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## A noble tradition recently suppressed.

### 1

The text is called *Treatise of the Hidden Chamber*. Its contents line the walls of a meandering, subterranean passage tomb from 1470 BC attributed to the Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III.

The text is a faithful copy from an original account compiled a thousand years earlier and provides instruction on how to proceed into the Otherworld, a place as real to the Egyptians as the physical world. However, unlike the physical world, which is governed by time and decay, this parallel place exists outside of time, it is present and eternal and simultaneous with the physical, like two serpents entwined around a pole. The Egyptians called it Amdwat.

The Amdwat interpenetrates the world of the living, it is the place from where all physical forms manifest and to where they return. It is an integral component of birth, death and rebirth. Only through a direct experience of the Amdwat can a person fully grasp the operative forces of nature, the knowledge of which was said to transform an individual into an *akh* — a being radiant with ‘inner spiritual Illumination’.

All these instructions neatly cover the walls and passages and chambers of Thutmose’s resting place. There’s just one problem:

the text explicitly states how the experience is useful for a person who is *alive*: “It is good for the dead to have this knowledge, but also for the person on Earth.... Whoever understands these mysterious images is a well provided light being. Always this person can enter and leave the Otherworld. Always speaking to the living ones. Proven to be true a million times.”<sup>1</sup>

Then there’s the tomb itself, an unusual one, to say the least:

- it comes complete with a well, a redundant feature for a dead person;

- its central feature is an oval sarcophagus of superlative craftsmanship, and yet Thutmosis’ mummy was found in the temple of Hatshepsut, where the pharaoh had earlier built a mortuary temple;

- the main chamber is aligned to the northeast, the direction associated with enlightenment and wisdom in esoteric philosophy;

- the complete text of the Amdwat is the first one of its kind in the Valley of the Kings, and yet, despite the pharaoh’s extraordinary accomplishments, it was painted onto the limestone plaster in a simplistic style uncharacteristic for a ruler of his magnitude.

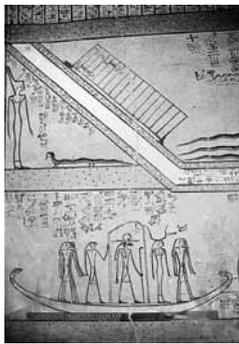
Very odd indeed.

To understand ancient Egyptians you have to think like ancient Egyptians. These people held an unshakable belief that everything that exists in the physical plane is a mirror of processes already taking place in the metaphysical. As above, so below. Consequently, much of their writings carry two meanings, one literal, the other allegorical or metaphorical. But when Victorian archaeologists saw inscriptions covering the walls of a pharaoh’s resting place they interpreted them as serving a literal funerary purpose because, from their point-of-view, these subterranean chambers were taken for what they were: repositories for dead people, even despite repeated absences of evidence of burial, or the mummies being found elsewhere — as in the case of Thutmosis III.

To the Egyptians, however, a tomb was considered a place of rest but not necessarily a pharaoh’s *final* resting place. And in much

the same manner, experiencing the Otherworld did not require a person to be dead. Rather, evidence shows that after undergoing a secret rite of initiation, the candidate was roused from a womb-like experience and proclaimed 'raised from the dead'.

This was the concept behind living resurrection, and it wasn't limited to Egyptian belief, it was understood by Mysteries schools, esoteric sects and shamanist societies the world over, from China to Arizona. Gnostics of the early Greek era describe this sacred ritual as an experience that disclosed to its practitioners insights into the nature of reality. The author of a Gnostic gospel titled



*A portion of the Treatise of the Hidden Chamber.*

*Treatise on Resurrection*, written in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, categorically states: “Do not suppose that resurrection is a figment of the imagination. It is not a fantasy; rather, it is something real. Instead, one ought to maintain that the world is an illusion, rather than resurrection.”<sup>2</sup> The anonymous author goes on to explain that to live a human existence ordinarily is to live a spiritual death, but the moment a person experiences living resurrection is the moment they discover

enlightenment: “It is...the revealing of what truly exists...and a transition into newness,”<sup>3</sup> and anyone exposed to this while still living became spiritually awakened.

