

***MATILDA
JOSLYN GAGE***



***WOMAN,
CHURCH &
STATE***

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Matilda Joslyn Gage

Woman, Church & State

**The Original Exposé of Male Collaboration Against the
Female Sex**

EAN 8596547029489

DigiCat, 2022

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Preface

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This work explains itself and is given to the world because it is needed. Tired of the obtuseness of Church and State; indignant at the injustice of both towards woman; at the wrongs inflicted upon one-half of humanity by the other half in the name of religion; finding appeal and argument alike met by the assertion that God designed the subjection of woman, and yet that her position had been higher under Christianity than ever before: Continually hearing these statements, and knowing them to be false, I refuted them in a slight *resume* of the subject at the annual convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association, Washington, D.C., 1878.

A wish to see that speech in print, having been expressed, it was allowed to appear in *The National Citizen*, a woman suffrage paper I then edited, and shortly afterwards in "The History of Woman Suffrage," of which I was also an editor. The kindly reception given both in the United States and Europe to that meager chapter of forty pages confirmed my purpose of a fuller presentation of the subject in book form, and it now appears, the result of twenty years investigation, in a volume of over five hundred and fifty pages.

Read it; examine for yourselves; accept or reject from the proof offered, but do not allow the Church or the State to govern your thought or dictate your judgment.

Chapter One

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The Matriarchate

Woman is told that her present position in society is entirely due to Christianity; that it is superior to that of her sex at any prior age of the world, Church and State both maintaining that she has ever been inferior and dependent, man superior and ruler. These assertions are made the basis of opposition to her demands for exact equality with man in all the relations of life, although they are not true either of the family, the church, or the state. Such assertions are due to non-acquaintance with the existing phase of historical knowledge, whose records the majority of mankind have neither time nor opportunity of investigating.

Christianity tended somewhat from its foundation to restrict the liberty woman enjoyed under the old civilizations. Knowing that the position of every human being keeps pace with the religion and civilization of his country, and that in many ancient nations woman possessed a much greater degree of respect and power than she has at the present age, this subject will be presented from a historical standpoint. If in so doing it helps to show man's unwarranted usurpation over woman's religious and civil rights, and the very great difference between true religion and theology, this book will not have been written in vain, as it will prove that the most grievous

wrong ever inflicted upon woman has been in the Christian teaching that she was not created equal with man, and the consequent denial of her rightful place in Church and State.

The last half century has shown great advance in historical knowledge; libraries and manuscripts long inaccessible have been opened to scholars, and the spirit of investigation has made known many secrets of the past, brought many hidden things to light. Buried cities have been explored and forced to reveal their secrets; lost modes of writing have been deciphered, and olden myths placed upon historic foundations. India is opening her stores of ancient literature; Egypt, so wise and so famous, of which it was anciently said: "If it does not find a man mad it leaves him mad," has revealed her secrets; hieroglyph-inscribed temples, obelisks and tombs have been interpreted; papyri buried 4,000 and more years in the folds of bandage-enveloped mummies have given their secrets to the world. The brick libraries of Assyria have been unearthed, and the lost civilization of Babylonia and Chaldea imparted to mankind. The strange Zunis have found an interpreter; the ancient Aztec language its Champollion, and the mysteries of even our western continent are becoming unveiled. Darkest Africa has opened to the light; the colossal images of Easter Island hint at their origin; while the new science of philology unfolds to us the history of peoples so completely lost that no other monument of their past remains. We are now informed as to the condition of early peoples, their laws, customs, habits, religion, comprising order and rank in the state, the rules of descent, name, property, the circumstances of family life, the position of mother, father,

children, their temples and priestly orders; all these have been investigated and a new historic basis has been discovered. Never has research been so thorough or long-lost knowledge so fully given to the world.

