

## Funerals in 3700 B.C.

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by Robert F. Turner

“**The Book of The Dead**” is a generic name given to the various texts found in early Egyptian tombs – apparently placed there so the deceased could “study up” for the great final examination, or serve as “ticket” for passage through the dark halls of the unknown into the presence of Osiris, “the conqueror of death, who made men and women ‘to be born again’.” These funeral texts were used as early as ca. 3,700 B.C. Through a long history many changes and additions were made, and we could not begin to give more than a few samples; but I want to put some of this material before you, and then comment upon it.

A section of **The Negative Confession** reads: “Hail, Usekh-nemmt, who cometh forth from Anu, I have not committed sin. Hail (various ‘gods’) I have not committed robbery with violence ...I have not stolen grain have not uttered lies ...I have not committed adultery, I have not lain with men.” Apparently there was a special “god” for everything, for each negative in this section begins with something like: “Hail Basti... Hail Tutu... etc.” “I have not eaten the heart (or, I have not grieved uselessly)... have not been angry without just cause ... have not set my mouth in motion (or, talked too much, or slandered).”

Another section, **The Great Judgment**, contains some real goodies. “I have not opposed my family and kinsfolk... I have not known men who were of no account (i.e., friend of worthless or profligate men)... I have not caught fish with bait made of the bodies of the same kind of fish ...I have not added to the weights of scales.”

First, we observe that this early civilization had a sense of “ought” or what was morally right. Adultery, homosexual acts (many specified) were wrong, and could adversely affect the judgment. “Eavesdropping, cursing” or even “making others to weep” are included in things considered wrong. There was no lack of moral perception. I found one: “I have not shut up my ears to the words of truth.” How does our society measure to this standard?

They related their actions in this life to judgment and the life beyond. I don't know how seriously they regarded these things while they had good health, but the thought of death had a sobering effect. From the number of “Books” found, I suspect some were prepared to lie to the “gods” – as today's funeral orations foolishly lie to the true God who knows all.

The pagan concepts, and child-like concepts of appeasement, symbolism, and ceremony, remind one of “Secret Orders” of our day – and, in fact, we find the source of some of today's foolishness in these ancient papers.

And the negative aspects of their “religion” is overwhelming. One might fill his coffin with “I have nots” and be woefully lacking in positive service to God. Of course the whole philosophy is inadequate. We could fall into the same error on a positive side – thinking a list of “Have dones” would earn for us heaven. But Christianity is Christ-centered, not man-centered. We can only say, I have sinned, and then turn to Christ for mercy. In faith that “*presses toward the mark*” we have marvelous assurance.

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