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RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM IN PTOLEMAIC TEXTS

C. de Wit

During the winter 1954/55, the writer took part in the archaeological excavations of the Mission Belge de Fouilles at El Kâb in Upper Egypt. After the dig he stayed one month at Karnak (Luqsor) to copy the unpublished texts covering the exterior walls of the Temple of Opet (Ptolemaic/Roman period). These walls are covered with inscriptions dating from the time of Caesar Augustus. They give geographical names, some of which were not known before.

During the winter 1955/56, he returned to Karnak where he spent another three months copying all the inscriptions covering the inside walls of the temple, which date for the greater part from the time of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (145-116 B.C.). These are religious texts which promise to be interesting for the study of syncretism in the Egyptian religion of later times. Some scenes show the Theban triad of Amun, Mut and Khonsu, but the epithets which accompany these gods are undoubtedly those of Orisis, Isis and Horus. The god Amun is represented in his own self, i.e. as one of the elements of the Ogdoad (the primeval forces before Creation), as father of the Eight (Ir-ta), as his own grandfather (Kematef) and as his own son (Amenopet). The point seems to be to try to explain how the son is not the inferior of the father, a problem which faced Christian theologians many centuries later. Such a tendency is already to be found in some Coffin Texts, which date from about 2000 B.C. The problems involved cannot be explained in a few words and we must refer to the writer's article 'A propos du temple d'Opet à Karnak', in the review *Le Flambeau*, a copy of which is to be found in Tyndale House Library. Any suggestion that the early Christian Fathers had knowledge of texts such as the Coffin Texts, which have been published only a few years ago by Professor A. de Buck of Leiden, must, of course, be rejected.

C. de WIT.