Such a concept is at odds with the manner in which resurrection has come to be portrayed, particularly after the rise of Catholicism; in fact, a text from the same codex, the *Gospel of Philip*, goes so far as to ridicule ignorant Christians who literally believe that a physical body can be resurrected after dying.<sup>4</sup>

So, how did people experience living resurrection? Why did so many choose to put themselves through its rigorous ritual? What did they hope to gain in daily life by rising from the dead? And why was this philosophy banned and its adherents murdered by the millions by prevailing religious forces?



*The Copper Scroll.*



## The myth of resurrection.

### 2

**M**uch of our current understanding of the true meaning of resurrection is shrouded in blissful ignorance or superstition. But we ought not be hard on ourselves, for superstition is what remains after the original understanding of a concept has been lost over time. And as concepts go, 'living resurrection' has been around far longer than we presently imagine.

Once upon a time it was regarded as a sacred ritual whose traditions were zealously guarded by adepts of the highest moral integrity. Admission into its inner practices was a privilege attained by few, and those few regarded the experience as the pinnacle of their spiritual development. Then, around two thousand years ago, the story became distorted and obscured. So, where and how did it take a wrong turn?

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century a new religion was brought to Rome, with a man named Yeshua ben Yosef occupying the leading role of resurrected hero. But the story did not fare well with a populace long accustomed to raising its heroes and rulers on pedestals and deifying them. Nor did it wash with the Gnostics of Greece, Asia Minor and Egypt who, up until that point, considered this man

Jesus to have been a mere mortal; they equally believed he'd never been crucified much less reincarnated from a physical death. The chief proponents of such 'heretical' views were bishop Marcion of Sinope, Valentinus of Alexandria, and another scholar from that same enlightened city, Basilides, who wrote twenty-four commentaries on the gospels and claimed that the crucifixion was a fraud — that a substitute named Simon of Cyrene took Jesus' place. Manuscripts possibly written within a century after Jesus' time, and rediscovered near the Nile at Nag Hammadi in 1945, claim as much. One of them — *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* — is particularly damning because it actually quotes Jesus in the first person describing the crucifixion: "I did not die in reality but in appearance, lest I be put to shame by them.... For my death which they think happened, happened to them in their error and blindness, since they nailed their man unto the death.... It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I...it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns.... And I was laughing at their ignorance." <sup>1</sup>

Even as late as the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Koran upheld the same argument: "And their false allegation that they slew the Messiah, Isa, the son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah, when in fact they never killed him nor did they crucify him but they thought they did. And those who disputed his fate were themselves in a state of uncertainty as to the truth and reality of the incident; their belief was based on empty knowledge and their supposition was formed on grounds admittedly insufficient, for indeed they just did not slay him but the guilt nevertheless resided in the intention." <sup>3</sup>

Most damning of all is the debauched Pope Leo X's admitting that the story of Jesus was a myth, in what must rank as one of history's biggest gaffes: "all ages can testifie enough how profitable that fable of Christ hath ben to us and our companie." <sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless a literal view of the crucifixion and resurrection was subsequently leveraged by the Roman Catholic Church,

whose authority relied on the experience by a small, closed group of apostles of Jesus' miraculous regeneration after death, and the position of incontestable authority the event supposedly bestowed upon them. Since Peter the apostle was the first witness, and the Pope came to derive his authority from Peter — based on Peter having been declared first bishop of Rome, despite a total absence of evidence <sup>4</sup> — naturally it was in the best interests of the Church to promote a literal spin on the subject of resurrection. The position was no doubt helped by the apostle Paul's misunderstanding of Jesus making dead people return to life, not to mention his lack of understanding of the ritual of living resurrection that was secretly performed by the Jerusalem Church. Remember, the Jerusalem Church was governed by Jesus' brother, James the Just, a man who would have been privy to the secret teachings, whereas Paul never even knew Jesus. The *First Epistle to the Corinthians* nearly lets the cat out of the bag when it notes that Paul was “determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified,” <sup>5</sup> in other words, that Paul sought to deny the existence of earlier myths of risen god-men already established throughout the ancient world. Paul then dug himself into a deeper hole by professing that spiritual knowledge is a vanity created by the devil — hardly the position taken by a man with a true understanding of spiritual doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the population of Europe was brainwashed into accepting the resurrection as a literal miracle experienced solely by Yeshua ben Yosef after being nailed to a cross, physically dying, and rising three days later, contrary to the laws of nature, even contrary to Jesus' personal views!

