

The topic of Ancient Egypt needs little to conjure up images of pharaohs, pyramids, and of course the extensive pantheon of gods. Throughout its three thousand year history, the worship of Egypt's hundreds of gods seems to have demonstrated itself as a monolithic acceptance of polytheism. Yet in the midst of this grand history stands one man who sought to overthrow the status quo of a history and tradition that was ancient even in his time. This revolutionary was Amenhotep IV, also known later as Akhenaten (meaning "beneficial to the Aten"¹). He reigned as Pharaoh for 16 years (1352-1336 B.C.) and was a king that created tremendous controversy, not only in his day, but still in modern times as well. John Foster notes that scholarship today is divided as to Akhenaten's contribution to Egyptian history, theology, and iconography. He has been labeled a "God-intoxicated man", a totalitarian, heretic, and intellectual lightweight.² The discussion of Akhenaten stirs up such passionate rhetoric that one might well wonder whether scholars really are referring to one individual. He is further branded a monotheist, henotheist, politician, atheist, a good ruler who loves mankind, as pathetic, sinister, and even a family man.³ It is in the realm of Akhenaten's religious insurrection that this essay seeks to interact. There have been numerous efforts which seek to address the contrasting theology of Atenism with traditional Egyptian religious beliefs. After summarizing the political setting of the El-Amarna period and the background to the theology of Atenism, I will seek to present a systematic approach to the theology of Atenism found primarily in the various hymns and prayers to Aten. These religious texts in the tomb of Akhenaten's courtier Ay have yielded the most extensive statements of Aten worship. The five texts in his tomb that will be drawn from

¹ Rainey, 78.

² Foster, 1754.

³ Murnane, 1-2.

are: 1) The Short Hymn to the Aten; 2) Two Hymns and a Prayer; 3) The Great Hymn to Aten.⁴ These hymns provide a minimally sufficient corpus toward developing a systematic theology of Atenism.

Political Background of the El-Amarna Period

The expulsion of the Hyksos and the arrival of the 18th dynasty brought Egypt back from a division of power and into the New Kingdom. The average reign of the kings beginning with Ahmose I down to Amenhotep III was over 24 years. This provided stability and opportunity for these New Kingdom monarchs to solidify Egypt's military might, wealth, and influence in the Near East. Thutmose IV achieved peace with Mittani and bestowed this state of affairs on his son Amenhotep III. Rainey comments that the arrival of the 14th century in Egypt brought about a resurgent apex in its long history. Most specifically during the reign of Amenhotep III, it could be considered in many respects the golden age of Egyptian history, and certainly the peak of New Kingdom cultural, social, and economic development.⁵ Amenhotep III needed only to wage one war into Nubia which in turn solidified an Egypt which was followed by a time of peace and prosperity. It was this time of stability that would provide the time and resources, not being waged in war, for subsequent changes that took place under Ahmenhotep III's son Akhenaten. The pre-Amarna period was characterized also by a change in the Egyptian's attitudes towards their foreign neighbors, whereas they were now seen as friendly contacts and even interacted with Amenhotep III's court. Due to the heavy foreign interaction, these foreigners were seen as part of god's creation, protected and sustained by the benevolent rule of the sun-god Ra and his earthly representative, the

⁴ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature II*, 89-99; *COS* 1, 44-46.

⁵ Rainey, 77-78.

pharaoh.⁶ This motif becomes quite obvious and transparent in the subsequent theology of Aten's greatness as creator of all.

The political succession surrounding Amenhotep III is still somewhat elusive as it relates to a possible co-regency. Along with this question is the possible disparity relating to the religious ideologies of Akhenaten and his father. What is clear is that Amenhotep IV initially took on this name that was loyal to the traditional sun-god worship of *amun*. Did these possible differences in religious belief contribute to choice of a co-regency? Scholars have debated the exact accession process of Amenhotep IV and whether or not there was co-regency, but most reject any co-regency at all.⁷ Other scholars will note that Amenhotep IV was never included on any monuments during his father's reign which in turn seems to lend support to the belief of no co-regency.⁸ Nevertheless, questions still remain. Was this some sort of political sleight or was it because his father was unwilling to portray his son with a possible physical deformity that was unashamedly displayed later during Akhenaten's reign? Aldred goes as far to note that some pathologists believe that he suffered from a disorder of the endocrine system; more specifically from a malfunctioning of the pituitary gland.⁹

Even so, Amenhotep IV began his reign with a major building program at Karnak. It is here that he built temples dedicated to a new form of sun worship that were not explicitly dedicated to the god Amun, but instead to Ra-Horus.¹⁰ The development from this sun god to the final form of Aten worship will be discussed subsequently.

⁶ Van Dijk, 265.

⁷ Ibid., 267.

⁸ Redford, *Heretic King*, 58.

⁹ Aldred, 134.

¹⁰ Van Dijk, 269.

This time of inherited peace and prosperity allowed Amenhotep IV to move his capital from Thebes to a virgin piece of land about 350km north of Thebes. He chose to build a new city that would be dedicated to his new found loyalty to the sun god's physical manifestation in the sun disk "Aten." Thus, he appropriately named this new city Akhetaten which means "Horizon of the Aten." It was built on the eastern bank of the Nile river and stretched for almost 15km. He chose to sever all ties to the priestly cults of Amun in the south and instead build his palace in the new city. It was a change not only in geography, but also in terms of style. Alberto Carpiceci comments that "his palace lacked both colossal size and structures capable of defying time and the elements. Its scale is human and it communes with the environment, for it was conceived for the temporal and spiritual life of the man and his family."¹¹ This city was occupied by the royal family for 16 years, but by the 3rd year of Tutankhamun, the new royal family left for Memphis. The new city dedicated to Aten worship was short-lived. It was under Horemheb that the city was systematically demolished and the material used for other projects.¹²

These major changes in the transfer of the capital from either Thebes or Memphis to a completely new midpoint were coupled with changes in theology as well as the recognition of the potential for political instability. We are not completely in the dark about the political situation and Egypt's vassalage in the surrounding regions due to the El-Amarna tablets. These tablets were discovered in 1887 by a Bedouin woman and now number around 380 tablets. Written primarily in Akkadian, they provide great background to the times including providing information about the seeming lack of

¹¹ Carpiceci, 86-87.

¹² Redford, "Tell El-Amarna", 181.

Akhenaten's care of these vassal states.¹³ This resulted in the practice of political opportunism by many of Egypt's vassals and a much greater degree of unrest in the form of banditry and civil disturbance.¹⁴ This seems consistent with the fact that Akhenaten was busy building a new city and religion while at the same time seeking to stamp out traces of the traditional polytheism.

Akhenaten's success during his 16 year reign inevitably brings up the question of how he was able to get away with a full-scale revolution. It is well known that that temple priests of the Amun cult were strong and powerful. Was it because of the increase of power of these cults and their attempts control him that he began to rebel against them and create his own form of religion? This doesn't seem completely likely due to the seeming genuine emotion displayed in the hymns and monuments. The belief that his newfound devotion to the sun disk was politically motivated is tenuous at best. Instead, he seems to have had some "born again" experience as it relates to his conversion to Aten worship.

Additionally, we can see that the focus or increasing prominence of the worship of the sun disk began in his father's rule. It is conceivable that as he was introduced to these icons that he became converted. Exactly what the circumstances are that brought about this conversion still remains elusive.¹⁵ The fact that the city of Akhetaten was systematically dismantled by Horemheb leaves little hope for a future answer to this enigma.

¹³ Na'aman, 174.

¹⁴ Matthews, 357.