These records prove that woman had acquired great liberty under the old civilizations. A form of society existed at an early age known as the Matriarchate or Mother-rule. Under the Matriarchate, except as son and inferior, man was not recognized in either of these great institutions, family, state or church. A father and husband as such, had no place either in the social, political or religious scheme; woman was ruler in each. The primal priest on earth, she was also supreme as goddess in heaven. The earliest semblance of the family is traceable to the relationship of mother and child alone. Here the primal idea of the family had birth.[1] The child bore its mother's name, tracing its descent from her; her authority over it was regarded as in accord with nature; the father having no part in the family remained a wanderer. Long years elapsed before man, as husband and father, was held in esteem. The son, as child of his mother, ranked the father, the mother taking precedence over both the father and the son.[2] Blood relationship through a common mother preceded that of descent through the father in the development of society.[3] This priority of the mother touched not alone the family, but controlled the state and indicated the form of religion. Thus we see that during the Matriarchate, woman ruled; she was first in the family, the state, religion, the most ancient records showing that man's subjection to woman preceded by long ages that of woman to man. The tribe was united through the mother;

social, political and religious life were all in harmony with the idea of woman as the first and highest power. The earliest phase of life being dependent upon her, she was recognized as the primal factor in every relation,[4] man holding no place but that of dependent.

Every part of the world today gives evidence of the system; reminiscences of the Matriarchate everywhere abound. Livingstone found African tribes swearing by the mother and tracing descent through her. Marco Polo discovered similar customs in his Asiatic voyages, and the same customs are extant among the Indians of our own continent. Bachofen[5] and numerous investigators[6] agree in the statement that in the earliest forms of society, the family, government, and religion, were all under woman's control; that in fact society started under woman's absolute authority and power.

The second step in family life took place when the father, dropping his own name, took that of his child. This old and wide-spread custom is still extant in many portions of the globe; the primitive peoples of Java, Australia and Madagascar are among those still continuing its practice.[7] By this step the father allied himself to both mother and child, although still holding an inferior position to both. The Matriarchal family was now fully established, descent still running in the female line. Thus, as has been expressed, we find that woman's liberty did not begin today nor under modern religions or forms or government, but that she was in reality the founder of civilization, and that in the most remote times woman enjoyed superiority of rights in all the institutions of life.[8] And yet so difficult is it to break away

from educated thought, so slight a hold have historical facts upon the mind when contrary to pre-conceived ideas, that we find people still expressing the opinion that man's place has always been first in government. Even under those forms of society where woman was undisputed head of the family, its very existence due to her, descent entirely in the female line, we still hear assertion that his must have been the controlling political power. But at that early period to which we trace the formation of the family, it was also the political unit. And when peoples became aggregated into communities, when tribal relations were ultimately recognized, woman still held superior position, and was the controlling power in government, and never was justice more perfect, never civilization higher than under the Matriarchate. Historians agree as to the high civilization even today of those nations or tribes still preserving traces of Matriarchal customs. Even under its most degenerate form, the family, governmental and religious rights of women are more fully recognized than under any phase of Christian civilization. In all the oldest religions, equally with the Semitic cults, the feminine was recognized as a component and superior part of divinity, goddesses holding the supreme place. Even at much later periods woman shared equally with man in the highest priestly offices, and was deified after death. In Egypt, Neith the Victorious, was worshiped as mother of the gods, and in the yearly festival held in her honor, every family took part for the time holding a priestly office. To neglect this duty was deemed an omission of great irreverence.[9] The most ancient

occultism recognized the creative power as feminine and preceding both gods and men.