This turn of events did not occur overnight. For the new cult of Jesus the God to supplant the old gods, he needed to be deified and made acceptable to people of the Roman world and beyond, in other words, he had to be seen to possess similar supernatural powers, and so, like the rejuvenating gods of the Egyptians, Persians, Phoenicians and Greeks — Thammuz, Adonis, Attis, Zeus, Osiris — Jesus too was made to cross into the Otherworld

and re-emerge triumphantly as a resurrected god.

Even if the political machinations behind this story are removed there still remains the fundamental misunderstanding of 'raising the dead'. For one thing, Gnostic cults claimed such a term was never meant to be taken literally. To ancient holy orders it was a figurative description of a ritual only revealed to initiates of the esoteric arts. And whereas Catholic dogma maintained that survival of the soul is only possible upon physical death — or following the end of the world — everyone else shared the common understanding that resurrection was to be achieved while still living, a point unequivocally stressed by the suppressed *Gospel of Philip*: “Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, those who believe in a literal interpretation of resurrection are confusing a spiritual truth with an actual event; Philip himself even goes on to describe fundamental Christianity as “the faith of fools.”

The Gnostics of that period had a better grasp of the Mysteries than orthodox religious orders. The knowledge they'd acquired in secret over centuries concerned an inner experience of God. They could claim the experience, and therefore, an authority that surpassed that of the apostles and their successors. This posed a great danger to the authority of the Church, a concern voiced by Iranaeus, the father of Catholic theology: “No one can be compared with them in the greatness of their gnosis, not even if you mention Peter or Paul or any of the other apostles...they themselves have discovered more than the apostle.”<sup>8</sup>

This would have been Iranaeus' mere opinion had the *Apocalypse of Peter* — another gospel from Nag Hammadi — also not come to light to undermine the Church's position. In this account the 'risen' Jesus explains to Peter: “those who name themselves bishop or deacon and act as if they had received their authority from God are in reality waterless canals. Although they do not understand the Mystery they boast that the Mystery of truth



## Early followers of The Way.

### 4

The removal of evidence of earlier crucified, atoning god-men by fundamental Christians sought to deny the ancient roots of Jesus' story in order to exalt singular status upon the new, catholicized hero, but alas, the idea had long been in vogue:

Sumeria, c.2000 BC: Damuzi/Thammuz, shepherd-god who retires to a sacred mountain to contemplate true holiness, then rises from the dead.

Phrygia, 1170 BC: Atys, atoning god-man suspended on a tree, buried, rises again to be revered as a messiah.

Tibet, c.700 BC: Indra, atoning god-man, born of a virgin of black complexion, walks on water, predicts the future, is nailed to a cross and rises from the dead. His followers were called Heavenly Teachers.

Nepal, c.622 BC: Iao, god-man, nailed to a tree, rises from the dead.

Java, c.552 BC. Wittoba: god-man nailed to a tree and symbolized by a crucifix.<sup>1</sup>

From Phoenicia to China, the pagan world celebrated the hero who crosses into the Otherworld as a 'dead' man, only to rise

as a god and become an example of an enlightened being walking the Earth. Five hundred years before Jesus, even the Greeks were enacting a morality play of the life of Prometheus, the atoning god-man of the Caucasus who rises from the dead after being nailed to an upright beam of timber with extended arms of wood. The symbolism is very clear: the returning hero, now spiritualized or ‘christed’, has become wedded to the world tree and the four elements that sustain the physical world — earth, air, fire and water, as represented by the equal-armed cross.