¹⁵ Foster, 1753. He mentions four possible, but inconclusive theories. 1) The attempt to suppress the growing power of the priesthood of Amun which might possibly challenge the throne (an event that did happen in the 21st dynasty); 2) A resurgence or re-emphasis of the sun-cult led by the priests of Heliopolis; 3) A new antipathy to the earth religion of Osiris; 4) The visionary personality of Akhenaten himself.

One thing that is clear is that he would not have been able to do this without the help of the military. There has been much confusion and doubt as to Akhenaten's connection to the military, because many have seen him as a pacifist. It is now recognized that he sent his army to quash a rebellion in Nubia in year 12 of his rule and so must have had the military's support in his various endeavors during the Aten revolution. However, the army's withdraw of support for Akhenaten is suspected to have some connection with the decline and end of his rule.¹⁶

The Background to the Theology of Atenism

In discussing the theology of Atenism, it is not surprising that after Akhenaten died, early in the reign of Tutankhamun, an officially sanctioned campaign of defamation was undertaken against him.¹⁷ There doesn't seem to be any monument, temple or personal tomb that were spared from the revolt that took place to completely obliterate any remembrance of this heretic king/theologian from Egypt's history. It wasn't until the 19th century that the king was rediscovered on the site of the desolate and abandoned Akhetaten. What exactly did this king do? Was not the worship of the Sun central to Egypt's history for the centuries prior? How was his form of worship different? The worship of the sun had certainly existed in various forms, but Akhenaten took this worship to the next level by seeking to present a single form or manifestation at the expense of the others.

The oldest tradition of sun worship begins with the god Amun who later was absorbed with Re to become Amun-Re. This double sided focus allowed for Amun to remain in his hidden or unknowable state while Re functioned as his incarnation and

¹⁶ Van Dijk, 270, 282.

¹⁷ Eaton-Krauss, 50.

revelation to the creature. The progression of Amun-Re from his mention in the Pyramid Texts down through Egyptian history brought about his rise to almost monotheistic status. After the expulsion of the Hyksos, this event served as a vindication of Amun worship and the rise of the New Kingdom emphasis now found in Amun temples and monuments. All these efforts allowed for a syncretism and absorption with other manifestations of the sun god. Thus, Amun eventually became associated with Amun-Re, Amun Re Atum, Amun Re-Montu, Amun-Re-Horakhty, and Min-Amun.¹⁸ The incredible and extensive complex at Karnak is a testimony to the devotion dedicated to Amun-Ra and his consorts and manifestations.

Amun's association with many of the local manifestations of the sun god included the god of known as Atum as well. He was one of the main creator gods along with Re, Horakhty, and Khepri as is seen in the above name associations with Amun. The cult of Amun existed throughout all of Egypt, but most prominently existed in the south at Thebes. Whereas, Atum's principal centers were in the Nile Delta where he was the principal god of Heliopolis and Pithom ("Per-Tem" or "house of Atum"). The Memphite theology of this region presents Atum as one who was Lord and head of a lesser pantheon of gods. It was common as well to have connections between the sun god Atum and the crowning of the Kings who had as their capital Memphis (ie. Rameses II). Even though he is mentioned in antiquity as far back as the Pyramid Texts, Atum became more popular after the Amarna period, most particularly during the Third Intermediate Period.¹⁹

¹⁸ Tobin, 18-19.

¹⁹ Myśliwiec, 158-160.

It is within this well established tradition of sun worship that Akhenaten brought forth his unique and narrow form of Sun worship. The departure from the worship of the sun god Amun and his various manifestations didn't happen overnight. Early in Amenhotep IV's reign, the traditional worship of Re-Horakhty (pictured as with hawk's head and a sun disk) was identical with Aten and was worshipped as a deity. It was not long however that this iconographic form was replaced solely with the sun disk. The common form included the solar disk as an orb that emitted rays down towards the King and his wife Nefertiti. At the end of the sun rays were hands which ostensibly denoted the providential care of Aten.²⁰ It was at this time that the previous names and manifestations of the sun god Amun were eliminated and the focus on Akhenaten as prophet of the Aten were magnified. Schlögl comments on this and the reason for Akhenaten's new city. He says,

“Although it was customary for gods to commune verbally with the pharaoh, Aten remained silent. He had Amenhotep IV to function as his herald and his prophet. Even though Aten had ascended to the top of the pantheon, most of the old gods retained their positions at first. This situation soon changed, however, and the gods of the dead, like Osiris and Sokar, were the first to vanish from religious life. Step by step, the king pursued his reformation...Amenhotep IV founded a new capital in the desert valley of Tell el-Amarna. Fourteen unique stelae cut out of rocks... marked the boundaries of the new residence. On these stela the king explained why he chose this site: on this virgin ground to which no one could lay

²⁰ See Redford, “Akhenaten”, *ABD*, 135 for comments on the new art and iconographic style of the Aten.

claim, the new city of Aten was to be erected. Here Aten could be worshipped without consideration of the other deities.”²¹

Akhenaten, the prophet, had obtained his own city which was deliberately away from the seemingly ubiquitous gods of traditional Egypt. From here he would continue to launch, with increasing intensity, his unique form of monotheistic Aten worship

What is important to note however is that Akhenaten was not the first to worship or attest to the divinity of the solar disk. The *Story of Sinuhe* (12th dynasty, ca. 1900 B.C.) mentions being united to the Aten.²² Further, particular favoritism and prominence of the of the Aten began to take place during the reigns of Akhenaten’s father and grandfather.²³ This belief is reflected in the “Hymns to the Sun” of the brothers Suti and Hor. It was in these hymns that the Aten, merged with Re, was known as the supreme creator-god; supreme but not the sole god.²⁴ The tolerant attitudes of the Egyptians towards pluralism were certainly not prepared for Akhenaten’s brand of religious worship.

Before proceeding towards the systematic theology of Atenism, a brief comment on the relationship of monotheism should be mentioned. Was Akhenaten a true monotheist or was his form of worship simply henotheism? The answer to this question is as diverse as there are those writing on it. Yet when one looks at the overall snapshot of Akhenaten’s reign, there is a definite shift in his theology. Henotheism is the belief that fits under the rubric of polytheism, but with a loose monotheistic twist. Most broad Egyptian theologies would fall under this category. You could easily have a local deity

²¹ Schlögl, “Aten”, *OEA*, 157.

²² Foster, 1753.

²³ Schlögl, “Aten”, *The Ancient Gods Speak*, 23.

²⁴ Lichteim, *AEL*, 89.

being worshipped as the supreme god or goddess for a particular geographic region. Yet this worship would never come at the expense or denial of other deities. For example, there is Bastet as patron deity of Tel Basta or, as was previously mentioned, Atum as the god of Heliopolis. This pluralistic belief did not deny the existence of other gods, but instead focused on the affirmation and protection of the local god.

Another more nuanced form of polytheism has been recently labeled as “summodeism.” Wentz summarizes,

“During the New Kingdom, particularly in the Ramessid period, hymns were composed that describe a divinity who is a kind of universal supertranscendent god, of whom all other deities are merely secondary emanations. This kind of theology, with its notion of an abstract transcendent god who stands above all other deities and whose true nature cannot even be fathomed by either gods or humans, has been regarded as reflecting a crisis in the traditional polytheism; however it certainly is not monotheism, since the existence of many deities—even though of lesser quality—is still not denied. Here the term “summodeism” best describes the situation in which there is a supreme god heading a polytheistic pantheon, whose multitude of deities exist as hypostases of the high god by virtue of his transforming himself into the many...henotheism with its implicit polytheism nevertheless prevailed in the practice of [Ramessid] religion.”²⁵

²⁵ Wentz, 227.

