

(Free) Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion (American University Studies)

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*Vincent A. Tobin*

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**Vincent A. Tobin : Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion (American University Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion (American University Studies):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Useful, but not indispensable, for describing the basics of Egyptian religious belief. By DAJ Yet another book focused on the deep significance of Egyptian theology. It's not very hard to read, unlike some of its ilk, though it feels more wordy than it needs to be. For those who have read Erik Hornung's *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, its treatment of the gods themselves won't provide much that's new. However, its scope is broader than the gods per se. There are chapters on mythology and its relationship with ritual, the process of creation, kingship, maat, the belief surrounding Osiris, afterlife beliefs, the question of monotheistic thought in Egyptian religion, and morality. On some of these subjects there's much less study than you'd expect, so Tobin's work on them is welcome. For instance, only a few recent Egyptologists have tried to define what role myth actually played in Egyptian society. Tobin argues that we should not expect myths to form coherent stories (in Egypt they largely don't), because the symbolic significance of myth is more easily preserved if myth is conveyed in a flexible, fragmentary form. He also says that mythic symbolism "perhaps demonstrates a greater reverence for the divine than do the most profound and abstract theological statements" interesting because, in addition to being an Egyptologist, Tobin is an Anglican minister! Tobin's conclusion describes the most important principles of Egyptian religion. One

was life, which was regarded as a force all its own, a power that continuously flowed through the world. That explains why the ankh sign, the hieroglyph for "life", is so ubiquitous in Egyptian art (and is therefore a famous symbol even today). The second principle was maat, the order that defined how the world should function. The third is the existence of deities, whose core purpose was to maintain maat and thus maintain the proper flow of life-force throughout the world. Tobin thus arrives at a conclusion similar to Religion of the Ancient Egyptians but describes it much less abstrusely. Although I disagree with a few of the details in Tobin's analysis and think it's missing another fundamental principle of Egyptian religion (heka, defined in *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*), his work is a great help in understanding the Egyptian worldview at its most basic.

This study approaches the religion of ancient Egypt from a theological stance, treating the mythic corpus of Egypt not as a mere collection of legends and traditions about the gods, but rather as a carefully constructed system of mythic symbolism. The author demonstrates that the mythic system of ancient Egypt was an articulation of a highly sophisticated and intellectual theological insight into the nature of the universe, an insight which produced an integrated perception of reality and expressed the basic order and unity apparent to the Egyptian mind in all levels of existence. The result is a work which shows Egyptian religion as a unified statement about the universe rather than a haphazard mass of mythic material.

This study of Egyptian religion is fascinating. Tobin has addressed the subject so as to bring it within range of modern understanding. Especially discerning is the description of myth and cult, and the parts they played in shaping piety. The ancient Egyptian religious genius springs into articulate view. The ways of a scholar are evident here, making available to readers the fruit of thoughtful research. (Gordon MacDermid, President Atlantic School of Theology) This is an excellent attempt at a systematic theology of Egyptian religion, seeking to be true both to the distinctive characteristics of the Egyptian experience, and to the need for a consistent account in modern terms. To have managed this clearly and comprehensively in so condensed a space is some achievement. (N. Wyatt, The Society for Old Testament Study) The strength of Tobin's work lies in his concentration upon what he considers to be the central experience of the Egyptians: their monistic and optimistic at-homeness in a benevolent and ordered universe. In working out this central idea, he enhances the crucial role of 'ma'at'. This emphasis provides a fresh and original approach to Egyptian religion, since this element has been overlooked by many scholars. (Sarah Israelit-Groll, *Studies in Religion*)