Regardless of whether they were inventions serving a moral purpose or real-life individuals — and many cultures assert they were real—these heroes were essentially reenacting the regenerative cycle of nature. Global traditions show again and again how the rebirth of the Sun as King of Heaven was celebrated for three days after the winter solstice, when his accouchement with the Queen of Heaven — the Celestial Virgin — brought forth the infant savior in the first minutes after midnight on December 24/25. The light overcame the dark of winter and the rebirth of the land was ensured for yet another cycle.

As for the hero, he or she undertook a ritual journey corresponding to the rhythm of the reborn Sun — people like the god-man Adonis, who was celebrated on December 25 in the temple of Jerusalem long before the time of Jesus.

From Native American rites of passage to the pilgrimages of Chinese seekers, the oldest rituals around the globe followed a near-identical prescription. Typically the quest began in a remote location, a place of solitude conducive to inner contemplation, followed by a period of sensory deprivation inside a secluded environment where, immersed in the cosmic world, initiates became aware of the purpose behind the universe they inhabit. Having arrived at a state of self-realization, they discovered the divine within themselves and returned to the body with a more informed view of doctrines to be adopted in daily life. And the synonym by which practitioners referred to the process was ‘The Way’.

These individuals did not die a physical death, they merely shed their ignorance of the laws of life by successfully crossing into the Otherworld, returning with a discovery of great significance that illuminated them immensely.

### *Native America*

Sacred mountains occupy a central theme in Native American folklore as doorways to and from the Otherworld. They were seen as universities from whom they sought the vision of guidance. In New York State, Mount Marcy was originally called “the Great Mystery” by the Iroquois, while in New Mexico, standing high above the flat desert like a vitrified guardian angel, Tsé Bit’a’í is sacred to the Hopi, to the Navajo (who call it Naat Ani Néz), and before them, the Anasazi, for whom it was also the center of their creation myth. These spiritually attuned people were said to have alighted at this very location from the Otherworld, the dark peak marking its gateway.

Tsé Bit’a’í is as sacrosanct to these cultures as Mount Kailas is to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. No one is permitted to climb it. Shamanic flights into the Otherworld took place over the course of a night inside the crevasses around the base of the near-vertical breccia. Perhaps it is for this reason that its name translates as ‘rock with wings’.

Although the Anasazi have long since departed for the next world, to the south, the Tewa still perform ceremonies at Tsikumu, a sacred mountain near their pueblo. Like so many Pueblo shrines, Tsikumu is visually disappointing but powerful of presence, being as it is the Tewa’s portal into the Otherworld, from which they claim to have emerged long ago. Here initiates work with an energy called *po-wa-ha*, which allows them to flow between this plane of reality, the Otherworld, and back. The tradition is timeless, based on ritual handed down from earlier, nameless people.



## The sacred bridal chamber.

### 8

If you recall, Cyrus the Great's ziggurat, located in a region Persians denominated as Paradise, featured a rectangular building on the summit, with a chamber accessed by an awkwardly narrow passageway — a feature not unlike that of the Incubators' temple at Baia, the mound of Knowth or any Egyptian pyramid. Inside said chamber lay a golden bed, a table with cups, a golden trough or sarcophagus, and an abundance of garments, but no dead Cyrus.<sup>1</sup> Alexander the Great's eyewitness account offers a unique insight into the purpose behind such temples as places of ritual resurrection rather than burial, for in a region where Mithraism was practiced, its adherents were known to use a 'bed chamber' during a bridal ceremony called *nymphus*, which marked the final phase of initiation, the notable difference being that no flesh and bone bride was involved.