This allows us to understand that, despite Akhenaten's initial acceptance of the Egyptian pantheon, by the end and peak of his rule, the evolution of his own theology brought forth a prophet who could be declared a bona fide monotheist.²⁶

Toward a Systematic Theology

The development of any sort of theology usually requires some sort of corpus to draw from. This can come from either epigraphic or anepigraphic sources, but there is no doubt that literary forms provide the easiest transition. Since the discovery of Akhetaten along the Nile River in the late 19th century, there have been numerous texts of the Amarna period.²⁷ The intent of this paper is to draw out a theology from the compilation known as the Hymns and Prayers from El-Amarna.²⁸ It is not known whether Akhenaten was the author of the Great and Short hymns, but the theology presented in them would have certainly have been recited and endorsed by the king. In order to ascertain a coherent theology I have chosen to base this systematic approach on the most standard forms that are found within Christian systematic theology.²⁹ The five texts that are being consulted will be abbreviated as follows and are all prefaced with Line (L) number: 1) Great Hymn to Aten (GH); 2) Short Hymn to Aten (SH); 3) Hymn to Aten #1 on the east wall of the tomb of Ay (H1); 4) Hymn to Aten #2 on east wall (H2); 5) Prayer to the King on east wall (PK). The prayer along with all of these hymns are included with the relevant line numbers at the end of this paper for reference.

²⁶ I recognize that some might argue against this label, but I hope to show that once a more comprehensive theology is developed (in this paper from the hymns), the evidence seems overwhelming of his commitment to a sole god and a denial of even the hint of any others.

²⁷ See Murnane for a comprehensive list.

²⁸ Lichteim, *AEL*, 89-99. One minor note. The text I am using for the Great Hymn comes from *COS* 1, whereas the other hymns are from *AEL*. I realize that the Great Hymn's texts are the same in both, but there is an added introduction in the more recent *COS*.

²⁹ Grudem, 1-5. Grudem offers a standard systematic theology format. I understand that there isn't going to be a complete one to one relationship, but it provides a reasonable format to work from.

Bibliology

This element of the theology of Atenism is one that has shown itself to be quite difficult. There is not a lack of material inscriptions available, but instead the challenge comes from what these texts say about themselves. About the closest we can get to a genuine textual authority would be those reliefs and inscriptions that are found on various stelae and also within the tombs of the courtiers. Based on the fact of the close association and support that Ay gave Akhenaten, there lends support that the inscriptions found in his tomb are representative of the authoritative theology of Atenism.

Nevertheless, these inscriptions make no mention of this possible authority, but instead are simply hymns and prayers offered to Aten. It has been noted that these compositions found in the various tombs do resemble one another closely and thereby show that they were derived from a common stock of formulations assembled by the royal scribes.³⁰

The Short Hymn to Aten was found in identical versions in five different tombs. Within this hymn there is an interesting phrase that lends support to the belief of Akhenaten as it relates to his own self-assessment. After describing the joy that comes from the festivities that celebrate the provision of Aten's rays being evidenced in the land, the hymn says, "And in all the temples of Akhet-Aten, the *place of truth* in which you rejoice" (L28 SH). Although not a direct reference to a text, what this relays to us is that Akhenaten was making a contrastive declaration that from the temples in this new dedicated city, was coming the truth of the revelation of Aten. This place of truth and its resultant theology of the Aten was a direct contrast to the previous errors of teachings that included other gods.

³⁰ Lichtheim, *AEL*, 89.

The examination of these inscriptions has caused some to believe that there are no ethical or moral demands made in the theology of Aten. Joy Collier comments that the “Hymn to Aten” is a paean of praise, not a pattern of the good life. It posed no ethical standards and demanded no moral virtue.”³¹ This is not completely accurate. Although there are no explicit references to any commands of morality, there are two in the Great Hymn that describe the king as being one who lives by *Maat* (L120, 122 GH). It is not reasonable to simply pass over the statements being made here by Akhenaten. It is his devotion to Aten which causes him to live by *maat*. This term is well known to represent the ethical conceptions of “truth,” “order,” and “cosmic balance.”³² There are additional references to the king living by *maat* in the shorter hymn (intro SH), as well as Hymn #1 (L16, 19 H1) and Hymn #2 (L6 H2). This ideal of *maat* was so important that even the servant of Ay was noted being given it (L7, 26 PK). Further, there are those accolades spoken by Ay where Aten is called “good” (intro H2) and he reminds the king that he is one who is “truthful” (L1 PK), “straight” (L2 PK), “knows what pleases... my Lord,” (L8 PK), “abhors falsehood” (L26 PK), and “he who hears your [Akhenaten] teaching of life” (L27 PK). All these demonstrate that morality, integrity, and justice, as summed up in the term *maat*, was something that was being aspired to. This also shows that Akhenaten has a definitive doctrine that he was teaching concerning the issues of life. On the paucity of explicit teaching commanding righteousness or integrity, Bratton writes, “Regardless of the presence or absence of moral values in the surviving literature, the fact

³¹ Collier, 127.

³² Teter, 189.

is that Akhenaton's actions were those of a person with a high moral standard of living."³³

Theology Proper (as Creator)

The role of Aten as creator is probably the most extensive theological element found throughout our corpus. It is well known that within traditional Egyptian theological thought, the sun gods were often labeled as being creator (ie. the cosmic Horus, Atum, Re, and Amun-Re). The rising of Aten to this place of honor is not surprising. What contributes to the controversy of this belief is the absence of any mention of other dependent deities. The use of the Egyptian verb *jrj*, "to create" also shows the nature of Aten in the place of honor and distinction as the creator.³⁴ There is a definite shift in the theology of Akhenaten versus that which preceded him.

We do know that it was not completely new to refer to Aten as the creator. As was mentioned prior, the two hymns of Suti and Hor mentioned Aten. It is here in these hymns (#2) that Aten is described as being the creator along with the other gods.³⁵ One might reasonably speculate whether these hymns served as an impetus or contribution to Akhenaten's later theology.

Before examining those texts describing Aten as creator we must draw forth those statements that refer to existence itself. One of the tenets of Atenism is that he is the "August God who fashioned himself" (L7 SH). Thus, it is evident that he is one who has the power of self-existence. This idea is continued in a most amazing passage that reads, "you yourself are lifetime, one lives by you" (L114 GH). It is in this passage that we see self-existence attributed to Aten as well as the complete and absolute dependency of the

³³ Bratton, 130.

³⁴ Foster, 1755.

³⁵ Lichtheim, *AEL*, 85-88.

creature's existence. This is an analogous concept to the Christian belief found in Acts 17:28 where we are told that "in Him we live and move and have our being."

We see in these hymns that Aten is the "creator of life" (L2 GH) and of "all that was made" (L8 GH). He is described as being the "maker" (L23 GH; L5 H2) as well as the one who "makes the seed grow in women" (L45 GH). One further description related to this motif has Aten being described as he "who creates people from sperm" (L46 GH). Aten is praised for being the one who is the "giver of breath" (L50, 57 GH; L42 SH) which is an interesting parallel to Genesis 2:7.

There is no limitation to that which has come from the hand of Aten. He is declared as the one who has created the "earth" (L65, 118 GH), "peoples, herds, flocks" (L66 GH; L9, 46-48 SH), "lands" (L8 SH), "trees" (L10 SH), "sky" (L98 GH; L39 SH), and "Hapy" (inundation of water either of the Nile or rain from heaven for foreign lands, L79, 91-93 GH). One other interesting reference to his creative works is that of the making of Hapy in the "Duat" or underworld. According to traditional Egyptian myth, this was the watery celestial world associated with Osiris.³⁶ The question of whether Duat was simply a reference to the underground water table or to this elusive spiritual place is still uncertain. So far, these descriptions of Aten's role in creation would not challenge the typical form of henotheistic Egyptian belief. There also would be no warrant for the charge of heresy. Yet this quickly changes as Akhenaten asserts that Aten is to have "made the earth as you wished, you alone" (L65 GH). This new theological premise is what caused so many to label Akhenaten as a heretic. He sought to remove any claims by any other deities to having any role in creation. Aten was the creator, there

³⁶ Griffiths, 254.

are no other creators. This is a distinct, but subtle difference than his other claims of the absolute non-existence of other gods which will be discussed subsequently.

