite of feminists, who point to her as a gentle but competent woman ruler. Hatshepsut took her male role as leader so seriously that she began to dress like a male complete with false beard.

11. Breasted, 363.

12. A. M. Blackman, "Oracles in Ancient Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 11 (1925), 253.

13. Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 210.

14. Breasted, 364.

15. Ibid., 274.

16. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 195.

17. Ibid.

18. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 143.

19. Ibid., 142.

20. Ibid., 140.

21. Ibid., 142. The use of the singular in this way is called the "majestic singular."

22. Ibid., 143.

23. Cyril Aldred, *Akhenaten: King of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 130.

24. Ibid., 131.

25. Rosalie David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 155.

26. Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 36.

27. Aldred, 219.

28. See Aldred, 96; Redford, 36; Grimal, 221.

29. Rosalie David, *The Cult of the Sun: Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 160.

30. Ibid., 162.

31. Grimal, 225.

32. Aldred, 106.

33. Redford, 57.

34. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 162.

35. Aldred, 222.

36. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 170.

37. J. Cerny, "Consanguineous Marriages in Pharaonic Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 40 (1954), 23–29, for a discussion of the much misunderstood phenomenon of incestuous marriages in Egypt.

38. Immanuel Velikovsky, *Worlds in Collision* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1965), 99. I am well aware of the controversial nature of Velikosvsky's ideas. With regard to the material cited here, he may be as correct as anyone.

39. Gardiner, 214.

40. Aldred, 232.

41. A. R. Schulman, "Some Remarks on the Military Background of the Amarna Period," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 3 (1964), 51.

42. Redford, 166.

43. Velikovsky, 58–59.

44. Aldred, 233.

45. Ibid., 232.

46. Ibid., 234.

47. Redford, 172, for the complete, if difficult to read, text of the proclamation.

48. J. R. Towers, "Was Akhenaten a Monotheist Before His Accession?" *Ancient Egypt*, vol. 4 (1931), 98.

49. Grimal, 230.
50. Gardiner, 227.
51. Velikovsky, 669.
52. Redford, 175.
53. Aldred, 269.
54. Redford, 140.
55. Redford, 176.
56. H. G. Fischer, "An Early Example of Atenist Iconoclasm," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 13 (1976), 131.
57. Ibid.
58. Aldred, 265; see also Schulman, 52–53.
59. James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1947), 306.
60. Assmann, 169.
61. Aldred, 49.
62. Redford, 158.
63. Redford, 178; see also Assmann, 179.
64. Assmann, 187.
65. Assmann, 187.
66. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 299.
67. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 183.
68. Redford, 178.
69. Assmann, 181.
70. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 183.
71. The inventor of religious warfare is usually considered to be Moses in his brutal treatment of the Midianites and Caananites. See Jonathan Kirsch, *Moses: A Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998). Kirsch is correct *if* one defines religious war as requiring the destruction of a foreign people along with their gods. If, on the other hand, the destruction of the false gods per se qualifies as religious war, this dubious honor belongs to Akhenaten and not Moses.
72. Gardiner, 227.
73. Aldred, 230.
74. Ibid., 246–247.
75. Ibid., 248.
76. See Redford, Ch. 11 and Aldred Ch. 11, for a discussion of the importance of the Armana letters.
77. Redford offers a good account of the Hittite strategy, 196.
78. Aldred, 283.
79. Ibid., 289.
80. Schulman, 67.
81. Redford, 193, suggests Akhenaten was homoerotically attracted to Smenkhkare.
82. Aldred, 295.

83. Akhenaten's body was never found, leading some to speculate that it may have been thrown to the dogs in a spate of religious fury, but his seems unlikely.

84. Redford, 209.

85. A good account of Egyptian skill at surgery and other medical techniques can be found in Richard Gabriel and Karen Metz, *A History of Military Medicine: From Ancient Times to the Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), Ch. 3.