The veil over this mystery is lifted further in the city dedicated to wisdom and founded, ironically, by Alexander himself — Alexandria. There, a piece of valuable information was conveyed to Clement of Alexandria by someone who underwent initiation, a specific phrase uttered during the final stages of the ceremony: "I

have descended into the bed chamber.” One of Clement’s contemporaries, the Algerian writer Apuleius, adds a candid description of his own initiation experience and, more importantly, takes us right up to the moment he reaches this restricted chamber: “The High Priest ordered all uninitiated persons to depart, invested in me a new linen garment and led me by the hand into the inner recesses of the sanctuary itself.... I approached the very gates of death and set one foot on Persephone’s threshold, I journeyed through all the elements and yet was permitted to return. At midnight I saw the sun shining as if it were noon; I entered the presence of the gods of the Underworld and of the Upperworld, stood near and worshipped them.”<sup>2</sup>

Such affirmations suggest that the initiates’ engagement in the Otherworld took on the form of a sacred marriage, the result of which was the regeneration of the soul back into the world of the living, followed by a resurrection from either a bed, a boat, a trough or a sarcophagus.

The environment used exclusively for the final coupling of the initiate with his bride — Isis or her regional *doppelgänger* — is described in the Eleusinian Mysteries as *pastos*, or ‘bridal chamber’. As it is in Valentinian Gnosticism, where the final act in the five steps of initiation culminated inside a bridal chamber, a secret room in a temple or sacred place where the candidate fulfilled the union of masculine and feminine in what was essentially a reenactment of the mystery play of Isis and Osiris.<sup>3</sup> The term was still in use in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, as proved by the Valentinians’ arch-nemesis, Bishop Iraneus: “some of them prepare a ‘bridal chamber’ and perform a mystagogy [a sacred rite relating to the Mysteries], with certain invocations, for those who are being perfected, and they claim that what they are effecting is a ‘spiritual marriage’”<sup>4</sup>

The Valentinian mythos was centered around the sacred marriage of the masculine Jesus (‘I Am’) with the feminine *Sophia* (‘knowledge, gnosis’), and their view helps clarify a curious statement made by Jesus himself: “Many are standing at the door,

but it is the single ones who will enter the bridal chamber.”<sup>5</sup> These ‘singles’ are initiates who learned to harmonize their complementary opposites, made the outside like the inside, the above as below, and were subsequently deemed fit to proceed with the final shamanic union.

The *Gospel of Philip* refers to a restricted room used by Jesus by the same name: “The lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism, a chrism, a Eucharist, a redemption, and a bridal chamber.”<sup>6</sup> Philip points out that only a son of the bridal chamber could be in a position to receive spiritual resurrection, and was adamant it ought to be attained while the candidate was living. He describes that in the consummation of this final act the soul is restored to its primal state, its polar opposites unified, the outcome being inner peace. And yet, true to tradition, no specific details are revealed aside from the following mouthwatering tidbit: “In the world of truth, if you see anything of that place you become one with what is there. You saw the spirit and you became the spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Philip infers that the union is not sexual, in a physical sense, but ecstatic in the celestial sense: “Everyone who enters the bridal chamber will kindle the light... If anyone becomes a son of the bridal chamber, he will receive the light.”<sup>8</sup>

The sacred union between soul and Source brings with it enormous spiritual benefits because experiencing this highest of realities bestows on the initiated the very characteristics of the world of the gods: “If you become one of those from above, it is those from above who will rest on you.”<sup>9</sup> This aphorism is echoed on walls of ancient temples throughout the world, where it is stated that the person who enters the innermost chamber is ‘transformed into a god, into a bright star’.

The earliest traditions of the bridal chamber can be traced to the Temple of Solomon. The *Book of Ezekiel*, for example, literally describes how the elders of Jerusalem “engaged in secret mysteries...of Egyptian provenance” in darkness under the Temple, and the secret chamber used for the occasion was referred to as



## Geezers of Nazareth.

### 9

Egypt was the perennial storehouse of occult and pagan spiritual ideas long forbidden in Jewish religion, so much so that, according to one early tradition, when John the Baptist returned from there charged with a prophetic mission offering self-discovery, his path was regularly impeded by temple authorities in Judea.