Theology Proper (His Providence)

One of the most beautiful aspects of the theology of Atenism is that which presents Aten as a loving care giver and provider for all of his creation. He not only provides for those in and out of the land of Egypt, but also for all of the animal world. Generally, Aten is described as providing daylight for Akhenaten himself as well as mankind (L10-11, 24-28 GH; L14 SH). He “rouses” mankind from their slumber (L30 GH), and communes with the birds by “their wings greeting your [his] *ka*” (L37 GH). The birds are able to “live when you dawn for them” (L40-44). Aten is one that “feeds the son [child]” (L47 GH), “soothes him” (L48 GH), “nourishes all that he has made” (L51 GH), and one who “supplies his needs” (L55 GH). The great Aten “sets every man in his place” (L71 GH) while he provides all their needs and food (L72-73 GH). He is the one who has created the seasons, provides the Nile River for Egypt and sends Rain for the foreign lands (L79-96 GH). He is described as the god who not only shines for man, but also the god who actually “toils for them” (L84 GH). This teaches of the great god who lovingly and caringly provides for his people. It brings a very personal touch to the theology of Aten. Most notably are the lines which read, “Who feeds the son in his mother’s womb, who soothes him to still his tears” (L47-48 GH). This presents the Aten as one who is not too distant to be personally unaware and unavailable even to the pre-born child.

Theology Proper (His Attributes)

The exploration of the attributes of Aten derived from the Great Hymn is not new. John Foster developed this topic from his own “literary” translation of the hymn and came up with ten attributes of the Aten.³⁷ Although his attempt touches on some of the more obvious characteristics, there is much more to glean when approaching it through the familiar rubric of a systematic theology.

One of the more obvious and “blasphemous” aspects of Atenism was the belief that Aten was the sole god. There were no other derived or pre-existent demi-gods or emanations that were distinct from Aten. He is described as the “sole God beside whom there is none” (L64 GH) and twice described as being “you alone” (L65, L100 GH). The fact there are no hints of any other gods being mentioned and the deliberate declaration that “besides whom there is none” is sufficient to brand Akhenaten as genuine monotheist. The words spoken are those similar to Isaiah 45:5 which are texts used to defend the monotheistic beliefs of the Judeo Christian system. Further evidence points to the tenet that Aten is one (L41 SH) and not a plurality in any form.

Aten is described as being the Lord who is “eternal” (L1 SH; L90 GH; L1 H1). It is within this designation that Aten is also being affirmed as “lord” or “master” (L16 SH; L2 H1). The focus on Aten being the sole god is further developed in the description as being the “living Aten” (L1, 30, 38, 48 SH; L1 H1; L2 GH; L1 H2). There is a risk, but when trying to grasp the full import of this statement, it is easy to see the similarity to Hebrew thought. In Jewish thinking, Yahweh is described as the living God in who is in juxtaposition to the false idols Israel so often chose to worship (Jer 10:10). If this is the

³⁷ Foster, 1755-1758.

thought being followed, then this shows the incendiary nature of these statements when being presented in the polytheistic climate of Akhenaten's contemporaries.

Aten is further emphasized as being “beauty” (L2, 22 SH; L4 H1; L4-5, 115 GH), “radiant” (L2 SH; L5 GH), “great” (L5 GH), “mighty” (L2 SH), “wise” (L9 PK), “great in glory” (L85 GH), and “high over every land” (L6 GH). It's within these particular attributes that it's tenable for Aten to be described as: omnipotent (as “creator”); omniscient (as “wise”); omnipresent (as “near” L101 GH and “your rays embrace the lands, to the limit of all that you made, being Re, you reach their limits”, L8 GH); and omni-benevolent (as “good”, intro H2; as well as his disposition towards *maat*, intro GH).

One of the more interesting aspects of the attributes of Aten is the development of the contrast between his immanence and transcendence. This motif is not new within the realm of Egyptian theology and has been observed in the beliefs of Amun-Re. Tobin writes,

“Amun-Re was the Egyptian creator deity par-excellence...his creative role, stressed during the Middle Kingdom (and even as early as the Pyramid Texts), developed fully during the New Kingdom, when he became the greatest expression of a transcendent creator ever known in Egyptian theology. He was not immanent within creation, and creation was not an extension of himself. He remained apart from his creation, totally different from it, and fully independent of it... During the New Kingdom, the theology of Amun-Re became very complex...As Amun, he was secret, hidden, and mysterious; but as Re, he was visible and revealed.”³⁸

³⁸ Tobin, 20.

What we find in the theology of Aten is something that follows along a similar, but not identical pattern. The transcendence of Aten can be drawn from the descriptions of his amazing works in the earth even though he is “hidden from sight” (L64 GH), and “though one sees you, your strides are unseen” (L12 GH). He has been described as one who existed eternally and brought forth the earth and all life (L2, 118 GH). This would denote a dependency on the part of creation towards the creator. The statement that “you made millions of forms from yourself alone” (L102 GH) does not necessitate that the forms are extensions of himself, but instead that they find their source and origination in Aten. The transcendence/immanence idea is summed up nicely in the statement that Aten is “distant, [yet] near” (L101 GH). Aten’s description of immanence is further found in the statements of incarnation as “you alone shining in your form of living Aten” (L100 GH) and “you are the living Aten whose image endures” (L38 SH). He is described as “being Re” (L9 GH) and takes on the form and image of the sun disk which provides his life giving rays to the whole earth (L7-9 GH; L23 SH). Whereas Amun (apart from Re) in his purest form would be wholly other, Aten would be knowable in a “general revelation” sense. The revelation of Aten is not limited to this type, but there also is a form of “special revelation” that is given solely to his *son* (more aptly “prophet” and king) Akhenaten. The recitation of the king declares, “You are in my heart, there is no other who knows you, only your son *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*, whom you have your ways” (L108-110 GH). This relationship will be addressed subsequently under *covenants*.

A very obvious and prominent attribute is that of Aten and the king being light. This imagery is further adduced by the focus on the repeated phrase of the Aten’s “rays.”

The sun disk as an icon is not new in this period, but the novelty of Atenism was the representation of the sun disk's rays shining down from the Aten. These sun rays culminated in little hands that reached out in blessing to the royal family. What's interesting about this representation is that even after the death of Akhenaten, it took some time for it to be fully eliminated. It can still be seen in the artifacts dating from the reign of Tutankamun. It is observed on the golden throne that was found in his tomb and is now housed on display in the Cairo museum.

There are a variety of terms used to bring forth the concept of light in our theology. Aten is described as the one who dwells in "lightland" (intro GH, SH, H1), is "radiant" (L5, 101 GH), "glorious" (L85 GH), one who "shines" (L25, 95, 98, 100 GH; L39, 44 SH), who "dispels the dark" (L26 GH), and who's "rays light the whole earth" (L14 SH). The association of light with the king comes from the consistent affirmation of the king being made in the likeness of Aten. When speaking of the king we are told that "you build him in your image like Aten" (L15 H1), "you make him like Aten" (L11 H1), and that he is "built like Aten" (L16 H2).