86. Redford suggests that Horemheb was not present at Akhetaten whereas Aldred suggests he was. Redford, 219; Aldred, 243.

87. Redford, 219–220.

88. A similar situation occurred at the end of the Roman civil wars. Deprived of the financial support of their *condottieri* generals, the soldiers took to crime and brigandage to make ends meet. It is one of Augustus' great achievements to have introduced a pension system to prevent such occurrences in the future.

89. Redford, 224.

90. Redford, 59.

CHAPTER 3

1. For the text of Seti's reaction as inscribed by Ramses II, his son, see Peter A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 147.

2. Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1984), 184.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. H. H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 54–55.

6. E. G. Kraeling, "The Origins of the Name Hebrew," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*, vol. 58 (1941), 241.

7. Kraeling, 243; see also Rowley, 54–55.

8. Kraeling, 241.

9. James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1947), 349.

10. Breasted, 349; see also Nicolas Grimal, *History of Ancient Egypt* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 219.

11. Rowley, 55.

12. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 11; Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 203; Kraeling, 237.

13. Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1998), 25.

14. Ibid., 24.

15. Ibid.

16. Armstrong, 11.

17. Buber, 13.
18. Ibid.
19. See Grimal, 219; Rowley, 3; H. M. Wiener, "The Historical Character of the Exodus," *Ancient Egypt*, IV, (1926), 112, for a refutation of the *Hyksos* theory.
20. Grimal, 219; Breasted, 349.
21. Donald Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 28. So common were Asiatics in Egyptian marketplaces that the hierglyph "to haggle" literally translates as "to do Syrian business."
22. Rowley, 73.
23. Ibid., 122.
24. Ibid., 71.
25. Ibid., 23.
26. Wiener, 108.
27. Breasted, 349.
28. *Joshua* 24:14; Armstrong, 24.
29. *Genesis* 47:4
30. Edouard Naville, "The Geography of the Exodus," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 10 (1924), 26.
31. Buber, 175.
32. Redford, 25.
33. Rowley, 116.
34. Buber, 21.
35. Rowley, 116.
36. Joel Klein, *In the Name of God* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 24.
37. Ibid., 26.
38. Rowley, 119.
39. Klein, 18.
40. Ibid., 13.
41. Breasted, 353.
42. Buber, 32.
43. Wiener, 107.
44. Jonathan Kirsch, *Moses: A Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 32.
45. Gardiner, 258; Rowley, 132; Grimal, 258.
46. Clayton, 147.
47. Grimal, 248–250.
48. Ibid.
49. Naville, 19–25, for the geographical locations of the two cities.
50. Rowley, 24.
51. Grant, 37; for the medical care given Egyptian construction crews, see Richard A. Gabriel and Karen S. Metz, *A History of Military Medicine* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), vol. 1, Chapter 3, "Egypt."
52. Rowley, 131.
53. Naville, 25.
54. Kirsch, 44.

55. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), 9; Kirsch, 67.
56. Kirsch, 47.
57. J. G. Griffiths, "The Egyptian Derivation of the Name Moses," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 12 (1953), 225.
58. Ibid., 231.
59. Grant, 57–58.
60. Klein, 12.
61. Kirsch, 61.
62. *Acts*, 7:22.
63. *Exodus*, 2:19.
64. Buber, 35–36.
65. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 80.
66. Grant, 202
67. Ibid., 203.
68. *Exodus*, 2:12.
69. Buber, 37. The idea that pharaoh would "slay" Moses rather than turn him over to the courts sounds to Buber more like an Israelite blood feud than Egyptian justice.
70. *Exodus*, 32:27.
71. Freud, 45.
72. *Numbers*, 25:5.
73. *Numbers* 31: 13–18.
74. Kirsch, 9–10.
75. *Exodus*, 34:35.
76. Kirsch, 275.
77. *Numbers*, 1:51.
78. *Numbers*, 21: 9.
79. Kirsch, 232.
80. As quoted in Kirsch, 207.
81. Buber, 37.
82. Wiener, 104–115, for the argument that much of the biblical account of the Exodus may be historically and geographically accurate if only in a general sense.
83. Wiener, 109; see also H. E. Rowley, "Early Levite History and the Question of the Exodus," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 3 (1944), 73–78; also, Rowley, op. cit., 105–106.
84. Grant, 48.
85. *Exodus*, 20: 2–17.
86. Kirsch, 252.
87. Buber, 122.
88. Ibid.
89. Grant, 48.
90. Ibid.
91. Assmann, 3.

