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ADAM AND ADAPA: TWO ANTHROPOLOGICAL CHARACTERS

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Because of the enormous impact of the Bible upon both the Jewish and Christian communities, any ancient Near Eastern literary discovery that may offer a parallel to some segment of biblical literature is greeted with interest. One such literary discovery is the Adapa myth. Its early discoverers and investigators claimed it as a true Babylonian parallel to the biblical story of Adam.[1] However, after the initial flush of excitement, other voices arose to point out the differences between Adam and Adapa, claiming that no parallels exist between them.[2] This position is retained in some of the more recent examinations of the material, but with the provision that some of the issues raised in the Adapa myth also occur in the biblical material.[3] Finally, renewed attempts at showing an essential parallel between Adam and Adapa (with due allowances for functional shifts in the material) have been made.[4] Such a "seesaw effect" of ancient Near Eastern parallels to the Bible is quite typical and suggests that the word "parallel,"

[1] See conveniently the discussion by A. T. Clay, *The Origin of Biblical Traditions*, Yale Oriental Series 12 (New Haven, (cnin., 1923), pp. 108-116.

[2] This reaction is well illustrated by A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 2d ed. (Chicago, 1951), p. 12-1: "The Adapa legend and the Biblical story (of Adam) are fundamentally as far apart as antipodes." This general conclusion had been anticipated by G. Furlani, "Il mito di Adapa," *Rendiconti della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*. Classe di scienze, etc. 6/5 (1929): 113-171.

[3] See, e.g., B. R. Foster, 'AVisdom and the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," Or, n. s., 43 (1974): 352-353; E. A. Speiser, "The Idea of History in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Oriental and Biblical Studies* (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 310, n. 96; G. Buccellati, "Adapa, Genesis, and the Notion of Faith," OF 5 (1973): 61-66; P. Xella, "L"inganno' di Ea nel mito di Adapa," *Oriens Antiquus* 12 (1973): 265.

[4] Recently W. H. Shea, "Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions, *AUSS* 15 (1977): 27-41; reprinted in Bible and Spade 6 (1977): 65-76.

though difficult to replace, may be inappropriate and quite inadequate to take account of the complex relationships that exist between biblical and extrabiblical literary traditions.[5] It is the purpose of this essay to address that problem with specific reference to the Adapa myth.

1. Adapa and the Suggested Parallels with Adam

The Adapa myth tells a simple story about a wise man, Adapa, in the city of Eridu in southern Mesopotamia.[6] He was created by Ea (Sumerian Enki), the god of the great deep and of the world of man, and served the city of Eridu and its temple with great devotion by, among other things, providing fish. Once a sailing mishap on a fishing expedition made him curse the south wind, thereby breaking its wing, whereupon the land was deprived of its cooling and moist breezes. For this offense he was summoned to the high god Anu (Sumerian An) to give account of his deed. First, however, he received this advice from his god Ea: (1) to appear in mourning garb at the gate of Anu so as to receive sympathetic assistance from the two heavenly gate keepers, Tammuz and Gizzida (vegetation gods); (2) to refuse the bread and water of death offered to him, but to accept oil for anointing himself and new garments. With this advice, which he followed carefully, Adapa succeeded admirably in his heavenly audience (to Anu's surprise), whereupon he was returned to earth (for he was but a man) with forgiveness for himself, release from feudal obligations for his city (Eridu), and healing for the illness which his offense had brought upon mankind.

Now we can turn to the so-called "parallels" between this story and the biblical story of Adam, notably Adam's fall (Gen. 3).

[5] S. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13, warned against it. See now also W. W. Hallo, "New Moons and Sabbaths: A Case Study in the Contrastive Approach," HUCA 48 (1977): 1-18.

[6] The best English translation is by E. A. Speiser in *ANET*, 101-103. Of the four extant fragments, three (A, C, D) derive from the Ashurbanipal library (7th cent. B.C.), and the fourth (B) comes from the Amarna archives (14th cent. B.C.).