The fact that Aten reveals himself and is knowable should also demonstrate that he desires to be known. This is brought out in that he is a personal god who is not wholly other from his creation (ie. Amun). In addition to his providential care (see above) his personality is further demonstrated in an examination of his relationship with his creation. He is called the "mother and father of all that you have made" (L12 SH) and this bond is further demonstrated in the descriptions of his tender care which could only reflect that of a parent. His providential care is seen in his provision of food, seasons,

and heat, but this parental care is seen through words such as “soothe” (L48 GH), “nurse” (L49 GH), and “nourish” (L51 GH).

The pantheon of gods existing in the ancient Near East are well known to be gods who judge and demand appeasement to escape judgment. It is usually uncommon for gods to be labeled as loving and caring (Yahweh notwithstanding). Yet this is exactly what we find when we encounter the god of Akhenaten. His love is said to be “great [and] immense” (L3 SH), and one who is filling up the land of Egypt with “[his] love” (L6 SH). As is expected, Aten has a special love for his son the king. In speaking of the beneficent rays of Aten, we read in reference to Akhenaten that “you bend them for the son whom you love” (L10 GH) and “you love him” (L11 H1). The relationship that Aten has with his son the king and his other sons and daughters is one that conveys a god that is fully knowable and desirous to be known. The belief in these attributes were undoubtedly an impetus and inspiration for Amenhotep IV to change his name, capital, and to begin his revolutionary introduction of monotheism.

It is appropriate to briefly mention that when perusing the material on the theology of the Great Hymn, there is a consistent mention of the potential parallels between the Great Hymn and Psalm 104. Foster states, “The claim for a relationship between the two is valid- in overall tone, in parallelism of certain general ideas, and in at least one specific passage. Taken together the three convergences make indebtedness of the psalm to the Hymn probable... the numerous parallels between the two poems demonstrate that the author of Psalm 104 somehow “knew of” the existence of the earlier Egyptian poem.”³⁹ It seems reasonable to note the similarities of the two poems due to

³⁹ Foster, 1759.

their similar subject matter⁴⁰, but I think Foster takes a gratuitous leap from similarity to dependence. Redford comments on this when he writes, "...the parallels are to be taken seriously. There is, however, no literary influence here, but rather a survival in the tradition of the northern center of Egypt's once great empire of the *themes* of that magnificent poetic creation."⁴¹ Lichteim joins Redford by opining, "A specific literary interdependence is not probable."⁴² Additionally, James Hoffmeier has chronicled this ostensibly long and stubborn association between the two literary texts in a paper he presented at the Society of Biblical Literature. He sums up his assessment by saying, "The fact that there is no chronological gap between Egyptian sun-hymns and the Hebrew Psalm, and in the absence of any evidence for a Canaanite-Phoenician intermediary, the theory of a Semitic link between the Aten Hymns and Psalm 104 ought to be abandoned."⁴³ As more and more solar hymns and texts are discovered, the disparity between the two texts seems to grow ever wider.

Anthropology (Essential Nature)

It is expected that the path toward developing a systematic theology would tarry quite awhile in theology proper, but there are still literary truths that contribute to the arena of anthropology. It is not surprising to observe points of contact between the theological realities of the creator and creature. This we see when man is described as being just that, "created" (L46 GH; L8-9 SH), "made" (L8, 66, 111 GH; L12 SH), and one who receives the "breath" of life (L50, 57 GH; L42 SH). It seems evident that man

⁴⁰ Auffrett, 65.

⁴¹ Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*, 232-233.

⁴² Lichteim, *COS I*, 44. For further rebuttal of Foster's viewpoint, see Collier, 237-241; Bratton, 124.

⁴³ Hoffmeier, "Psalm 104 and the hymns to Aten", 11. He goes on further to challenge the supposed sequence similarities and provides a fresh critique at how this demonstrates itself to be quite problematic.

is solely dependent on Aten for his existence (L114 GH) and would die if he did not receive his daily sustenance (L17-23 SH; L40, 111-114 GH).

Another insight into the tender care and love that Aten has for his creatures is referred to when discussing the motivation for their creation. We are unaware of the exact reason except that “you made them for yourself” (L82 GH). Yet its important to note that nowhere in these hymns do we see people being created as slaves or even servants. Aten created mankind to shower them with his love and providential care, simply for his own pleasure.

The sovereignty of Aten over his creation as a topic has not been discussed, but it is quite evident. We are told that Aten has set pre-determined limits on each one individually as well as their unique personalities; “You set every man in his place” (L71 GH) and “their characters likewise” (L76 GH). We are told that man comes from his hand “as you made them” (L110 GH). Aten is the one who created the various ethnic groups, “their skins are distinct for you have distinguished the peoples” (L77-78 GH) and provided various languages, “their tongues differ in speech” (L75 GH). Aten, the giver of life, also determines length of life of individual creatures, for “his lifetime is counted” (L74 GH).

Anthropology (Covenants)

The concept of Aten being a god of the covenant is limited by the fact that there are no direct quotes or decrees of Aten in these hymns. Aten has shown himself to be the god who has made man for himself. The tenderness and care he exhibits in his providence still does not demand that Aten be covenantaly bound to his creation. Could Aten remove himself from this world leaving it to die? The hymns would teach us that

this is unfathomable due to the immense and great love that Aten displays. Yet there are those statements made by his faithful followers that elucidate the expectations they have of Aten. Naturally, most of these expectations revolve and apply most specifically to his “eternal son” (L20 H2) Akhenaten.

The rest of this section seeks to highlight the relationship of Akhenaten to Aten as presented in our corpus. It is quite evident that the “son of Re” holds a special position of favor and is a conduit for blessing for those in this world. The first thing we can note is that he is named according to the very ancient expression denoting the relationship between god and king, “the son of Re.” This epithet was used as far back as the old kingdom and brought with it clear associations and privileges of the king with the god. These also included being connected with the god’s image.⁴⁴ These appellations are precisely what we find as we examine our texts. We are told of the Aten’s actions concerning Akenaten that “you create him daily like your forms, you build him in your image like Aten” (L14-15 H1) and that “you rouse them [the earth] for your son who came from your body” (L118 GH). Akhenaten is seen as the “offspring... august son, sole one of Re” (L33, 32 SH). This gives us insight into the unique position that Akhenaten held in relation to access to the Aten. This privilege was something that Akhenaten reserved solely for himself when he says, “You are in my heart, there is no other who knows you... whom you have taught your ways and might” (L107-109 GH).

It seems clear then that Akhenaten serves as some sort of mediator and priest between Aten and his people. We get a few insights into the functions in which this prophet, priest, and king served. He is called “beautiful” (L34 SH), “holy” (L30 SH), the “the son who serves you, who exalts your name” (L36 SH), and “your holy son who

⁴⁴ Hoffmeier, “The King as God’s Son in Egypt and Israel”, 29.

performs your praises” (L30 SH). Further demonstration of this covenantal relationship and privilege stems from comments such as: “you [Aten] hearken to the wish of his heart” (L10 H1); “You dawn to give him eternity, when you set you give him infinity” (L12-13 H1); “Your rays on your son, your beloved” (L5 H1); “You delight in seeing him who came from you” (L7 H2); “He enfolds him in his rays, he gives him eternity” (L11-12 H2). It is within the breadth of these honors that Akhenaten is spoken of as receiving worship in addition to Aten. (L14 PK).⁴⁵

Most of these epithets are given by the courtier Ay in honor of the king. How much of this was initiated by Akhenaten is unclear, but those comments we do have directly from Akhenaten (ie. L107-110 GH) coincide nicely with the privileges of the covenant that Aten has with his son. It is within these lines (above) that we are told that Akhenaten has been taught directly by Aten and is the only who has been given these teachings. These accolades heaped upon Akhenaten by Ay seem to be derived from authoritative doctrine. The reliability of these sayings are increased when Ay, the Royal Scribe writes, “My Lord has taught me, I do his teaching” (L13 PK). This conveys to us that there was as this time a definitive body of doctrine that was passed on “from Aten” to Akhenaten to the royal scribes. This corpus of belief was called the “teachings of life” (L27 PK).