Under the Matriarchate, monogamy was the rule; neither polyandry or promiscuity existed.[10]

For long years after the decline of the Matriarchate we still discover that among many of the most refined nations, woman still possessed much of the power that belonged exclusively to her during that early period. Ancient Egypt, recognized as the wisest nation since the direct historic period, traced descent even to the throne in the female line. To this reminiscence of the Matriarchate are we indebted for the story of Moses and his preservation by an Egyptian princess in direct contravention of the Pharaoh's orders, as told by the Bible and Josephus. She not alone preserved the child's life but carried him to the king as her son given to her by the bounty of the river and heir to his throne. As showing woman's power in that kingdom, the story is worthy of being farther traced. Josephus says that to please his daughter, the king took the child in his arms, placing his crown on the baby head, but the chief priest at that moment entering the room, in a spirit of prophecy cried aloud, "Oh King; this is the child of whom I foretold danger; kill him and save the nation," at the same time striving to take the babe from the king. But the princess caught him away, thus setting both kingly and priestly power at defiance, taking this step by virtue of her greater authority, protecting him until he reached manhood and causing him to be educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, in a college under her own control. Nor in the supreme hour of the nation's peril, when the king, too old to lead his armies to battle,

demanded Moses as heir to the throne in his place, would she give him up until she had exacted an oath from her father, the potent Pharaoh, that he meant the youth no harm.

The famous Iroquois Indians, or Six Nations, which at the discovery of America held sway from the great lakes to the Tombigbee river, from the Hudson to the Ohio, and of whom it has been said that another century would have found them master of all tribes to the Gulf of Mexico on the south, and the Mississippi on the west, showed alike in form of government, and in social life, reminiscences of the Matriarchate. The line of descent, feminine, was especially notable in all tribal relations such as the election of Chiefs, and the Council of Matrons, to which all disputed questions were referred for final adjudication. No sale of lands was valid without consent of the squaws and among the State Archives at Albany, New York, treaties are preserved signed by the "Sachems and Principal Women of the Six Nations."[\[11\]](#) The women also possessed the veto power on questions of war. Sir William Johnston mentions an instance of Mohawk squaws forbidding the war-path to young braves. The family relation among the Iroquois demonstrated woman's superiority in power. When an Indian husband brought the products of the chase to the wigwam, his control over it ceased. In the home, the wife was absolute; the sale of the skins was regulated by her, the price was paid to her. If for any cause the Iroquois husband and wife separated, the wife took with her all the property she had brought into the wigwam; the children also accompanied the mother, whose right to them was recognized as supreme. So

fully to this day is descent reckoned through the mother, that blue-eyed, fair-haired children of white fathers are numbered in the tribe and receive both from state and nation their portion of the yearly dole paid to Indian tribes. The veriest pagan among the Iroquois, the renowned and important Keeper of the Wampum, and present sole interpreter of the Belts which give the most ancient and secret history of this confederation, is Ephraim Webster, descended from a white man, who, a hundred or more years since, became affiliated through marriage with an Indian woman, as a member of the principal nation of the Iroquois, the Onondagas. As of yore, so now, the greater and lesser Council Houses of the Iroquois are upon the "mountain" of the Onondaga reservation a few miles from the city of Syracuse, New York. Not alone the Iroquois but most Indians of North America trace descent in the female line; among some tribes woman enjoys almost the whole legislative authority and in others a prominent share.[12] Lafitte and other Jesuit missionary writers are corroborated in this statement by Schoolcraft, Catlin, Clark, Hubert Bancroft of the Pacific coast, and many students of Indian life and customs. But the most notable fact connected with woman's participation in governmental affairs among the Iroquois is the statement of Hon. George Bancroft that the form of government of the United States, was borrowed from that of the Six Nations.[13] Thus to the Matriarchate or Mother-rule is the modern world indebted for its first conception of inherent rights, natural equality of condition, and the establishment of a civilized government upon this basis. Although the reputation of the Iroquois as warriors appears