After a period of seclusion in the wilderness to discover himself, John returned to a working life in Bethesda and advised new candidates to “prepare for The Way.” His ritual baptisms — an initial component on the path to living resurrection — offered liberation to a populace long excluded from contact with gnosis by a conservative religious establishment. To orthodox keyholders, what John was doing was nothing short of scandalous, and yet to the masses, the Baptist’s message rang a bell because the faith he professed was nothing new, in fact it was a return to an older, outlawed practice.

Fortunately the establishment’s censoring did not entirely succeed. His followers went on to become the Mandeans who, despite ongoing Christian persecution, still survive to this day as the Natzoraje in southern Iraq, along with their most prized

possession, the *Book of John*, the gospel of their preeminent spiritual teacher. As we saw earlier, the Mandaean ritual incorporated the bridal chamber, as well as a particular emphasis on flowing or ‘living water’ during baptism. Only two adepts of the Mysteries are known to have used this technique: one was John the Baptist.

The other was Jesus. For a guy who inspired a centralized religious movement, albeit without his consent, little is known about him, and even that little is a lot misunderstood. For centuries the Church has tried to paint him as an itinerant Mediterranean peasant who heralded from Nazareth, and yet neither the city nor the synagogue depicted in Christian scripture actually existed at the time — the entire area appears to have been a hamlet consisting of nothing more than a few hovels and former cave dwellings.<sup>1</sup>

In reality Jesus was far more than that. The Mandaean texts categorically state that he broke away from John the Baptist’s school to fashion his own. This caused much consternation among the sect because they accuse Jesus of openly teaching many of the Mandeans’ secret doctrines. However, his actions and esoteric teachings betray his true spiritual roots to not one singular creed but many, including the initiation methods of the house of Osiris.<sup>2</sup>

What is known is that in his later years Jesus belonged to a Gnostic



*The divine virgin, in her many disguises.*

brotherhood linked to both the Mandeans and the Essenes — the *Nasurayi*, meaning ‘guardians of secret rites and knowledge’; their hometown was Cochaba.<sup>3</sup> Jesus’ unique methods of initiation indicate he’d once been a *magus* at the highest level of Mandaean initiation, a position that carried the title *nasoraiyi*, and the way in which initiates came to adopt this title was through a rite of passage performed in a bridal chamber, after which they were

officially qualified to administer that most secret of rites, the living resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

Persian magi actually regarded Jesus as the latest embodiment of Zoroaster, whom they saw as a reincarnating prophet who changes his name, form and appearance through the ages on his voyage to master the secrets of nature; Jesus was claimed to be the thirteenth and final such incarnation.

A true Piscean, Jesus was born on March 1. The mere mention of this heresy is sure to have your name struck from every dinner party hosted by latter-day Christians. But your days in societal purgatory will be compensated by the joy of knowing that even the medieval Church was aware of this fact, and only in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was Jesus awarded a birth date wedded to the winter solstice. At the time, the reason was a practical one: wishing to corral pagans into this new religion, the Emperor Constantine — himself a worshipper of Mithras — took the celebration of Jesus and amalgamated it with a goodly number of pagan traditions of gods who regenerated themselves around the time of the winter solstice — Apollo, Dionysus, Adonis, Attis, Thammuz — but especially Mithras, a god-man whose birth in a cave was attended by shepherds, and who took a last supper before undergoing a ritual death.

### *Osiris and Jesus, separated at birth.*

Not forgetting, of course, Osiris, whose dismembered body is restored by his consort Isis, to reemerge three days after the winter solstice as Horus, the infant who sits on the lap of Isis, later transferred into Christian imagery as the god-child Jesus sitting on the lap of Mary.

