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## Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. A. H. SAYCE, D.D., LL.D., OXFORD.

### 'Weeping for Tammuz.'<sup>1</sup>

TAMMUZ is one of the most attractive figures in Babylonian theology; at all events he has been so to myself ever since the days when in my Hibbert Lectures I tried to interest scholars in the old Chaldean deity. Recent discoveries, more especially among the tablets from Nippur now in the Philadelphia Museum, have thrown abundant and unexpected light upon the earlier history of the god and cleared up many of the problems connected with him. We have now learnt that he occupied a leading place in the religious thought of ancient Babylonia, and that his worship exercised a very important influence upon the religion of that country. The influence extended not only to Judah, where Ezekiel beheld the women who wept for the fate of the god, but through Hellenistic channels has left its mark even upon Christian thought.

Two illuminating books on the subject have appeared in English during the last few months. Professor Zimmern had already published some of the liturgies connected with the worship of Tammuz and drawn attention to their importance in his *Sumerische Kultlieder*; his work has been ably followed up in the two books I have undertaken to review. Dr. Langdon's volume is intended not only for the Assyriologist and Semitic scholar, but for the general public as well; Dr. Radau's work is addressed specially to the Assyriologist. The larger part of it consists of facsimile copies of the texts relating to Tammuz preserved in the Museum of Philadelphia, but these are preceded by an introduction which is full of both learning and suggestiveness. Dr. Langdon's work is more comprehensive, but the learning displayed in it is equally wide and detailed; every side of the question is passed under review, and it gives an account of the Babylonian mother-goddess and her son, or husband, which is as complete as our

present materials allow it to be. It will be found intensely interesting by all classes of readers.

Tammuz, like his mother Innini, was of Sumerian origin. His mother was the earth-goddess, and Tammuz himself the god of vegetation. As vegetation withers and dies, so too did the god, and his death was celebrated by mournful liturgies and wailing women. But vegetation dies only to live again, and Tammuz, therefore, also rose from the dead. His mother had sought him in the netherworld, in the depths of that earth wherein the seed germinates, and her own imprisonment in Hades brought with it the reward of his resurrection. The relation of the god of vegetation to mother-earth, however, admitted of yet another explanation. Tammuz could be not only the son, but the consort also, of his mother, and the goddess who sought him in the world below could thus be bride as well as mother.

In passing to the Semites the worship of Tammuz underwent many changes and modifications. But even in its Sumerian days it had attracted to itself the cults of various deities and assumed different forms in the different states of Babylonia. The earth-goddess and her son had been adored under manifold names, and conceived of in manifold ways. Tammuz was sometimes a shepherd, sometimes an agriculturist, sometimes a fisherman; this latter conception of him must have grown up in Eridu where he was known as 'Tammuz of the Deep.' One of the most interesting chapters in Dr. Langdon's book is that on 'Ophidian and Oracular Deities,' where he proves that Tammuz, like his twin-brother Nin-gis-zida, 'the sovereign of the firmly planted tree,' was once a serpent-god whose symbol, the serpent twining round the stem of a tree, is found on early monuments. Tammuz and Nin-gis-zida stood on either side of the entrance to the heavenly Paradise, like Boaz and Jachin on either side of the door of Solomon's temple, wherein they forbade the enemy to enter. The earth-goddess herself was also symbolized by the serpent; the serpent denoted the earth, as the Lydians said, for it was a child of the soil. To this day schoolboys believe that worms are generated by the mud.

<sup>1</sup> *Tammuz and Ishtar*. By S. Langdon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914. *The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania: Sumerian Hymns and Prayers to god Dumu-zi; or, Babylonian Lenten Songs*. By Hugo Radau. Munich, 1913.

In the later days of astral theology Tammuz and his mother were translated to the visible sky and transformed into constellations and stars. Like Dr. Langdon I do not believe that this goes back to an early period: astral theology was the counterpart of astrology and astronomy, and all three grew up together. Whether Tammuz was ever impersonated by a living or dead man is a different matter. Dr. Langdon follows Professor Zimmern in thinking that a remarkable hymn from the temple-service of the city of Isin commemorates certain Semitic (not Sumerian) kings who played the part of Tammuz and died, like the god, 'for the life of their cities.' But I agree with Dr. Radau in believing that the hymn has quite a different meaning, and that it really refers to Istar's visit to Hades, where she wishes to 'rest' with the deceased kings of Isin. I can find no evidence either in Babylonia or in any other part of the Semitic world for Sir J. G. Frazer's theory of a king who takes the place of a god and has to pay the penalty of his divine kingship by being put to death. Kings are indeed put to death among certain savage African tribes when they are considered too old to perform their duties, but the only authenticated case of the sort in the ancient civilized world was that of the priest of Aricia who was not a king, and was just the solitary 'exception which proves the rule.'

It is needless to say that Dr. Langdon and Dr. Radau do not always agree in the inferences they draw from their materials or in their translation of individual words and phrases. The decipherment of the Sumerian language is still young, and that of the Tammuz texts still younger. The astonishing thing is that the two scholars should agree so largely; there can be no better proof of the progress that has been made in Sumerian studies, and of the extent to which the ancient language of Babylonia is now known. Dr. Radau is too much inclined, however, to resolve all the various deities of Sumerian Babylonia into forms of Tammuz and his mother, outdoing in this respect the later theologians of Chaldæa. But there can be no doubt that Sumerian theology at a particular date rested

on a Trinity in which a mother-goddess and her son played the leading part, and I fully agree with him that in this as well as in the Tammuz cult we have one of many 'foregleams' of Christianity. Would Dr. Langdon, however, assent to his assertion that the resurrection of Tammuz is never mentioned in the dialectal texts of southern Sumer?

By a slip of the pen Dr. Langdon himself speaks of 'Central Asia' as the primitive home of the Sumerians. As they carried the vine with them, however, they must have come from Armenia, in accordance with the old tradition which brought the survivors of the Deluge from Ararat to Babylonia. The Babylonian map of the world similarly places Ura-Urdhu at the foot of Mount Nizir, where the ark rested, in northern Kurdistan. I ought to add that *Tammuz and Ishtar* is provided with a very practical Index.

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### Notes and News.

AN important paper has lately been read by Professor Friedrich Delitzsch before the Berlin Academy. The Museum at Berlin has recently acquired some cuneiform tablets from Boghaz-Keui, the ancient Hittite capital in Cappadocia, and among them are fragments containing dictionaries or lists of words in Sumerian, Assyrian, and Hittite. There is usually also a column giving the pronunciation of the ideographs by which the Sumerian words are expressed, so that their pronunciation is at last settled. Still more important is the column in which the Hittite equivalents of the Sumerian and Assyrian words are given, as these will form a starting-point for the interpretation of the Hittite cuneiform texts of which there is a large collection at Constantinople. One result, as Professor Delitzsch points out, is to show that the Hittite language was not Indo-European. Its relations must be sought among the languages of the Caucasus. One of its main characteristics was the extent to which the composition of words was carried.

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