92. Ibid., 4.
93. Ibid., 45.
94. Ibid., 45–46.
95. Armstrong, 9; see also Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), for a similar view.
96. Armstrong, 14. The incident of the Kohar rebellion in Moses' camp was precipitated precisely on the grounds that the "whole people are holy," that is, god talks to all men not just Moses, a view much more in line with how the Israelites traditionally saw their gods than Moses' new vision.
97. Assmann, 3–4.
98. Mary Douglas, *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), for the idea of an "enclave religion." See also Assmann, 32.
99. Armstrong, 41.
100. Kirsch, 342; *Deuteronomy* 32:1–43.
101. Buber, 58.
102. Arthur Weigall, *The Life and Times of Akhenaten* (1923), p. 121, as quoted in Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 26.
103. Buber, 43.
104. Grant, 25.
105. Buber, 43.
106. Buber, 182. The obscure passage in *Exodus* 32:29 often taken to mean the appointment of the Levites as priests by Moses is, Buber argues, no such thing. It is, instead, the appointment of the Levites as a bodyguard to Moses and the protector of the sacred tent of meeting, that is, the creation of a praetorian guard. The establishment of a priesthood in Yahweism comes much later, after Moses' death.
107. Ibid., 186.
108. Again, the Kohar rebellion challenged the view of the leader as the only communicant with god as being outside the Israelite tradition.
109. James H. Breasted, *History of Egypt* (1906) as quoted in Freud, *op. cit.*, 23.
110. Klein, 4; *Deuteronomy*, 33:14.
111. Klein, 4.
112. Ibid.
113. *Exodus* 20:7.
114. Kirsch, 236.
115. Ibid., 115.
116. Ibid., 116.
117. Assmann, 61–62.
118. *Exodus*, 8:26.
119. *Exodus*, 20: 4–6.
120. James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 354.
121. A. S. Yahuda, "The Osiris Cult and the Designation of Osiris Idols in the Bible," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 3 (1944), 196.
122. Assmann, 69.

123. Paradoxically, the lack of a cosmology to explain the purpose of man is characteristic of Babylonian religions as well, wherein the gods created man solely so that he might serve and worship the gods. Once men "wore out," they died and either ceased to exist or went to some Hades-like partial existence. In either case, there was no sense of a higher immortal end for man.

124. Freud, 20.

125. *Numbers*, 14: 28–29.

126. *Deuteronomy*, 20: 16–17.

127. Grant, 87.

128. Quoted from Hugo Gressmann in James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 368.

129. Buber, 85.

130. Armstrong, 25.

131. Grant, 22–23.

132. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 367–368.

133. Ibid., 384.

CHAPTER 4

1. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Afterlife* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 14.

2. A. H. Gardiner, "Notes on the Ethics of the Egyptians," *Ancient Egypt*, vol. 2 (1914), 55–56.

3. Joseph Scott and Lenore Scott, *Egyptian Hieroglyphics for Everyone: An Introduction to the Writings of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 23.

4. E A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), xlviii.

5. Christine Hobson, *The World of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 168.

6. James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1947), 106.

7. Ibid., 111.

8. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, xlvii.

9. Breasted, 45.

10. Ibid., 95.

11. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 66.