(a) The name Adapa has a tantalizing similarity to that of Adam, a fact that has led to the suggestion that a simple phonetic development may explain their relationship, i.e., a labial shift from *m* to *p*, rather than vice versa.[7] Moreover, the final ending *a* in Adapa also appears in the Hebrew *'adama*, meaning "ground"/ "soil." Finally, *a-da-ap* is reported by E. Ebeling to occur in a syllabary text with the meaning "man."[8] Whatever the merit of these linguistic considerations, the etymology of Adam is itself uncertain. Is it "soil"/"ground," (*'adama*) or "red" (*'edom*), or "blood" (*dam*)?[9] As for the name Adapa, it appears frequently with the epithet "the learned, the wise,"[10] and is in fact now known to be the name of the first of the seven antediluvian sages (*apkallu*),[11] each of whom is associated with an antediluvian king.[12] Adapa is identified as the one who ascended to heaven, following the account of our myth in a text published by E. Reiner,[13] who on the basis of the epithets *apkallu* and especially *ummanu* has

[7] See Shea, pp. 38-39.

[8] See ANET, p. 101, n*, where reference is given to Ebeling's Tod and Leben, 27a.

[9] TDOT, 1: 75-79. The name *adamu* (syllabically spelled) is now reported to have been found on the Ebla tablets as the name of a governor of that city (see M. Dahood, "Ebla, Ugarit, and the Old Testament," *The Month*, 2d, n.s. 11 [1978]: 274). From the same city a calendar with the month name ^{d}*a-dam-ma-um* has appeared (see G. Pettinato, "Il Calendario di Ebla al Tempo del Re Ibbi-Sippis sulla base di TM 75.G.427," *AfO* 25 [1976]: 1-36). W. H. Shea, who kindly drew my attention to this item, has presented a discussion of the calendar in question in *AUSS* 18 (1980): 127-137, and 19 (1981): 59-69, 115-126. Also the Sumerian *a-dam* (pasture) may offer an opportunity to speculate upon the etymology of *Adam* (see W. W. Hallo, "Antediluvian Cities," JNES 23 (1970): 58. Taken at face value, the Genesis account would appear to tie *Adam* to *'adama* (ground), from which the man was taken and to which he will return.

[10] See *ANET*, 313-314, 450; A. K. Grayson, "The Weidner Chronicle," *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources 5 (New York, 1975), 147: 33; Foster, pp. 344-349.

[11] *Apkallu*, "wise man, expert, sage," refers to the seven antediluvian sages and is an epithet of Adapa. *CAD*, A/11, 171-172.

[12] See T. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago, 1939): Hallo, p. 62.

[13] "The Etiological Myth of the 'Seven Sages,'" *OrNS* 30 (1961): 1-11.

concluded that Adapa is to be identified as a "master craftsman" with reference to the scribal arts, hence a vizier.[14] W. G. Lambert, however, has argued on the basis of another text that the epithet of Adapa should be read *^{m}umanna*, and that its determinative produces a double name, Umanna-Adapa,[15] which was transferred into Greek as the Oannes of Berossos.[16] In fact, he suggests that *adapa* functioned as an epithet of Umanna (Oannes) with the meaning "wise."[17] Since, however, this likely represents a secondary development of the meaning of this word, it consequently does not answer our question about etymology. At any rate, some etymological relationship between Adam and Adapa now seems likely, although any original meaning behind them both is not thereby elucidated. The functional meaning of Adam, namely "man" (*homo sapiens*), may take us as closely as we can get to the names of our characters.

(b) Both Adam and Adapa were apparently tested with food (and drink, in the case of Adapa); and, according to some interpreters, both failed the test, hence the parallel between the two accounts. But whether Adapa in fact failed is a moot question. It would mean that he failed unwittingly by completely obeying his god Ea in refusing the bread and water of death, which actually turned out to be emblems of life. Ea, in turn, would have to be understood as deceiving Adapa by keeping divinity from him (making him refuse the heavenly food) for a selfish reason, namely that he wanted to retain the service of Adapa in Eridu.[18] However,

[14] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[15] "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," *JCS* 16 (1962): 64.1.6; and p. 74. See also W. W. Hallo, "On the Antiquity of Sumerian Literature," *JAOS* 83 (1963): 176.