Soteriology

The aspect of salvation to be found in these writings is somewhat limited, but there a few things we can glean. Most salvific themes are found not in the hymns of Akhenaten , but instead in the hopes and desires of courtier’s hymns and prayers. What

⁴⁵ Ray, 30. Ray comments that there seems to be a direct relationship in this worship. Whereas the royal family worships Aten directly, the rest of the world worships Akhenaten as a representation of Aten.

has been noted in the previous section is that Akhenaten is seen as the only mediator between god and mankind. Therefore, we must realize that most hopes of salvation are naturally going to be addressed towards him.

The aspects of physical and “eternal” salvation become clearly delineated when observing those things that the scribe requests. He requests from Akhenaten that he be granted “a lifetime high in your favor” (L19 PK), “a happy fate to him whom you favor” (L25 PK), “a good old age” (L30 PK), “a good burial by the wish of your *ka*” (L31 PK), “that my *ka* abide and flourish for me as when on earth I followed your *ka*” (L54-55 PK), “to arise in my name to the blessed place” (L56 PK), and to “go with your favor when old age has come” (L60 PK). It seems evident that there still was a belief in an afterlife and that one sought the favor of the king in order to secure a blissful and flourishing eternity.

Eschatology

The final section to be addressed is also scant and similar to the aspect of Soteriology. About the only things we can garner from these writings is that which relates to personal eschatology. There is no mention of a great judgment as in other Egyptian motifs. Instead we see Akhenaten being “assigned to everlastingness” (L36 PK). Does this include all others? We cannot be certain. However, we can note that Queen Nefertiti is spoken as one “who is at the side of the Sole one of Re for all time” (L47 PK). Their marriage is one that will be eternal.

The royal scribe Ay asks to be granted the opportunity to “kiss the holy ground, to come before you with offerings, to Aten, your father, as gifts of your *ka*” (L51-53 PK). This seems to indicate that Akhenaten was thought to have the authority to grant certain individuals to have fellowship with Aten in the next life. A further contrast is made

between Ay's life in this world and the next. He asks "grant that my *ka* abide and flourish for me, as when on earth I followed your *ka*" (L54-55 PK). The distinction here is between his life on earth and that which is to follow by the mercies of Akhenaten. Whether or not there is a physical resurrection is unclear, but Ay does speak of the opportunity to "arise in my name to the blessed place" (L56 PK), called a place of "rest" (L57 PK). This seems to be the closest association to what might be labeled as heaven. However, his entrance to the "mountain of Akhet-Aten, the blessed place" (L33 PK) is dependent on Akhenaten's personal decision. Ay asks, "may my name be pronounced in it [blessed place] by your will" (L58 PK).

Conclusion

The richness and beauty of the literary hymns and prayers of Atenism have provided a genuine treat in endeavoring to develop a systematic theology. The similarities and contrasts to the personal nature of the sole God of Akhenaten still has much to be discovered. It is granted that this treatise was simply a start on the path toward a full-fledge systematic theology of Atenism. There are still scores of texts and inscriptions that could have been consulted. Yet it is a credit to the profundity of the writings examined that we could bring forth this level of discussion from four hymns and one prayer.

WORKS CITED

- Aldred, Cyril. *Akhenaten: Pharaoh of Egypt- A New Study*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968.
- Auffret, Pierre. "Note Sur La Comparason Entre L'Hymne a Aton Et Le Ps 104 a Partir De Leurs Structures Litteraires D'Ensemble." *Revue Des Sciences Religieuses* 57 (1983): 64-65.
- Bratton, Fred Gladstone. *The First Heretic*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
- Carpicci, Alberto Carol. *Art and History of Egypt*. Florence: Casa Editrice Bonechi, 1989.
- Collier, Joy. *The Heretic Pharaoh*. New York: The John Day Company, 1970.
- Eaton-Krauss, Marianne. "Akhenaten." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 48-51.
- Foster, John L. "The Hymn to Aten: Akhenaten Worships the Sole God." In *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East II*, edited by Jack Sasson. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000, 1751-1761.
- Griffiths, J. Gwyn. "Osiris Cycle." In *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 251-255.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Hoffmeir, James K. "The King as God's Son in Egypt and Israel." *JSSEA* 24 (1994): 28-38.
- _____. "Psalm 104 and the Hymns to Aten." Presented to *SBL* annual meeting, 1998.
- Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature II*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- _____. "The Great Hymn to Aten." In *Context of Scripture I*, edited by William Hallo and Lawson Younger. Leiden: Brill, 1997, 44-46.
- Matthews, Victor H. "El-Amarna Texts." In *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, edited by Suzanne Richard. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003, 357-359.

- Murnane, William J. *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Myśliwiec, Karol. "Atum." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 158-160.
- Na'aman, Nadav. "Amarna Letters." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary I*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, 174-181.
- Rainey, Anson F. *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical Word*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2006.
- Ray, John. "Akhenaten: Ancient Egypt's Prodigal Son?" *History Today*, 40 Ja 1990, 26-32.
- Redford, Donald B. *Akhenaten. The Heretic King*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- _____. "Akhenaten." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary I*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, 135-137.
- _____. "Tell El-Amarna." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary I*. New York: Doubleday, 1992, 181.
- Schlögl, Herman A. "Aten." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 156-58.
- _____. "Aten." In *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 22-25.
- Teter, Emily. "Maat." In *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 189-191.
- Tobin, Vincent Arieh. "Amun and Amun-Re." In *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 18-20.
- Van Dijk, Jacobus. "The Amarna Period and the Later New Kingdom." In *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Ian Shaw. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 265-307.
- Wente, Edward F. "Monotheism." In *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion*, edited by Donald B. Redford. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 225-230.

REFERENCE TEXTS

THE GREAT HYMN TO ATEN (1.28) COS 1
In the Tomb of Ay — West Wall, 13 Columns
Miriam Lichtheim

I have numbered these below and they are referenced in the paper as (Lx GH) L= Line and number. GH= Great Hymn

1. Splendid you rise in heaven's lightland,
2. living Aten, creator of life!
3. When you have dawned in eastern lightland,
4. You fill every land with your beauty.
5. You are beauteous, great, radiant,
6. High over every land;
7. Your rays embrace the lands,
8. To the limit of all that you made,
9. Being Re, you reach their limits,²
10. You bend them <for> the son whom you love;
11. Though you are far, your rays are on earth,
12. Though one sees you, your strides are unseen.
13. When you set in western lightland,
14. Earth is in darkness as if in death;^b
15. One sleeps in chambers, heads covered,
16. One eye does not see another.
17. Were they robbed of their goods,
18. That are under their heads,
19. People would not remark it.
20. Every lion comes from its den,
21. All the serpents bite;³
22. Darkness hovers, earth is silent,
23. As their maker rests in lightland.
24. Earth brightens when you dawn in lightland,
25. When you shine as Aten of daytime;
26. As you dispel the dark,
27. As you cast your rays,
28. The Two Lands are in festivity.
29. Awake they stand on their feet,
30. You have roused them;
31. Bodies cleansed, (5) clothed,
32. Their arms adore your appearance.
33. The entire land sets out to work,^c
34. All beasts browse on their herbs;
35. Trees, herbs are sprouting,