most prominent in history, we nevertheless find their real principles to have been the true Matriarchal one of peace and industry. Driven from the northern portion of America by vindictive foes, compelled to take up arms in self-protection, yet the more peaceful occupations of hunting and agriculture were continually followed. Their history was preserved by means of wampum, while under their women the science of government reached the highest form known to the world. Among the Zunis of New Mexico, woman still preserves supreme religious and political authority; the Paramount Council consisting of six priests under control of a supreme priestess who is the most important functionary of the tribe.[14] This form of government is traceable to their earliest civilization at which period their cities were grouped in sevens, six of them constructed upon a uniform plan; the supreme seventh containing six temples clustered about a supreme central seventh temple. While male priests ruled over the six primal cities the central and superior seventh was presided over by a priestess who not alone officiated at the central temple, but to whom the male priests of the six cities and six inferior temples were subservient. The ancient Lycians, the Sclavs, the Basques of Spain,[15] the Veddas of Ceylon,[16] the inhabitants of Malabar, the aborigines of widely separated lands, all show convincing proof of woman's early superiority in religion, in the state, and in the family. Monogamy was a marked feature of the Matriarchate. Bachofen, who has written voluminously upon the Matriarchate, recognizes it as peculiarly characteristic of woman's government. He also says the people who possessed the Mother-rule together

with Gynaikokraty (girls' rule) excelled in their love of peace and justice. Under the Matriarchal family and tribal system even long after its partial supersedence by the incoming Patriarchate, the marriage relation was less oppressive to woman than it has been under most centuries of christian civilization. Daughters were free in their choice of husbands, no form of a force or sale existing.[17]

One of the most brilliant modern examples of the Matriarchate was found in Malabar at the time of its discovery by the Portuguese in the XV century. The Nairs were found to possess a fine civilization, entirely under the control of women, at a period when woman's position in England and on the Continent of Europe, was that of a household and political slave. Of Malabar it has been said, that when the Portuguese became acquainted with the country and the people, they were not so much surprised by the opulence of their cities, the splendor of all their habits of living, the great perfection of their navy, the high state of the arts, as they were to find all this under the entire control and government of women. The difference in civilization between christian Europe and pagan Malabar at the time of its discovery was indeed great. While Europe with its new art of printing, was struggling against the church for permission to use type, its institutions of learning few, its opportunities for education meagre; its terrible inquisition crushing free thought and sending thousands each year to a most painful death, the uncleanliness of its cities and the country such as to bring frequent visits of the plague; its armies and its navies with but one exception, imperfect; its women forbidden the right of inheritance, religious, political,

or household authority;—the feminine principle entirely eliminated from the divinity—a purely masculine God the universal object of worship, all was directly the opposite in Malabar. Cleanliness, peace, the arts, a just form of government, the recognition of the feminine both in humanity and in the divinity were found in Malabar. To the question of a Danish missionary concerning their opinion of a Supreme Being, this beautiful answer was given.

The Supreme Being has a Form and yet has no Form; he can be likened to nothing; we cannot define him and say that he is this or that; he is neither Man or Woman; neither Heaven or Earth, and yet he is all; subject to no corruption, no mortality and with neither sleep nor rest, he is Almighty and Omnipotent without Beginning and without End.[18]

Under the Missionaries sent by England to introduce her own barbaric ideas of God and man, this beautiful Matriarchal civilization of Malabar soon retrograded and was lost.

The ancient Mound Builders of America, of whom history is silent and science profoundly ignorant, are proven by means of symbolism to have been under Matriarchal rule, and Motherhood religion. Anciently motherhood was represented by a sphere or circle. The circle, like the mundane egg, which is but an elongated circle, contains everything in itself and is the true microcosm. It is eternity, it is feminine, the creative force, representing spirit. Through its union with matter in the form of the nine digits it is likewise capable of representing all natural things.[19]

The perfect circle of Giotto was an emblem of divine motherhood in its completeness. It is a remarkable fact—its significance not recognized,—that the roughly sketched diameter within the circle, found wherever boys congregate, is an ancient mystic sign[20] signifying the male and female, or the double-sexed deity. It is the union of all numbers, the one within the zero mark comprising ten, and as part of the ancient mysteries signifying God, the creative power, and eternal life; it was an emblem of The All.