[16] See the edition by F. Jacoby, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 3/C (Leiden, 1958): 369-370.

[17] See W. G. Lambert, "Three Literary Prayers of the Babylonians," *AfO* 19 (1959-60): pp. 64, 72, n. 72; "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," p. 74.

[18] Thus E. Burrows, "Note on Adapa," *Or*, no. 30 (March 1928), p. 24; T. Jacobsen, "The Investiture and Anointing of Adapa in Heaven," AJSL 46 (1930): 201-203 (reprinted in *Towards the Image of Tammuz* [Cambridge, Mass., 1970], pp. 48-51); *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven, Conn., 1976), pp. 115-116; J. Pedersen, "Wisdom and Immortality," *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (Leiden, 1955): 244; Foster, p. 351; Shea, p. 34.

this interpretation of the matter has met with some challenge from investigators who have warned against introducing into the myth the familiar concepts of temptation, deception, and fall.[19] Another suggestion has it that Ea gave Adapa the best advice he knew regarding the bread and water, and that Adapa followed it obediently. This would imply that Ea underestimated the willingness of Anu to receive and pardon Adapa and hence unfortunately, unnecessarily, and perhaps unwittingly warned his protege about the presumed dangerous bread and water of heaven.[20] But this explanation, as W. H. Shea rightly points out,[21] is weakened by the fact that Ea everywhere appears as the god of wisdom, cleverness, and cunning, and that indeed at the very moment of giving his advice Ea is introduced as "he who knows what pertains to heaven."[22]

A possible solution to this problem (i.e., how can wise and cunning Ea fail so miserably with his advice or be so deceptive with his favorite son?) would be that once again Ea was indeed right with his advice,[23] that the bread and water of life would in fact become bread and water of death to a mere mortal,[24] and that the unpredictable element in the Adapa crisis was Anu, who turned

[19] See, e.g., F. M. Th. Bohl, "Die Mythe vom weisen Adapa," *WO* 2 (1959):418; B. Kienast, "Die Weisheit des Adapa von Eridu," *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae*, F. M. Th. Bohl Festschrift (Leiden, 1973), p. 234; G. Komoroczy, "Zur Deutung der altbabylonischen Epen Adapa and Etana," *Neue Beitrage zur Geschichte der Alten Welt I*, ed. E. C. Welskopf (Berlin, 1969), p. 38.

[20] Thus Komoroczy, 39; S. N. Kramer, "Mythology of Sumer and Akkad," *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. S. N. Kramer (Garden City, N.Y., 1961), p. 125.

[21] Shea, pp. 33-34.

[22] *ANET*, p. 101.

[23] Ea (Enki) traditionally helped gods and humans in crisis situations. He restored Inanna from the underworld, reviving her with the water and grass of life (see T. Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness, p. 58). He successfully warned Ziusudra/Utnapishtim about the coming flood and assured the survival of mankind (ibid., p. 114; ANET, p. 93). He averted a rebellion among the lower gods by proposing and arranging the creation of man (W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis* [Oxford, 1969], p. 55). He solved the crisis caused by Apsu's rage by cleverly placing a spell over him and having him killed (*ANET*, p. 61).

[24] "Fur den Sterblichen rind Nektar and Ambrosia Gift," Bohl, p. 426. Also cf. Kienast, pp. 237-238; Buccellati, p. 63.

the tables on Ea in the matter of the food and who, by laughing at Adapa (B, line 70; D, line 3), showed himself to be the real culprit.[25] In any case, the meal may not at all have been intended as a sacred investiture of Adapa into divinity,[26] but merely a meal provided in response to the requirements of hospitality.[27] But can a mortal accept such hospitality (including a robe and oil) to the extent of sharing the ambrosia and nectar with Anu? If this interpretation is at all correct, the heavenly food may at one and the same time be food of life and food of death, depending upon the one who eats it. A similar duality may be reflected in the biblical picture of the two trees: one of life, leading to eternal life (Gen 3:22); the other of knowledge, presumed to offer godlikeness, but actually leading to mortality (Gen. 3:3-5; 2:17).[28]