Let us now come full circle to the solar hero, the candidate who undertakes a figurative death, is awakened to the Great Mystery, and returns from the Otherworld transfigured as a bright star. Gnostic sects whole-heartedly believed in living resurrection



*Osiris, guardian of the gate into Sekhet Ianu, Paradise.*

as a tool for self-discovery, and initiates who mastered it were described as the Great Illuminated. In doing so they took their place alongside the lineage of priest-kings of the Neolithic era, the Horus pharaohs and Sun Kings — truly awakened heroes deserving the epithet Sons of God.

In reality, to be proclaimed a Son of God is to disclose one's highest grade of initiation. In the language of the temple, the initial stage carried the term 'son of woman', followed by 'son of man', from whence one graduated as an initiate of cosmogonic science to become a 'son of the gods', culminating in total illumination which came with the title 'Son of God'.<sup>5</sup>

The original Son of God is Osiris, the hero who shed his material attachment to the body, mastered the Otherworld, transfigured his soul, resurrected as a bright star and became like a god. Osiris is the very personification of the god-man. He is the hero of his personal ritual, and by way of a perk he also gets to preside over the entrance into *Sekhet Ianu* — the 'field of reeds', otherwise known as Paradise.

Not surprisingly, Osiris becomes the role model for subsequent solar heroes, one of the most recent being Jesus Christ, which we now know to be not a real name but a symbolic Greek title, *Iessous Christós*, essentially meaning 'I am an anointed man spiritualized by knowledge of God'. It's an archetypal title for an initiate of the Mysteries who's learned to transmute their carnal nature into



## **Egyptian initiation.**

### **11**

**W**riting in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the Roman historian Marcellinus remarks on the wealth of secret knowledge stored in the library of Alexandria: “If anyone in the earnestness of his intellect wishes to apply himself to the various branches of divine knowledge, or to the examination of metaphysics, he will find that the whole world owes this kind of learning to Egypt.”

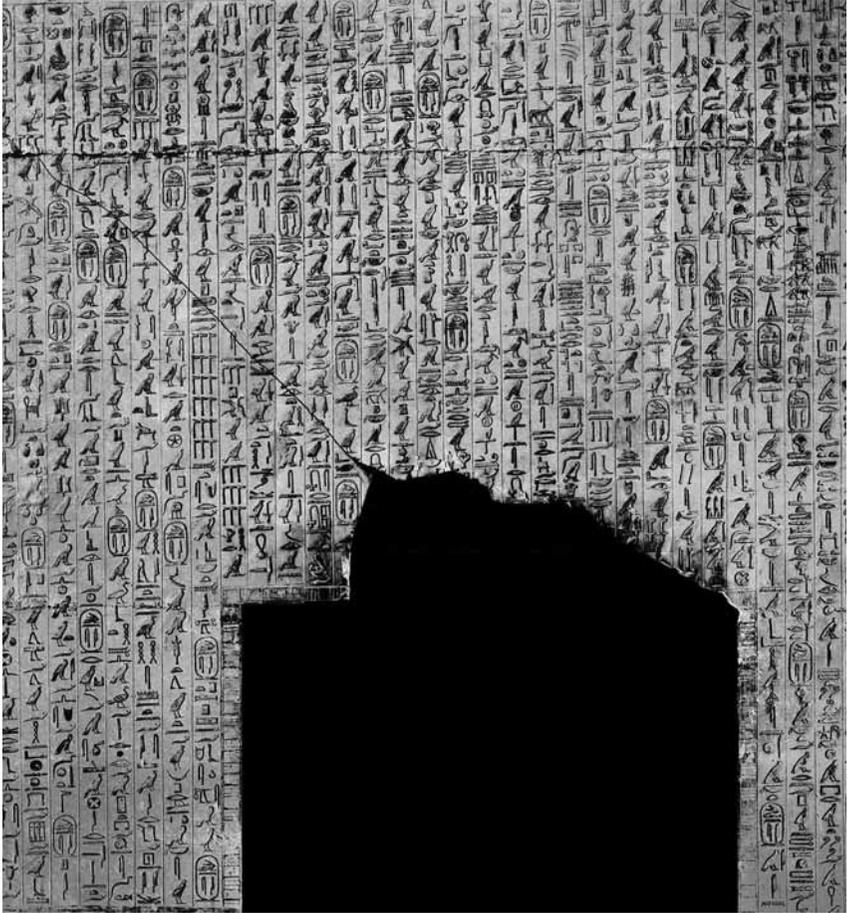
The original Egyptian Mysteries were a closely guarded secret, rarely written down and mostly committed to memory by priests of the temple. And yet despite its firm grasp of the laws of the Universe, even Egyptian culture slowly but inexorably fell into decline. Following its resurrection by Alexander the Great, the Ptolemaic era that ensued witnessed the rebuilding of many temples made derelict by invading Persian hordes, and in exact accordance to their original state. By the time Hellenistic scholars streamed into Alexandria, the knowledge finally began to be committed to parchment or temple walls, translated, and made available to a wider audience, the only fly in the ointment of this noble plan being the wholesale destruction of the material by a mob of Christian fundamentalists.