36. Birds fly from their nests,
 37. Their wings greeting your *ka*.^d
 38. All flocks frisk on their feet,
 39. All that fly up and alight,
 40. They live when you dawn for them.
 41. Ships fare north, fare south as well,
 42. Roads lie open when you rise;
 43. The fish in the river dart before you,
 44. Your rays are the midst the sea.^e
 45. Who makes seed grow in women,
 46. Who creates people from sperm;
 47. Who feeds the son in his mother's womb,
 48. Who soothes him to still his tears.
 49. Nurse in the womb,
 50. Giver of breath,
 51. To nourish all that he made.
 52. When he comes from the womb to breathe,
 53. On the day of this birth,
 54. You open wide his mouth,
 55. You supply his needs.
 56. When the chick in the egg speaks in the shell,
 57. You give him breath within to sustain him;
 58. When you have made him complete,
 59. To break out from the egg,
 60. He comes out from the egg,
 61. To announce his completion,
 62. Walking on his legs he comes from it.
 63. How many are your deeds.^f
 64. Though hidden from sight,
 • sole God beside whom there is none!^g
 65. You made the earth as you wished, you alone,
 66.^h All peoples, herds, and flocks;
 67. All upon the earth that walk on legs,
 68. All on high that fly on wings,^h
 69. The lands of Khor and Kush,
 70. The land of Egypt.
 71. You set every man in his place,
 72. You supply their needs;
 73. Everyone has his food,
 74. His lifetime is counted.
 75. Their tongues differ in speech,
 76. Their characters likewise;
 77. Their skins are distinct,
 78. For you distinguished the peoples.⁴

79. You made Hapy in the *Duat*,⁵
 80. You bring him when you will,
 81. To nourish the people,
 82. For you made them for yourself.
 83. Lord of all who toils for them,
 84. Lord of all lands who shines for them,
 85. Aten of daytime, great in glory!
 86. All distant lands, you make them live,
 87. You made a heavenly Hapy descend from them;
 88. (10) He makes waves on the mountains like the sea,
 89. To drench their fields and their towns.
 90. How excellent are your ways, O Lord of eternity!
 91. A Hapy from heaven for foreign peoples,
 92. And all lands' creatures that walk on legs,
 93. For Egypt the Hapy who comes from the *Duat*.⁶
 94. Your rays nurse all fields,
 95. When you shine they live, they grow for you;
 96. You made the seasons to foster all that you made,
 97. Winter to cool them, heat that they taste you.
 98. You made the far sky to shine therein,
 99. To behold all that you made;
 100. You alone, shining in your form of living Aten,
 101. Risen, radiant, distant, near.
 102. You made millions of forms from yourself alone,
 103. Towns, villages, fields, the river's course;
 104. All eyes observe you upon them,
 105. For you are the Aten of daytime on high.
 106. ... --- ...⁷
 107. You are in my heart,
 108. There is no other who knows you,
 109. Only your son, *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*,
 110. Whom you have taught your ways and your might.
 111. <Those on> earth come from your hand as you made them,
 112. When you have dawned they live,
 113. When you set they die;
 114. You yourself are lifetime, one lives by you.
 115. All eyes are on <your> beauty until you set,
 116. All labor ceases when you rest in the west;
 117. When you rise you stir [everyone] for the King,
 118. Every leg is on the move since you founded the earth.
 119. You rouse them for your son who came from your body,
 120. The King who lives by Maat, the Lord of the Two Lands,
 121. *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*,
 122. The Son of Re who lives by Maat, the Lord of crowns,
 123. *Akhenaten*, great in his lifetime;

124. (and) the great Queen whom he loves, the Lady of the Two Lands,
 125. *Nefer-nefru-Aten Nefertiti*, living forever.
 126.

Hymns and Prayers from El-Amarna

THE SHORT HYMN TO THE ATEN

As already said, the hymn occurs in five Amarna tombs. The five copies fall into two groups. One consists of the text as given in the tombs of Any and Meryre; the other is the version of the other three tombs. Apart from minor textual variations, the principal difference between the two groups is that Any and Meryre are the worshipers who recite the hymn, whereas in the three other tombs the hymn is spoken by the king.

The hymn gives the impression of consisting of bits and pieces drawn from the scribal stock of formulations that reflected the royal teaching. Though not without beauty it lacks structural unity. The translation is made from the synoptic text with the version of Apy serving as base. The line count is that of Apy's text.

Publication: Davies, *Amarna*, IV, 26–29 and pls. xxxii–xxxiii. Sandman, *Akhenaten*, pp. 10–15.

Translation: A. Scharff, *Aegyptische Sonnenlieder* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 67–69.

(1) Adoration of *Re-Harakhti-who-rejoices-in-lightland In-his-name-Shu-who-is-Aten*, who gives life forever, by the King who lives by Maat, the Lord of the Two Lands: *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*; the Son of Re who lives by Maat, the Lord of crowns: *Akhenaten*, great in his lifetime, given life forever.¹

1. Splendid you rise, O living Aten, eternal lord!
2. You are radiant, beautiful, mighty,
3. Your love is great, immense.
4. Your rays light up all faces,
5. Your bright hue gives life to hearts,
6. When you fill the Two Lands with your love.
7. August God who fashioned himself,
8. Who made every land, created what is in it,
9. All peoples, herds, and flocks,
10. All trees that grow from soil;
11. They live when you dawn for them,
12. You are mother and father of all that you made.

Davies, Amarna N. de G. Davies. *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*. 6 parts. Egypt Exploration Society, Archaeological Survey, 13–18. London, 1903–1908.

Sandman, Akhenaten M. Sandman. *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten*. Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca, 8. Brussels, 1938.

¹ As originally composed, the hymn was recited by the king, hence this introduction. In the final portion of the hymn, the king speaks in the first person. In the tombs of Any and Meryre the hymn was adapted to the use of the courtiers, and the scribe of Meryre was consistent in that he omitted the final portion; but the scribe of Any retained it.

13. When you dawn their eyes observe you,
14. As your rays light the whole earth;
15. Every heart acclaims your sight,
16. When you are risen as their lord.
17. When you set (5) in sky's western lightland,
18. They lie down as if to die,
19. Their heads covered, their noses stopped,
20. Until you dawn in sky's eastern lightland.
21. Their arms adore your *ka*,
22. As you nourish the hearts by your beauty;
23. One lives when you cast your rays,
24. Every land is in festivity.
25. Singers, musicians, shout with joy,
26. In the court of the *benben*-shrine,²
27. And in all temples in Akhet-Aten,
28. The place of truth in which you rejoice.
29. Foods are offered in their midst,
30. Your holy son performs your praises,
 - Aten living in his risings,
31. And all your creatures leap before you.
32. Your august son exults in joy,
 - Aten living daily content in the sky,
33. Your offspring, your august son, Sole one of Re;³
34. The Son of Re does not cease to extol his beauty,⁴
35. *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*.
36. I am your son who serves you, who exalts your name,
37. Your power, your strength, are firm in my heart;
38. You are the living Aten whose image endures,
39. You have made the far sky to shine in it,
40. To observe all that you made.
41. You are One (10) yet a million lives are in you,
42. To make them live □ you give □ the breath of life to their noses;
43. By the sight of your rays all flowers exist,
44. What lives and sprouts from the soil grows when you shine.
45. Drinking deep of your sight all flocks frisk,⁵

² A sanctuary of Aten at El Amarna which seems to have been named after the sanctuary of Re at Heliopolis that bore this name.

³ The epithet which forms part of Akhenaten's throne name.

⁴ One expects "your beauty."

⁵ The version of Apy ends here. The remainder is the text of Tutu.

46. The birds in the nest fly up in joy;
47. Their folded wings unfold in praise
48. Of the living Aten, their maker.

TWO HYMNS AND A PRAYER IN THE TOMB OF AY

The east wall of the unfinished tomb of Ay is inscribed with two hymns and a prayer, addressed to the Aten and to the king. The texts occupy the lower half of the wall and are accompanied by the kneeling figures of Ay and his wife. The upper half of the wall, now much destroyed, showed the royal family at worship.