[25] Though Anu represents the highest authority in the world, he is not nearly so resourceful and calm as is Ea. A case in point is Anu's reaction to Adapa's offense: "`Mercy!' Rising from his throne: ‘(Let) them fetch him hither!'" (*ANET*, p. 101). Again, he was apparently unable to face the threat of Tiamat (*ANET*, p. 63). Also, the Atra-Hasis myth finds him unable to propose a solution to Enlil's problem, namely, a rebellion among the lower gods (Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, pp. 49-55). In general, Anu appears less resourceful and predictable than Ea, like a weak and insecure chairman of the board!

[26] Thus Burrows, p. 24. The idea is that Anu, impressed with Adapa's power and skill, decided to include him among the gods-an old illustration of the maxim: If you can't beat them, join them (or make them join you).

[27] Jacobsen, "The Investiture and Anointing of Adapa in Heaven," pp. 48-51.

[28] According to Gen 2:9 the tree of life stood in the midst of the garden as did also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen 3:3 locates the forbidden tree in the midst of the garden, but does not otherwise name it, whereas Gen 3:22 speaks of the tree of life from which man must now be kept. Concerning the two trees, located at the same place, man is forbidden to eat from one, never commanded to eat from the other, but subsequently hindered from reaching it. The tree of life (plant of life) occurs relatively frequently in ancient Near Eastern literature (B. S. Childs, "Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Life," *IDB* 4, 695-697), the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is practically unknown outside Genesis (see, however, M. Tserat, "The Two Trees in the Garden of Eden," *Eretz-Israel* 12 [1975]: 40-43). It is tempting to suppose that this "double tree" in the midst of the garden indicates two postures that man can take: (1) He can eat of one (presuming to be a god) and die, or (2) he can refuse to do so (remaining human), but staying alive with access to the other tree. He cannot eat from both.

From this it would follow that Ea's advice to Adapa, which proved valuable in every other respect, must also be taken in this sense with reference to the heavenly food. Ea does not deceive Adapa to keep him mortal and in his service in Eridu. He saves his life from what ordinarily would mean certain death through a presumption to be a god. If this is correct, the alleged parallel between Adapa and Adam over failing a test involving food falls away, but another emerges: Both were subject to a test involving food and both received two sets of advice; namely, "do not eat" (God and Ea) and "eat" (serpent and Anu). One, Adapa, obeyed and passed his test; the other, Adam, disobeyed and failed. But even this situation is complicated by a further consideration; namely, the relationship between obedience/disobedience and immortality.

(c) It is frequently suggested that Adapa, like Gilgamesh, sought immortality, that his visit before Anu was ill-fated by depriving him of his nearly realized quest (thanks to his blind obedience to Ea's deceptive advice), and that the Adapa myth is an etiology explaining human mortality.[29] However, Adapa did not possess immortality originally (A, line 4);[30] and no absolute proof exists that he sought it, but was hindered by Ea's schemes.[31] Not even Anu's laughter and Adapa's return to earth, which is recorded in the late fragment D,[32] necessarily implies forfeited immortality on the part of Adapa. Instead, it may indicate Anu's amused satisfaction over Adapa's wisdom and loyal obedience, which enables him to refuse that heavenly food, the acceptance of which would be an act of *hybris*. Hence he is rewarded with life on earth, rather than with punishment by death.[33] At the most, the myth

[29] Foster, pp. 352-353; Bohl, pp. 416-417.

[30] The fundamental distinction between gods and men in the ancient Near East is precisely the inability of the latter to achieve immortality (with the exception of Utnapishtim, the hero of the Flood). Yet even the gods are not unalterably immortal, for they too depend upon eating and upon care and are vulnerable before a variety of adverse circumstances. Cf. Bohl, p. 426.