12. Ibid., 175.

13. Ibid., 167.

14. Breasted, 45.

15. Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, 200–204.

16. Ibid., 208.

17. Hobson, 52.

18. Ibid., 53.

19. Ibid.

20. James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 38–39.

21. Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Afterlife*, 41; see also Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 97.

22. Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, 79.

23. Hobson, 56.

24. Ibid., 144.

25. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 27.

26. Ibid., 101.

27. James Breasted records his own experience with scorpions in Egypt along similar lines. Breasted notes that he came upon a peasant in the Delta whose dog had been stung by a scorpion and was dying. Another farmer told the man of an ancient cure for scorpion bites. The dog was wrapped in linen and placed in a shallow tub of warm water as his body was stroked until the animal fell asleep. After some hours in a deep slumber the dog awoke and recovered. Breasted notes that this treatment is the one that was administered to Horus in the story of the attempt by the scorpion god on the child's life.

28. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 31.

29. Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, 96.

30. Ibid., 309.

31. Jaroslav Cerny, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 125.

32. *1 Corinthians*, 15:35.

33. Scott and Scott, 83. The title can also be translated as the *Book of Coming into the Day*, or *the Dawn*.

34. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, lxix.

35. Ibid., lix.

36. Ibid., lx.

37. Ibid. lxi.

38. Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, 328.

39. Richard A. Gabriel and Karen S. Metz, *A History of Military Medicine*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 77.

40. Ibid., 80.

41. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, lxiii.

42. Ibid., lxiv.

43. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 47–48.

44. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, lxiv.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., lxxvi.

47. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 35.

48. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, lxvi.

49. Ibid., lxvii.

50. S.G.F. Brandon, *Religion in Ancient History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 75; 113.

51. Rosalie David, *The Cult of the Sun: Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 133.

52. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, xii.

53. The description of the final judgment that follows is derived from several sources to compensate for differences in translation and emphasis. The sources most heavily relied upon are the works of Breasted and Budge, all already noted herein. Budge's work is most commonly regarded as the most original and seminal.

54. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 255.

55. This is Breasted's translation of Budge, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 255; see orginal in Budge, "Chapter of Entering into the Hall of Truth," *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, cli.

56. Budge, ibid., 299.

57. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 260.

58. Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 309.

59. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 262.

60. Cerny, 137–138.

61. Ibid., 138.

62. Ibid., 131.

63. Ibid., 133.

CHAPTER 5

1. Nicolas Grimal, *History of Ancient Egypt* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 382.

2. W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization* (New York: Meridian Books, 1961), 178.

3. F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996), 173.

4. Ibid., 165.

5. One of the great triumphs of Rome was that it was able to impose Roman law throughout the empire although with some local variation.

6. Grimal, 381.

7. Peters, 169.

8. Ibid., 170.

9. Tarn, 185.

10. The Romans were appalled by the practice, which they considered incest and quickly put a stop to it.

11. Tarn, 105–108.

12. Jaroslav Cerny, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 136.

13. Peters, 471.

14. Cerny, 137.

15. Peters, 472.
16. Cerny, 137.
17. Ibid., 138.
18. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Afterlife* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 72.
19. James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 348.
20. Ibid., 150.
21. James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 330.
22. Ibid., 321.
23. Sigfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 247.
24. Cerny, 138.
25. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), vol. II, 286.
26. See Budge, ibid., and Peters, 472.
27. A. Rosalie David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).174.
28. Peters, 473.
29. Ibid.
30. Cerny, 139.
31. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, 285.
32. Cerny, 128.
33. A. S. Yahuda, "The Osiris Cult and the Designation of Osiris Idols in the Bible," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 3 (1944), 196–197.
34. Michael Grant, *Jews in the Roman World* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1995), 16–17.
35. Tarn, 211.
36. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 68.
37. Tarn, 217.
38. Ibid., 218.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 226.
41. Ibid., 235.
42. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 104.
43. Peters, 324–325.
44. Ibid., 325.
45. Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1984), 275–276.
46. Crossan, 420.
47. Armstrong, 71.
48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, 226.

51. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1991), 207.

52. Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1977), 74.

53. Ibid., 75; see also Meier, 208.

54. Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels*, 87.

55. As quoted in Meier, 294; see Martin Hengel, *The Hellenization of Judea in the First Century after Christ* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 14–15.

56. Michael Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World*, 4.

57. Crossan, 19; see also Andrew J. Overman, "Who Were the First Urban Christians? Urbanization in Galilee in the First Century," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 1988*, edited by David J. Lull, 27. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 165–168.

58. Crossan, 19; Overman, 168.

59. Crossan, 15.

60. Seiporos is only a day's walk from Nazareth, and it is often argued that Christ may have obtained experience with the urbanized Hellenes of his day here although there is no evidence that Christ ever set foot there. Meier, 294.

61. As quoted in Crossan, 19.

62. Ibid., xxvii.

63. Ibid., xxviii.

64. Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 12.

65. Ibid.

66. Peters, 498; see also B. R. Rees, "Popular Religion in Graeco-Roman Egypt: The Transition to Christianity," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 36 (1950), 86–92.

67. Peters, 498.

68. Rees, 88.

69. Peters, 499.

70. Armstrong, 130.

71. E. A. Wallis Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), vi.

72. Morenz, 164.

73. *John*, 1:1–3.

74. Morenz, 154.

75. Apparently the idea that God could be incarnate in images was not that far-fetched to early Christians. The *Apocryphal Gospels* tell of Mary and Jesus' arrival in Egypt. "There was a movement and quaking throughout the land and all the idols fell down from their pedastals and were broken in pieces. When the nobles went to a powerful priest who could speak with the devils in the idols for an explanation, he told them that the footsteps of the son of the secret and hidden god had fallen upon

the land of Egypt." E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 66.

76. Armstrong, 130.
77. Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels*, 117.
78. Ibid.
79. See Chapter 3 of this work.
80. S.G.F. Brandon, *Religion in Ancient History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 344–347.
81. Morenz, 142.
82. H. Te Velde, "Some Remarks on the Structure of Egyptian Divine Triads," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 57 (1971), 81.
83. Ibid.
84. Brandon, 83.
85. Ibid., 73.
86. Ibid., 79–80.
87. Ibid., 80.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid., 73–74.
90. *Odyssey*, XI:204–222.
91. Armstrong, 35.
92. Ibid., 36.
93. Ibid., 35.
94. Paul, 1 *Corinthians*, 15:3–5.
95. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 17.
96. Brandon, 82.
97. Rees, 93.
98. Smith, 17.
99. Peters, 326; see also Brandon, 113.
100. Michael Grant, *Jews in the Roman World*, 37.
101. *Daniel*, 12:2.
102. Crossan, 284.
103. Brandon, 114.
104. Tarn, 227.
105. Michael Grant, *Jews in the Roman World*, 294.
106. Crossan, 388.
107. Brandon, 115.
108. *Ecclesiastes*, 3:19.
109. Brandon, 112.
110. Peters, 326.

CHAPTER 6

1. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 138.