In many old religions, the generative principle was regarded as the mother of both gods and men. In the Christian religion we find tendency to a similar recognition in Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary. The most ancient Aryans were under the Matriarchate, the feminine recognized as the creative power. The word *ma* from which all descendants of those peoples derive their names for mother, was synonymous with *Creator*. Renouf, the great antiquarian authority upon the Aryan's,[21] gives the songs and ceremonies of the wedding. In these, the woman is represented as having descended to man from association with divine beings in whose custody and care she has been, and who give her up with reluctance. In Sanscrit mythology, [22] the feminine is represented by Swrya, the Sun, the source of life, while the masculine is described as Soma, a body. Soma, a beverage of the gods especially sacred to Indra, was the price paid by him for the assistance of Vayu, the swiftest of the gods, in his battle against the demon Vritra. A curious line of thought is suggested. The marriage of the man to the woman was symbolized as his union with the gods. Soma, a drink devoted to Indra, the highest god,

signified his use of a body, or the union of spirit and body. In the same manner, woman representing spirit, by her marriage to man became united with a body. As during the present dark age, the body has been regarded more highly than the spirit, we find a non-recognition of the woman, although the union of spirit and body is symbolized in the Christian church by the sacrament of bread and wine. During the purest period of Aryan history marriage was entirely optional with woman and when entered into, frequently meant no more than spiritual companionship. Woman equally with man was entitled to the Brahminical thread; she also possessed the right to study and preach the Vedas, which was in itself a proof of her high position in this race. The Vedas, believed to be the oldest literature extant, were for many ages taught orally requiring years of close application upon part of both teacher and student.

The word *Veda* signifies “to-know”; the latter from *Vidya* meaning “wise.” The English term widow is traceable to both forms of the word, meaning a wise woman—one who knows man. Many ages passed before the Vedas were committed to writing.[\[23\]](#) At that early day the ancestral worship of women—departed mothers—was as frequent as that of departed fathers, women conducting such services which took place three times a day. In the old Aryan Scriptures the right of woman to hold property, and to her children, was much more fully recognized than under the Christian codes of today. Many of the olden rights of women are still extant in India. The learned Keshub Chunder Sen vigorously protested against the introduction of English law into India, upon the ground that it would destroy the ancient

rights of the women of that country. It was primal Indian law that upon the death of the husband the wife should heir all his property. Marriage was regarded as an eternal union, the two, by this act, having so fully become one, that upon the husband's death, one half of his body was still living. The property and the children were held as equally belonging to the husband or the wife.

Colebrook's *Digest of Hindoo Law*, compiled from the writings of the Bengal Pundit Jergunnat, 'Na Tercapanchama, from those of Vasist ha, Catayana, and other Indian authorities says:

In the Veda, in Codes of Law, in sacred ordinances, the wife is held as one person with the husband; both are considered one. When the wife is not dead, half the body remains; how shall another take the property when half the body of the owner lives? After the death of the husband the widow shall take his wealth; this is primeval law.

Though a woman be dependent, the alienation of female property, or of the mother's right over her son by the gift of a husband alone[24] is not valid in law or reason;

The female property of wives like the property of a stranger, may not be given, for there is want of ownership.

Neither the husband, nor the son, nor the father, nor the brother, have power to use or alien the legal property of a woman.

We hold it proper that the wife's co-operation shall be required in civil contracts and in religious acts

under the text.

A gift to a wife is irrevocable.

The collection of East Indian laws made under authority of the celebrated Warren Hastings, 1776, is of similar character. The kinds of property a wife can hold separate from her husband at her own disposal by will, are specified.

During long centuries while under Christian law the Christian wife was not allowed even the control of property her own at the time of marriage, or of that which might afterwards be given her, and her right of the disposition of property at the time of her death was not recognized in Christian lands, the Hindoo wife under immemorial custom could receive property by gift alike from her parents, or from strangers, or acquire it by her own industry, and property thus gained was at her own disposal in case of her death. Another remarkable feature of Indian law contrasting with that of Christian lands was preference of woman over man in heirship. In case of a daughter's death, the mother heired in preference to father, son, or even husband.