[31] Recently Komoroczy, p. 38.

[32] It comes from the Ashurbanipal library and is attributed to an Assyrian scribe. For the relationship between this fragment and the main fragment B (from the Amarna archives) see Bohl, pp. 427-429.

[33] See Kienast, pp. 237-238; Komoroczy, pp. 38-39.

affirms that immortality is the privilege of the gods and cannot belong to man, even to the wisest of all.[34] Here is a direct contrast between Adam and Adapa: Adapa is restrained by Ea from seeking immortality (presumptuously or even accidentally) in the court of Anu; Adam is restrained (unsuccessfully) from losing it. However, once Adam has lost his immortality, he too must be kept from seeking it anew (Gen 3:22f).

(d) Adam and Adapa are both summoned before the divinity to give account of their actions. Adam's offense is clearly that he broke the prohibition regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with the implication that in grasping for this knowledge he aspired for divinity.[35] But what is Adapa's offense? On the basis of the presumed parallel with Gen 3, the answer has often been that like Adam so Adapa offended (unwittingly) in the matter of eating (and drinking), except that Adapa declined to eat where Adam declined to avoid eating.[36] However, Adapa's non-eating can hardly be considered an offense at all, except possibly an offense by Ea to which fate made Adapa a party.[37] If, on the other hand, the offense is defined as that which brought about the summons before the divinity, then Adapa's offense was clearly breaking the wing of the south wind. Three things may be observed concerning this act. First, Adapa broke the wind with a word. He clearly was in possession of magic power,[38] something which may explain the incantation in fragment D employed to dispel illness. Second,

[34] Foster, p. 353.

[35] The term "good and evil" is generally understood to mean "everything," and seeking such knowledge represents human *hybris*. See J. A. Bailey, "Initiation and the Primeval Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3," *JBL* 89 (1970): 144-148. But see also B. Reicke, "The Knowledge Hidden in the Tree of Paradise," *JSS* 1 (11956): 193-201; R. Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls," *JBL* 76 (1957): 123-138.

[36] See Shea, p. 39.

[37] The role of fate appears to be prominent in some Mesopotamian traditions, perhaps because the gods were not always partial to virtue, but took advantage of it. Cf. Foster, p. 352.

[38] Thus Jacobsen, "The Investiture and Anointing of Adapa," pp. 50-51; Foster, p. 349.

Adapa issued the curse while fishing in the service of the temple of Eridu, that is, while performing his religious duties. His anger over capsizing is directed not against his god Ea, who sent him out to sea, but against the wind that blew over his boat. In other words, he broke the wind in his eager devotion to Ea, possibly not counting the consequences vis-a-vis the land.[39] Third, in breaking the wind, Adapa seriously disturbed the land (the world of southern Mesopotamia), and hence its high god Anu, who had authority over its maintenance. By maiming the south wind, Adapa halted the cooling life-giving breezes from the sea, leaving the land exposed to the scorching sun. G. Roux found in this condition an explanation of the presence of Tammuz and Gizzida (both fertility gods) at Anu's door.[40] They suffered the lack of the fertile, moist wind and had sought help from Anu, who in turn inquired about the situation and upon being told cried, "Mercy!" (B, line 13) and sent for Adapa. It would also explain Ea's advice to Adapa that he approach the gate where the fertility gods were waiting, in mourning (over their miserable condition) so as to express his contrition and gain their sympathy and help. In that, Ea and Adapa were eminently successful. This success is indicated by Adapa's recognition before Anu, his acceptance of the signs of hospitality,[41] which, very much to Anu's astonishment,[42] he knew how to receive while discreetly refusing that to which he was not entitled (the heavenly bread and water). At this point a clear contrast with the story of Adam emerges, for excuses and a self-defense, not contrition and obedience, characterize Adam's confrontation with God.

[39] See Kienast, p. 237.

[40] G. Roux, "Adapa, le vent et 1'eau," RA 55 (1961): 13-33. That only seven days are involved does not speak against this conclusion (thus Foster, p. 352), for the story is a myth in which realities are stylized into symbols.

