

## THE BABYLONIAN GOOD FRIDAY.

BY THE EDITOR.

WE know that pre-Christian paganism in almost all the countries of Hither Asia and in Egypt celebrated a kind of Easter festival to commemorate the renewal of life, and this Easter festival follows upon a corresponding Good Friday. While Easter represents the resurrection of the god of vegetation, of the sun, or of life in general, the Good Friday ceremony commemorates his death and descent into hell, or his temporary defeat. In the Christian calendar the two festivals are placed close together, and in some pagan rituals this arrangement may have had precedence, but as a rule the two feasts were celebrated in different seasons of the year, e. g., the death of Tammuz falls in the high summer season, while his resurrection was celebrated in the spring.

The idea of a god that dies and rises to life again is common to almost all pre-Christian mythologies. In Babylonia we find this idea attributed to several deities, who for all we know may originally have been the same and were worshiped in different places under different names, whereupon they may have developed into different deities.

A kind of Good Friday celebration is mentioned by Ezekiel, who, as told in Chap. viii, sees in a vision the abominations carried on in the temple of Jerusalem. The temple service at that time was performed in the way customary among the surrounding nations, and so Yahveh kept away from his sanctuary. In the 14th verse Ezekiel speaks of "the gate of the Lord's house toward the north," and he adds, "Behold there sat women weeping for Tammuz." Another mention of the lamentation festival is made in Zech. xii. 11, where the prophet alludes to the "great mourning in Jerusalem as the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddon." The latter passage may be neglected because the text is corrupt and the meaning uncertain, nor does it contain anything

new except the name of the Aramaic or Edomitic Tammuz, Hadad-Rimmon.

The Babylonian Tammuz festival is very old and can be traced back to the Sumerian period. In Sumeria the god Tammuz was represented as a son of Ea, and he was called *Dumuzi*, which means "genuine son," or *Dumu zi abzu*, that is, "genuine son of the deep."

The god Tammuz is also mentioned in the old Babylonian inscriptions of Gudea and his predecessors of Telloh, and we must assume that this lamentation for the death of Tammuz is an ancient festival which dates back to prehistoric times.

The Tammuz cult was connected with the Adapa myth and also with the Greco-Phœnician legend of Adonis. In fact Adonis means nothing but Lord, and is the title of Tammuz, a title which he also bore in Babylonia where in the text he was called *Belu*, that is "Lord," or *Edu*, that is "hero."

Adapa may have been originally identical with Tammuz, for the Adapa myth relates how it happened that one of the immortal gods was mortal and had somehow acquired mortality.

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The Adapa myth is recorded in the clay tablets of Tell-Amarna, and in three fragments of the Assurbanipal library. The narrative briefly told is as follows:

Adapa, the son of Ea, is endowed with wisdom from his father who was one of the great Babylonian trinity of gods, the others being Anu and Bel. Adapa was in charge of his father's shrine at Eridu and procured for it the necessary supply of bread, water and fish. One day while he was fishing the south wind upset his boat so that he sank into the sea, and Adapa in revenge broke the wings of the south wind. When Anu, the god of heaven, noticed the change on earth, he inquired into the cause and summoned Adapa before his seat of judgment. Ea, Adapa's father, advised his son to appeal to the compassion of the gods, to put on a garment of mourning, and when he came to the palace of Anu he was to refuse bread and drink and a new garment, but when they offered him oil he should anoint himself with it. He says: "When thou appearest before Anu bread of death will be offered thee; eat it not. Water of death will be offered thee; drink it not. A garment they will offer thee; put it not on. Oil they will offer thee; anoint thyself with it." When Adapa is conducted before the throne of Anu, the gods Tammuz and Gishzida take pity on him and pacify Anu's wrath. Everything happens as predicted by Ea, except that Anu

offers him bread of life and water of life, which Adapa refuses and thus forfeits his immortality.

The suggestion has been made that Adapa may be the original form of the Hebrew Adam, and that the change from *p* to *m* may be partly due to a scribe's mistake, partly to the natural habit of people to explain a foreign word by some familiar etymology, Adam meaning man.

The main point in the story of the food of life by which some half-divine being forfeits his immortality is obvious, and it appears that Adapa is a humanized counterpart of Tammuz. Adapa represents the loss of immortality, Tammuz its restitution. In a similar way Adam is opposed to Christ, and Christ is called the second Adam.