That is called a woman's property; First. Whatever she owns during the Agamini Shadee, i. e. Days of Marriage;...

Whatever she may receive from any person as she is going to her husband's home or coming from thence.

Whatever her husband may at any time have given her; whatever she has received at any time from a brother; and whatever her father and mother may have given her.

Whatever her husband on contracting a second marriage may give her to pacify her.

Whatever a person may have given a woman for food or clothing.

Whatever jewelry or wearing apparel she may have received from any person; also whatever a woman may receive from any person as an acknowledgment or payment for any work performed by her. Whatever she may by accident have found anywhere.

Whatever she may gain by painting, spinning, needle-work or any employment of this kind.

Except from one of the family of her father, one of the family of her mother, or one of the family of her husband, whatever she may receive from any other person. Also if the father or mother of a girl give anything to their son-in-law, saying at the same time: "This shall go to our daughter," and even without any words to this purpose at the time of making the gift, if they merely have it in their intention that the thing thus given should revert to their daughter, all and every one of these articles are called a woman's property.

Her right of final disposal by will is also specified. Her effects acquired during marriage go to her daughters in preference to her sons, and possessing no daughters, to her mother.

When a woman dies, then whatever effects she acquired during the Agamini Shadee, even though she hath a son living, shall go first to her unmarried

daughter; if there is but one unmarried daughter she shall obtain the whole; if there are several unmarried daughters, they all shall have equal share.

Property under the three forms of marriage, if no unmarried daughters and others mentioned here, goes to her mother before to her father; and if neither, to her husband, and if no husband to husband's younger brother, or several younger brothers, (if several).

The specification of gifts of intention is remarkable in securing property to the wife that was seemingly given by the parents to the husband alone. An equally remarkable fact is the father's heirship in preference to the husband's, and the heirship of the daughters and mother in preference to any male relative however near, and is in striking contrast to Christian law in reference to woman's property. If a husband neglect to provide his wife necessary food and clothing, the East Indian wife is allowed to procure them by any means in her power. Maine has not failed to recognize the superior authority of the eastern wife in relation to property over that of the Christian wife. He says:

“The settled property of a married woman incapable of alienation by her husband, is well known to the Hindoos under the name of Stridham.”

It is certainly a remarkable fact that the institution seems to have developed among the Hindoos at a period relatively much earlier than among the Romans. The *Mitakshara*, one of the oldest and most revered authorities of the Hindoo judicial treatises,

defines Stridham, or woman's property, as that which is given to the wife by the father, the mother, or a brother at the time of the wedding, before the nuptial fire.

But adds Maine:

The compiler of Mitakshara adds a proportion not found elsewhere; also property which she may have acquired by inheritance, purchase, partition, seizure or finding, is denominated woman's property.... If all this be

Stridham, it follows that the ancient Hindoo law secured to married women an even greater degree of proprietary independence than that given to them by the modern English Married Woman's Property Act.

Property is common to the husband and the wife. The ample support of those who are entitled to maintenance is rewarded with bliss in heaven; but hell is the portion of that man whose family is afflicted with pain by his neglect. Therefore the Hindoo husband is taught to maintain his family with the utmost care. Maxims from the sacred books show the regard in which the Hindoo woman is held:

"He who despises woman despises his mother."

"Who is cursed by woman is cursed by God."

"The tears of a woman call down the fire of heaven on those who make them flow."

"Evil to him who laughs at woman's sufferings; God shall laugh at his prayers."

"It was at the prayer of a woman that the Creator pardoned man; cursed be he who forgets it."

"Who shall forget the sufferings of his mother at his birth shall be reborn in the body of an owl during three successive transmigrations."

"There is no crime more odious than to persecute woman."