For centuries the only known surviving source of information on Egyptian Mystery rites came from Lucius Apuleius, based on his personal initiation experience of the resurrection cult of Osiris, whose focal point — or at least the temple with which it is most synonymous — is the Osirion at Abydos. Lucius writes how he underwent a period of observation within the inner temple community, leading to a kind of monastic experience within the priesthood. Preparations began with the purging of base emotions of the physical body or lower vibrations; asceticism was essential throughout the teachings, while a ten-day fast prepared the body for the final stage. At sunset on the tenth day, the priest took the candidates by the hand and led them “to the most secret and most sacred place of the inner temple.” From this point Lucius kept his vow of silence and wrote about what he saw no more. However, he offers a hint: “I at length returned, borne along through all the elements. I beheld the sun shining in the dead of night; I saw both the infernal and celestial gods. I approached and adored them.”<sup>1</sup>

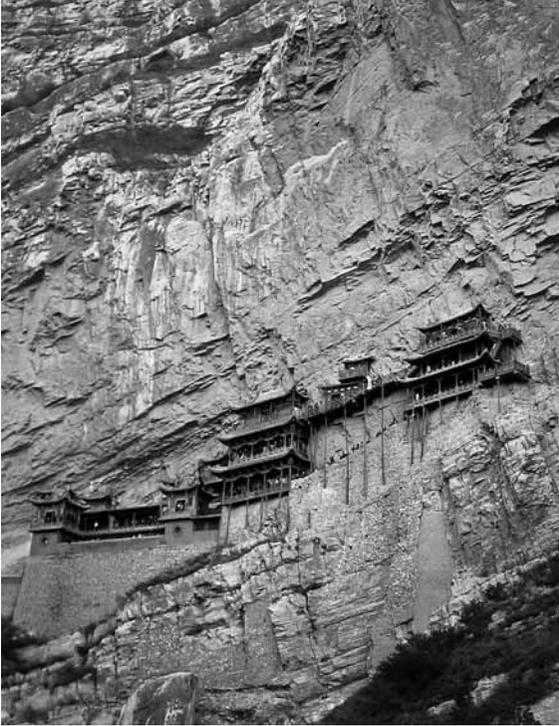
Some late Egyptian texts add further details: how the priest or initiate would enter a special place in the temple and immerse themselves in *qed*, a state of meditation that paved the way for individual access into the Otherworld. The priests expected every individual to return albeit sometimes stunned by what they’d seen, describing it as “a voluntary death and a difficult recovery of health.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***The Book of the Not-so-Dead***

The greatest obstacle to understanding the true nature of Egyptian resurrection texts lies with interpretations by Victorian historians who treated the material within a Judeo-Christian framework, in other words, as literal funerary rites and not as they were intended to be read, as allegories. With few notable exceptions,<sup>3</sup> intellectuals of the period were in total denial that primitive Egyptians could have possibly understood a mystical



*The Pyramid Texts. Saqqara.*



*Why build on the flat plain below when the vertical cliff will do?  
Temple of Hsuan-k'ung Ssu, China*