The theme of both hymns is the close association of the Aten with King Akhenaten, as reiterated by the king on his monuments. The hymns are followed by a biographical statement and a prayer of Ay in which the courtier asks for the king's continuing favor which is to protect him in life as well as after death.

The prayer shows clearly the effect which the Aten cult had on the expectations and practices of the courtiers. They could no longer pray to Anubis for protection; nor could they look toward passing the judgment before Osiris and being welcomed by the gods. All that a courtier of Akhenaten could hope for was to be granted a tomb and that his *ka* would survive by virtue of his association with the king. It is no wonder that after the death of Akhenaten his followers hastily abandoned his teaching and returned to the comforting beliefs in the many gods who offered help to man in life and beyond death.

Publication: Davies, Amarna, VI, 17–19, 28–29, and pls. xxv and xxxviii–xxxix. Sandman, Akhenaten, pp. 90–93.

Translation: BAR, II, §§991–996.

1. Hymn to the Aten and the King (H1) = HYMN #1

East Wall, columns 1–5

(1) Adoration of *Re-Harakhti-who-rejoices-in-lightland In-his-name-Shu-who-is-Aten*, who gives life forever; (and of) the King of Upper and Lower Egypt: *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*, the Son of Re: *Akhenaten*, great in his lifetime; (and) the great Queen, *Nefer-nefru-Aten Nefertiti*, living forever.

1. Praises to you when you dawn in lightland,
2. living Aten, lord of eternity!
3. Kissing the ground when you dawn in heaven,
4. To light all lands with your beauty.
5. Your rays are on your son, your beloved,
6. Your hands hold millions of jubilees
7. For the King, *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*,
8. Your child who came from your rays.

BAR J. H. Breasted. *Ancient Records of Egypt*. 5 vols. Chicago, 1906–1907. Reprint New York, 1962.

9. You grant him your lifetime, your years,
10. You hearken to the wish of his heart,
11. You love him, you make him like Aten.
12. You dawn to give him eternity,
13. When you set you give him infinity.
14. You create him daily like your forms,
15. You build him in your image (5) like Aten.
16. The Ruler of Maat who came from eternity,
17. The Son of Re who exalts his beauty,
18. Who offers him the product of his rays,
19. The King who lives by Maat,
20. The Lord of the Two Lands, *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re,*
21. (And) the great Queen, *Nefer-nefru-Aten Nefertiti.*

2. Hymn to the Aten and the King (H2) = HYMN #2

East Wall, columns 6–10

(6) The God's Father,¹ the favorite of the Good God, the Vizier and Fanbearer to the right of the King, the Master of all the horses of his majesty, the true, beloved royal scribe, Ay. He says:

1. Hail to you, O living Aten!
2. Dawning in heaven he floods the hearts,
3. Every land is in feast at his rising;
4. Their hearts rejoice in acclamations,
5. When their lord, their maker,² shines upon them.
6. Your son offers Maat to your fair face,
7. You delight in seeing him who came from you;
8. The son of eternity who came from Aten,
9. Who benefits his benefactor,³ pleases the heart of Aten.
10. When he dawns in heaven he rejoices in his son,
11. He enfolds him in his rays;
12. He gives him eternity as king like the (9) Aten:
13. *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re, my God,*

¹ The title "god's father" was often borne by priests but sometimes by courtiers who did not have priestly functions. Its meaning has been discussed a number of times, notably by A. H. Gardiner, *AEO*, I, 47*–52*; C. Aldred, *JEA*, 43 (1957), 35–37; H. Brunner, *ZÄS*, 86 (1961), 90–100; H. Kees, *ZÄS*, 86 (1961), 115–125.

² The scribe wrote "his maker."

³ The king is *3 n 3 n.f.*, "one who benefits his benefactor," an allusion to the name *Akhenaten* ("He who benefits Aten") which he had assumed when he discarded the name *Amenhotep*.

14. Who made me, who fosters my *ka*.
15. Grant me to be sated with seeing you always,
16. My Lord, built like Aten, abounding in wealth;
17. Hapy flowing daily who nourishes Egypt,
18. Silver and gold are like the sands of the shores.
19. The land wakes to hail the power of his *ka*,
20. O Son of Aten, you are eternal,
21. *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*,
22. You live and thrive for he made you.

3. Self-Justification and Prayer to the King (PK) = Prayer to the King Columns 11–30

(11) the God's Father, the Vizier and Fanbearer on the right of the King, the Master of all the horses of his majesty, the true, beloved Royal Scribe, Ay. He says:

1. I am one truthful to the King who fostered him,
2. One who is straight to the Ruler and helps his Lord:
3. A *ka*-attendant of his majesty, his favorite,
4. Who sees his beauty when he appears in his palace.
5. I am leader of the nobles, the royal companions,
6. Chief of all those who follow his majesty;
7. He set Maat in my body, I abhor falsehood,
8. I know what pleases the Sole one of Re, my Lord,
9. Who is knowing like Aten, truly wise.
10. He heaps my rewards of silver and gold,
11. I being chief of the nobles, leader of the people;
12. My nature, my good character made my position,
13. My Lord has taught me, I do his teaching.
14. I live by worshiping his *ka*,
15. I am sated by attending him;
16. My breath, by which I live, is this northwind,
17. This thousandfold Hapy who flows every day,
18. *Neferkheprure, Sole-one-of-Re*.
19. (15) Grant me a lifetime high in your favor!
20. How happy is your favorite, O Son of the Aten!
21. All his deeds will endure and be firm,
22. When the *ka* of the Ruler is with him forever,
23. He will be sated with life when he reaches old age.
24. My Lord who makes people and fosters a lifetime,
25. Give a happy fate to him whom you favor,

26. Whose heart rests on Maat, who abhors falsehood.
27. How happy is he who hears your teaching of life!
28. He is sated by seeing you constantly,
29. His eyes beholding the Aten each day.
30. Grant me a good old age as you favor me,
31. Grant me a good burial by the wish of your *ka*
32. In the tomb you assigned me to rest in,
33. In the mountain of Akhet-Aten, the blessed place.
34. May I hear your sweet voice in the *benben*-temple,
35. As you do what your father praises, the living Aten;
36. He will assign you to everlastingness,
37. He will reward you with jubilee feasts.
38. Like a counting of shore-□ sands □ by the *oipe*,
39. Like reckoning the sea by the *dja*,⁴
40. The sum total of mountains weighed in the balance,
41. The feathers of birds, (20) the leaves of trees —
42. Such are the jubilees of the Sole one of Re, king forever,
43. And of the great Queen, his beloved, rich in beauty,
44. Who contents the Aten with a sweet voice,
45. With her beautiful hands on the sistra,
46. The Lady of the Two Lands, *Nefer-nefru-Aten Nefertiti*, everliving
47. Who is at the side of the Sole one of Re for all time.
48. As heaven will endure (25) with what it contains,
49. Your father, the Aten, will dawn in the sky,
50. To protect you every day for he made you.
51. Grant me to kiss the holy ground,
52. To come before you with offerings
53. To Aten, your father, as gifts of your *ka*.
54. Grant that my *ka* abide and flourish for me,
55. As when on earth I followed your *ka*,
56. So as to rise in my name to the blessed place,
57. In which you grant me to rest, my word being true.
58. May my name be pronounced in it by your will,
59. I being your favorite who follows your *ka*,
60. That I may go with your favor when old age has come:
61. For the *ka* of the Vizier, Fanbearer on the right of the King,
62. True, beloved Royal Scribe, God's Father, Ay, living anew.

⁴ The *oipe* and the *dja* are measures of capacity.