“When women are honored the divinities are content; but when they are not honored all undertakings fail.”

“The households cursed by women to whom they have not rendered the homage due them, find themselves weighed down with ruin and destroyed as if they had been struck by some secret power.”

“We will not admit the people of today are incapable of comprehending woman, who alone can regenerate them.”

The marriage ceremony is of the slightest kind and under three forms:

1. Of mutual consent by the interchange of necklaces or strings of flowers in some secret place.

2. A woman says, “I am become your wife,” and the man says, “I acknowledge it.”

3. When the parents of a girl on her marriage day say to the bridegroom: “Whatever act of religion you perform, perform it with our daughter,” and the bridegroom assents to this speech.

The comparatively modern custom of suttee originated with the priests, whose avaricious desires created this system in order thereby to secure the property of the widow. The Vedas do not countenance either suttee or the widow’s relinquishment of her property, the law specifically declaring, “If a widow should give all her property and estate to the Brahmins for religious purposes, the gift indeed is valid, but the act is improper and the woman

blamable.” An ancient scripture declares that “All the wisdom of the Vedas, and all that has been written in books, is to be found concealed in the heart of a woman.” It is a Hindoo maxim that one mother is worth a thousand fathers, because the mother carries and nourishes the infant from her own body, therefore the mother is most revered. A Hindoo proverb declares that “Who leaves his family naked and unfed may taste honey at first, but shall afterwards find it poison.” Another says, “A wife is a friend in the house of the good.”

Ancient Egypt worshiped two classes of gods; one purely spiritual and eternal, the other secondary but best beloved, were believed to have been human beings who from the services they had rendered to humanity were upon death admitted to the assembly of the gods. Such deification common in ancient times, is still customary in some parts of the earth. Within the past few years a countryman of our own was thus apotheosized by the Chinese to whom he had rendered valuable service at the time of the Tae-ping rebellion.[25] Ancient Egyptians recognized a masculine and feminine principle entering in all things both material and spiritual. Isis, the best beloved and most worshiped of the secondary gods, was believed by them to have been a woman who at an early period of Egyptian history had rendered that people invaluable service. She was acknowledged as their earliest law-maker, through whose teaching the people had risen from barbarism to civilization. She taught them the art of making bread[26] from the cereals theretofore growing wild and unused, the inhabitants at an early day living upon roots and herbs.

Egypt soon became the grain growing portion of the globe, her enormous crops of wheat not alone aiding herself, but rendering the long stability of the Roman Empire possible. The science of medicine was believed to have originated with Isis; she was also said to have invented the art of embalming, established their literature, founded their religion. The whole Egyptian civilization was ascribed to the woman-goddess, Isis, whose name primarily Ish-Ish, signified Light, Life.[27] Isis, and Nephtys—the Lady of the House—were worshiped as the Beginning and the End. They were the Alpha and Omega of the most ancient Egyptian religion. The statues of Isis bore this inscription:

I am all that has been, all that shall be, and none among mortals has hitherto taken off my veil.

Isis was believed to contain germs within herself for the reproduction of all living things. The most universal of her 10,000 names was, “Potent Mother Goddess.”[28] This Egyptian regard for Isis is an extremely curious and interesting reminiscence of the Matriarchal period. Her worship was universal throughout Egypt. Her temples were magnificent. Her priests, consecrated to purity, were required to bathe daily, to wear linen garments unmixed with animal fibre, to abstain from animal food, and also from those vegetables regarded as impure.[29] Two magnificent festivals were yearly celebrated in her honor, the whole people taking part. During one of these festivals her priests bore a golden ship in the procession. The ship, or ark,[30] is peculiarly significant of the feminine principle, and wherever found is a reminiscence of the Matriarchate. The

most sacred mysteries of the Egyptian religion, whose secrets even Pythagoras could not penetrate, to which Herodotus alluded with awe, and that were unknown to any person except the highest order of priests, owed their institution to Isis, and were based upon moral responsibility and a belief in a future life. The immortality of the soul was the underlying principle of the Egyptian religion.