[41] Here I follow Jacobsen ("The Investiture and Anointing of Adapa," pp. 48-51; *The Treasures of Darkness*, p. 116) against Burrows ("Note on Adapa," p. 24). Adapa is not being invested as a heavenly being (only to lose it all by refusing his meal). Rather he is being accepted and forgiven of his offense, thanks to his contrition, caution, and the good offices of Tammuz and Gizzida.

[42] According to fragment B, Anu laughs and says, "Take him away and return him to his earth" (B, line 70). The later Assyrian scribe responsible for fragment D

(e) Although Adapa, unlike Adam, is not the first man on earth, he does represent mankind in a special sense. According to fragment A, line 6, he is a "model of men," a human archetype; and as B. R. Foster suggests, this particular aspect of Adapa's character identifies him as a wise man whose abilities extend in several directions.[43] First, he is a sage whose superior knowledge given him by Ea makes him general supervisor of human activities in the city of Eridu. He bakes, cooks, prepares the offering, steers the ship, and catches the fish for the city (A, lines 10-18). Second, he is a vizier to the first antediluvian king, Alulim.[44] Thus he is the first *apkallu* (antediluvian wise man) and as such is identified with the Oannes of Berossos,[45] about whom it is reported that he daily ascended from the sea in the form of a fish and taught mankind the arts of civilization.[46] Third, Adapa is wise in scholarship, having authored a literary work (unknown except in this fragmentary text).[47] In consequence of these characteristics, Adapa became the epitome of wisdom and a model of it to later generations.[48] When this fact is combined with his association with the first king, he is the typical man, even the primal man. Although unlike Adam, he is not the first man, still he is a sort of prototype, so that the matters pertaining to all mankind are explicable in reference to him (as, for instance, is apparently the case with regard to mortality, as portrayed in this myth). What Adapa does, or what he is, has consequences for subsequent generations of mankind, not because he passed on to them some form of original sin, but because through his wisdom

offered this added explanation by attributing the following words to Anu: "Of the gods of heaven and earth, as many as there be, who (ever) gave such a command, so as to make his own command exceed the command of Anu?" (D, lines 5f.). Anu is surprised that his ruling in the matter had been anticipated and met with such a wise response-perhaps a little annoyed, as well, at being found out!

[43] Foster, pp. 345-349.

[44] Hallo, "Antediluvian Cities," p. 62; Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, p. 27.

[45] See above, p. 182.

[46] Jacoby, pp. 369-370.

[47] Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," p. 70.

[48] See n. 17, above; also Xella, "L"inganno' di Ea nel mito di Adapa," pp. 260-261.

he was chosen to establish the context within which subsequent generations of mankind must live. Here a parallel as well as a contrast between Adapa and Adam emerges. Both are primal men, but the heritage which each one passes on to subsequent generations varies considerably.

2. Contrasts Between Adapa and Adam

From considerations such as the foregoing, it can only be concluded, so it would seem, that although the stories of Adapa and Adam exhibit some parallels (notably in regard to the name and primal position of the two chief characters), they also reveal important contrasts. Therefore, those interpreters who insist upon reading the Adapa myth without assistance from the familiar categories of Gen 3 do make an important and necessary point. The story of Adapa is a myth (or legend) set in the earliest time (antediluvian) of southern Mesopotamia, and it intends (perhaps in a somewhat whimsical way) to give expression to certain distressing situations. The most immediate of these concerns is human mortality. The response of the myth is that man cannot gain immortality, for that is the exclusive prerogative of the gods. Even Adapa, the foremost among men, after whom all mankind is patterned--with all his wisdom, skill, and power--cannot achieve it. Immortality, therefore, cannot be had by humans; it belongs exclusively to the gods, who alone are the ultimate rulers of the universe.[49] Yet, the alternative to immortality is not death, but life on earth--temporal and subject to the fickles of fate, but not without satisfactions. To this life Adapa is returned, a wiser man who is aware of the distance between heaven and earth. "As Adapa from the horizon of heaven to the zenith of heaven cast a glance, he saw its awesomeness" (D, lines 7-8).

