

The Negative Confession

[Taken from Nels M. Bailkey, ed. *Readings in Ancient History: Thought and Experience from Gilgamesh to St. Augustine*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1987. Pp. 49-50.]

“The following example of ‘counting up character,’ as this ceremony was called, is from the tomb of Nu, a high official during the Eighteenth Dynasty (1570-1305 BC).

“The following shall be said when the overseer of the palace, the chancellor-in-chief, Nu, triumphant, cometh forth into the Hall of Double Maati, so that he may be separated from every sin which he hath done and may behold the faces of the gods. The Osiris Nu, triumphant, saith:

‘Homage to thee, O Great God [Osiris], Lord of Double Maati, I have come to thee, O my Lord, I have brought myself hither that I may behold thy beauties. I know thee, and I know thy name, and I know the names of the two and forty gods who exist with thee in this Hall of Double Maati, who live as warders of sinners and who feed upon their blood on the day when the lives of men are taken into account in the presence of the god Un-nefer [Osiris]: in truth, “Lord of Justice” is thy name. In truth I have come to thee, and I have brought *maat* to thee, and I have expelled wickedness for thee.

1. I have not done evil to mankind.
2. I have not oppressed the members of my family.
3. I have not wrought evil in the place of right and truth.
4. I have had no knowledge of worthless men.
7. I have not brought forward my name for exaltation to honors.
8. I have not ill-treated servants.
9. I have not belittled a god.
10. I have not defrauded the oppressed one of his property.
11. I have not done that which is an abomination unto the gods.
14. I have made no man to suffer hunger.
15. I have made no one to weep.
16. I have done no murder.
17. I have not given the order for murder to be done for me.
18. I have not inflicted pain upon mankind.
22. I have not committed fornication.
26. I have not encroached upon the fields of others.
27. I have not added to the weights of the scales [to cheat the seller].
28. I have not misread the pointer of the scales [to cheat the buyer].
29. I have not carried away the milk from the mouths of children.
33. I have not turned back water at the time [when it should flow].
37. I have not driven off the cattle from the property of the gods.

I am pure! I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!’”