Isis seems to have been one of those extraordinary individuals, such as occasionally in the history of the world have created a literature, founded a religion, established a nationality. She was a person of superior mentality, with power to diffuse intelligence.

Moses, “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” borrowed much from Isis. The forms and ceremonies used in her worship were largely copied by him, yet lacked the great moral element—immortal life—so conspicuously taught as a part of Egyptian religion. The Sacred Songs of Isis were an important part of the literature of Egypt. Plato, who burned his own poems after reading Homer, declared them worthy of the divinity, believing them to be literally 10,000 years old.^[31] All orders of the priesthood were open to women in Egypt; sacred colleges existed for them, within whose walls dwelt an order of priestesses known as “God’s Hand,” “God’s Star.” Its ranks were recruited from women of the principal families, whose only employment was the service of the gods. “Daughter of the Deity,” signified a priestess.

Women performed the most holy offices of religion, carrying the Sacred Sistrum and offering sacrifices of milk, both ceremonies of great dignity and importance, being regarded as the most sacred service of the divinity. Such

sacrificial rites were confined to queens and princesses of the royal household. Ames-Nofri-Ari, a queen who received great honor from Egyptians, spoken of as the “goddess-wife of Amun,” the supreme god of Thebes, for whose worship the wonderful temple of Karnak was founded by a Pharaoh of the XII dynasty, is depicted on the monuments as the Chief High Priest—the Sem, whose specific duty was offering sacrifices and pouring out libations in that temple. By virtue of her high office she preceded her husband, the powerful and renowned Rameses II. The high offices of the church were as habitually held by women as by men; Princess Neferhotep, of the fifth dynasty, was both a priestess and a prophetess of the goddesses Hathor and Neith, the representatives of celestial space, in which things were both created and preserved.

A priestess and priest in time of the XIII Pharaoh represented on a slab of limestone, in possession of the Ashmolean Library of Oxford, England, is believed to be the oldest monument of its kind in the world, dating to 3,500, B.C.

Queen Hatasu, the light of the brilliant XVIII dynasty, is depicted upon the monuments as preceding in acts of worship the great Thotmes III, her brother, whom she had associated with herself upon the throne, but who did not acquire supreme power until after her death.[\[32\]](#) The reign of Hatasu was pre-eminent as the great architectural period of Egypt, the engraving upon monuments during her reign closely resembling the finest Greek intaglio. Egypt, so famous for her gardens and her art of forcing blossoms out of season, was indebted to this great queen for the first

acclimatizing of plants. Upon one of her voyages she brought with her in baskets filled with earth several of those Balsam trees from Arabia, which were numbered among the precious gifts of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. The red granite obelisks erected by Hatasu before the gates of Karnak, the most magnificent and loftiest ever erected in Egypt, were ninety-seven feet in height and surmounted by a pyramid of gold.

As early as the XI Pharaoh, II dynasty, the royal succession became fixed in the female line. A princess was endowed with privileges superior to a prince, her brother, her children reigning by royal prerogative even when her husband was a commoner; the children of a prince of the Pharaonic house making such marriage were declared illegitimate.

From the highest to the most humble priestly office, women officiated in Egypt. A class of sacred women were doorkeepers of temples, another order known as "Sacred Scribes" were paid great deference. The Pellices or Pellucidae of Amun were a remarkable body of priestesses whose burial place has but recently been discovered. They were especially devoted to the services of Amun-Ra, the Theban Jove. Egypt was indebted to priestesses for some of its most important literature. To Penthelia, a priestess of Phtha[33] the God of Fire, in Memphis, Bryant ascribes the authorship of the Iliad and the Odyssey, Homer[34] in his travels through that country, by aid of a suborned priest, having stolen these poems from the archives of the temples of Phtha where they had been deposited for safe keeping.