But more importantly, the myth concerns itself with human authority, even arrogance, before the gods. Here the myth is ambivalent. Obviously, Adapa's authority is being curtailed, for he

[49] Foster, p. 353. This point is made most forcefully in the Gilgamesh epic, during the conversation between Utnapishtim and Gilgamesh (Tablet XI; *ANET*, 93-96).

is summoned to give account of his action; but his wisdom, obedience, and cunning is such that he gets away with more than we would expect. He obtains a reception, life, and some trophies. This is possible because the gods, though immortal, are themselves vulnerable. They depend upon Adapa's provisions for the temple and are subject to his rash breaking of the south wind, thereby throwing the whole land into disarray. The liberation given to Eridu (D, line 10) may be a recognition of the fact that there are limits to the gods' dependence and reliance upon mankind.[50] That the myth thereby becomes an exaltation of Eridu[51] does not seem entirely persuasive.[52]

However, just as the world of the gods is vulnerable, so is the world of humanity. The myth ends with a reference to illness which could permanently terminate even the limited and temporal existence of mankind. The healing promised through an appeal to the goddess Ninkarrak (D, lines 17-18) is appropriately attached to the myth of Adapa's successful confrontation with the gods. Just as the wing of the south wind, and hence life in land and city, can be healed, so also can human illness,[53] through a proper relationship with the gods, who are both the rulers of the world and its providers of life.

In short, the myth of Adapa is an attempt to come to terms with the vicissitudes of human life, as it exists, by insisting that so it is ordained. It suggests that by wisdom, cunning, humility, and

[50] This appears to be an issue in the Atra-Hasis flood story. The high gods set mankind to work in order to appease the low gods; subsequently mankind rebels and by its size frightens the high gods into sending a flood, whereupon they suffer from the lack of mankind's service. See Lambert and Millard, Atra-Hasis. The suggestion that the flood represents a disruption identifiable as an overpopulation problem only underscores the fact that the gods are vulnerable before their creatures and unable to control their own solution to their problem (see T. Freymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for our Understanding of Genesis 1-9," BA 40 [1977]: 147-155).

[51] Thus Komoroczy, pp. 39-40.

[52] "Nicht die Stadt, sondern der Mensch and sein Erleben stehen im Mittelpunkt," so Kienast, p. 235.

[53] That it refers only to the healing of broken shoulder blades or arms, viz. the broken wing of the south wind, is not likely. For this suggestion see Bohl, p. 428.

obedience human beings can receive (or extract, if needs be) from the gods, who too are vulnerable, whatever concessions, short of immortality, will make life meaningful and satisfactory.

Gen 2-3, on the other hand, seeks to explain why existing conditions are what they clearly ought not to be. Therefore, Adam, unlike Adapa, is not struggling with distressing human problems such as immortality, nor is he strapped down with duties of providing for city and temple, nor is he caught up in the tension between his obligations to his God and hindrances to such obligations arising from an evil world[54] or from inner wickedness.[55] He is a natural creature whose simple lack, loneliness, is met in a fully satisfactory and permanent way (Gen 2:20-24). The only other potential difficulty in this harmonious existence lies in his capacity to disobey his God.

Moreover, not only in his existence before God, but also in his confrontation with God does Adam differ from Adapa. That confrontation arises from an experience of weakness in yielding to temptation, not from blind devotion, as in the case of Adapa. Also, Adam fails to manifest contrition similar to that of Adapa. And finally, again unlike Adapa, Adam refuses to take responsibility for his deed; he hides from it and subsequently blames his wife. Adam's fall is therefore much more serious than Adapa's offense, perhaps because of the considerable height from which Adam tumbled.[56] Both the height of his former position and the depth of his present one are not parallel to those experienced by Adapa.