The Adapa myth must have been very popular in ancient Babylon. The Gilgamesh epic (table VI, 46) mentions the lamentations for the death of Tammuz, which were repeated annually, and the story is also referred to in Istar's descent to hell.

The mortal enemy of Tammuz is the god Ninib, who is the sun-god at the time of the most intense summer heat. The rays of the sun kill the god of vegetation, and this is represented in the myth of Adonis who is killed by a boar while hunting. The boar is sacred to Ninib for in some phases of ancient mythology the sun is represented as a boar with golden bristles. This same idea is preserved in northern mythology, where the sun-god, called the Lord or *Fro*, (the masculine of Freya, "lady," corresponding to the modern German *Frau*) is represented as riding on a golden boar, and the souls of the departed heroes are feasting in Walhalla on the meat of a boar, the supply of which is inexhaustible.

The resurrection of Tammuz is celebrated by a procession in which Tammuz himself is carried on a float, representing a ship called "the ship of plenty," and there he appears in the shape of a couching bull. The triumph of the god culminates in his marriage to Nina, the fish-goddess.<sup>1</sup>

The British Museum contains a hymn to Tammuz<sup>2</sup> which has been translated by Prof. J. Dyneley Prince, according to whose version it reads thus:

"(Lament) for my mighty one who liveth no more.  
— — — — who liveth no more, for my mighty one who liveth  
no more.

<sup>1</sup>The name literally means "House of Fish."

<sup>2</sup>Tablet 15821, Plate 18.

— — — — — who — — — — — liveth no more; for my mighty one  
who liveth no more.

— — — — — — — — — — — my spouse who liveth no more.

— — — — — — — — — — — my — — — — — who liveth no more.

— — — — — great god of the heavenly year who liveth no more.

Lord of the lower world who liveth no more.

Lord of vegetation, artificer of the earth, who liveth no more.

The shepherd, the lord, the god Tammuz who liveth no more.

The lord who giveth gifts who liveth no more.

With his heavenly spouse he liveth no more.

(The producer of) wine who liveth no more.

Lord of fructification; the established one who liveth no more.

The lord of power; the established one who liveth no more.

Like a mighty bull is his appearance; the forceful one, like an  
ancient bull he coucheth.

Like a mighty bull is his appearance; in his ship of plenty  
like an ancient bull he coucheth.

In accordance with thy word(?) the earth shall be judged.

(Thus) the high parts of the earth verily shall be judged.

— — — — — who — — — — — verily they shall cry out for it.

For food which they have not to eat they shall verily cry out.

For water which they have not to drink they shall verily cry  
out.

Verily the maiden who is pleasing shall cry out for it.

Verily the warrior who is acceptable shall cry out for it.

— — — — — thy — — — — — the mighty one, the land with a  
curse is destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

— — — — — the mighty one, the land with a curse is de-  
stroyed.<sup>3</sup>

Power of the land (is he). With (his) gift no gift can vie.

Power of the land (is he). The Word<sup>4</sup> which overcometh  
disease.

Power he exalteth, exalteth.

Food which they have not to eat he raiseth up.

Water which they have not to drink he raiseth up.

The maiden who is pleasing he raiseth up.

<sup>3</sup> Literally "the land he overwhelmeth with a curse." Professor Prince prefers the passive form in his translation because the curse is caused by the absence of Tammuz from earth. It is a curse to the country that Tammuz no longer quickens the life of vegetation.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Prince adds in a note: "Here Tammuz is the life-giving Word, a conception which has many parallels in early Semitic literature and which culminated in the Word of the Gospel of St. John."

The warrior who is acceptable he raiseth up.  
The mighty one who destroyeth your people.  
The god Ninib destroyeth even the least among your people.  
With her gracious aspect Ninâ speaketh.  
In her gracious rising verily she shineth forth.  
Where she waxeth full, her procreative power is mighty of  
aspect.  
The creative one (with) the staff of her left hand, verily she  
establisheth the cleansing *uvulu*-herb.<sup>5</sup>  
With her sceptre of judgment she commandeth.  
The creative one with her firm voice she speaketh to him.  
XLI lines. A hymn for the god Tammuz."

<sup>5</sup> A plant used for purification ceremonies.