2. David Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romishcen Welt* vol. 23 (February, 1980), 1517; see also Crossan, 309.
3. W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization* (New York: Meridian Books, 1961), 235
4. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 69.
5. Ibid.
6. Crossan, 141.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 156.
9. Ibid., 4.
10. Smith, 9.
11. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), vol. II, 169.
12. Smith, 79.
13. Budge, 181.
14. Ibid., 170.
15. Ibid., 182.
16. Joel T. Klein, *Through the Name of God* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 190, 191.
17. Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 394–395.
18. Klein, p. 193.
19. Klein; see also Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae Atque Chaldaicae* (Jerusalem: Shocken Books, 1967), 143.
20. Klein, p. 105.
21. Julian Morgenstern, "The Ark, the Ephod and the "Tent of Meeting," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vols. 27–28 (1942–1943), 45. The original 1928 study is cited at length in this later article by the same author.
22. Ibid.
23. Klein, p. 92, 104.
24. Ibid., 97–98.
25. Ibid., 102.
26. *Exodus*, 13:19. For the embalming of Joseph see *Genesis*, 50:26.
27. *Exodus*, 13:14.
28. Adolf Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 32.
29. Smith, 48.
30. Smith, 48. See also the *Greek Magical Papyri*, Book 7:222–232 and Book 8:65, as cited in Smith.
31. Smith, 46.
32. Smith, 47.
33. In one version of the story regarding Christ's illegitimacy, it is alleged that his father was someone named Pantera who may have been a Sidonian archer named Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera, who served in Palestine about the time of Jesus' birth and later saw duty on the Rhine. Christ is sometimes referred to as "Ben Pantera" in the polemical literature. In the case of the reference to him as "Ben Stada," it is probably a play

on words describing Mary as "s'tat da," i.e., "the one who has turned away from her husband."

34. Smith, 151.

35. Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 107.

36. Ibid.

37. R. J. Doyle and Nancy C. Lee, "Microbes, Religion, and War," *Canadian Journal of Microbiology*, vol. 32, no. 3 (March, 1986), 195.

38. Ibid. The notion of a bleeding host had terrible consequences for the Jews in Europe, who were often charged with stealing the host and torturing it to make it bleed. In 1296 a Jew was found in possession of such a bleeding wafer and the accusation touched off riots against the Jews of Wurzburg, Rothenberg, and Nuremberg in which 10,000 Jews were murdered.

39. *The New American Bible*, "New Testament: Letter to the Galatians" (New York: Catholic Book Publishing House, 1992), 292.

40. For a detailed account of the beliefs and rituals of the Attis cult, see the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th Edition (1910), vol. 2, 886–887.

41. *Matthew* 26:26–28.

42. Smith, 122.

43. *John* 6:51.

44. *John* 5:54–56.

45. Smith, 150.

46. See F. L. Griffith and Herbert Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London: H. Grevel and Co., 1904) for this and other texts.

47. Ibid., 15, as quoted in Smith, 122.

48. *John* 6:52.

49. Smith, 123.

50. Maccoby, 110.

51. Crossan, 324.

52. Ibid., 354–355.

53. *The New American Bible*, "Matthew," 14.

54. Ibid.

55. Sir Alan Gardiner, "The Baptism of Pharaoh," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 36 (1950), 3–12.

56. Rosalie David, *The Cult of the Sun: Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 100.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 101.

59. Gardiner, "Baptism of Pharaoh," 12.

60. Ibid., 6.

61. Ibid., 7.

62. *Matthew*, 3:16–17.

63. *The New American Bible*, "Matthew," 14.

64. David, 102.

CHAPTER 7

1. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 46.
2. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 100.
3. Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 5.
4. Brown, 104.
5. Jaroslav Cerny, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 147.
6. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 257.
7. Ibid.
8. Alan Wolfe, "The Opening of the Evangelical Mind," *Atlantic Monthly* (October, 2000), 55–75.

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About the Author

RICHARD A. GABRIEL is an historian and Adjunct Professor of Humanities and Ethics at Daniel Webster College. He is the author of more than 30 books, including *From Sumer to Rome: The Military Capabilities of Ancient Armies, Great Battles of Antiquity,* and *Great Captains of Antiquity* (Greenwood Press, 1991, 1994, and 2000 respectively). Dr. Gabriel was a professor at St. Anselm College for more than 20 years before assuming the position of Professor of History and Politics at the U.S. Army War College. He is a frequent lecturer to the academic, governmental, and military establishments of Canada, the United States, Germany, China, and Israel.