Even the nature of the relationship between man and God is different in Gen 2-3. God is not vulnerable before Adam, yet he

[54] For a discussion of these common human tensions, see W. Eichrodt, *Man in the Old Testament*, SBT 4 (London, 1951), pp. 51-66.

[55] Ibid., pp. 66-74.

[56] Contrary to J. Pedersen ("Wisdom and Immortality," p. 245), the fall of Adam thus does not parallel the experience of Adapa before Anu. To be sure, both Adam and Adapa made approaches towards divinity by means of wisdom, but Adapa did so from the position of human inadequacy. Adam, on the other hand, suffered no such lack. He enjoyed a relationship with his God through filial obedience and was in possession of all wisdom (cf. Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil," p. 125).

appears hurt by Adam's fall and takes action in Adam's behalf (cf. Gen 3:21). Adam, on the other hand, is dependent upon God, but appears to ignore that fact (cf. Gen 3:8).

In short, then, we conclude that parallels do indeed exist between Adam and Adapa, but they are seriously blunted by the entirely different contexts in which they occur.

3. Analysis of the "Seesaw" Parallelism

How, then, shall we explain this "seesaw" parallelism? Does Adapa represent a parallel to the biblical Adam, or should Adam and Adapa rather be contrasted? The suggestion of this essay is that in Adam and Adapa we have the representation of two different anthropological characters, perhaps capable of being illustrated by an actor who plays two distinct roles, but who is clearly recognizable in each.

The Adapa character assigned to this actor is suitable for its cultural milieu. It is that of a wise man. The epithet *apkallu* supports it, and his identification with Berossos' Oannes confirms it. His wisdom is ordained by his god Ea, and it comes to expression in the devotion and obedience with which he conducts his affairs. Adapa is not a "sinner," but a "perfect man." He is therefore a model man, arising from the sea, like Oannes, to instruct mankind. He is a human archetype who compares best to such biblical personalities as Noah, Joseph, Moses, Job, and Daniel, who are also models of wisdom, devotion, and obedience, and who represent ideals to be imitated.[57] Naturally, inasmuch as Adapa lives in a polytheistic world, so he must contend with all its conflicting interests. These are not unlike the conflicting interests with which biblical man is confronted, except that the perpetrators in the latter case are humans. For man to survive in such a world takes wisdom, integrity, reliability, devotion, and humility before the unalterable superiority of the divine powers. But the ideal human character can succeed in this. He may not achieve all that

[57] Cf. Foster, p. 353; Speiser, p. 310. According to Buccellati, p. 65, Adapa is characterized as a man of faith, and hence he can be compared to such biblical personages as Noah and Abraham. The notion of faith emerges in Adapa's total commitment to his god's counsel. See also Xella, p. 260.

he desires; he remains mortal and shares in the suffering to which humanity is liable, but he does stand to gain real satisfactions from his life and can attain to a noble status and enjoy divine recognition. Here is a clear parallel between Adapa and certain OT ideals, particularly in the wisdom literature.

The Adam role, however, is that of the first man, who is sinless and destined to immortality--of one who, even though a created being, is in the image of God and who enjoys his presence continually. We very much suspect that the same actor is indeed playing, because of the similarity of the names of our characters, because of their primary position among the antediluvians, and because of certain distinct experiences they had in common (e.g., a summons before divinity, and a test involving food). But the precise role which Adam plays is foreign to the Mesopotamian literature. Unlike Adapa, Adam, though made of clay, originally has the potential for immortality and is totally free before God. Further, Adam serves the earth, rather than temple. Moreover, although he possesses enormous wisdom (so as to name the animals, Gen 2:20), he is not portrayed as a teacher of civilization to mankind. Rather, he exists above and before civilization, in a pristine state of purity, nobility, and complete harmony. Furthermore, his confrontation with God is not in sorrow or mourning, comparable to the experience of Adapa; he is subsequently brought low while blaming his misadventures upon a woman. In this, Adam is clearly not an ideal to be followed, but a warning to all--a failing individual, rather than a noble, heroic one. Here a clear contrast emerges between our two characters.

According to an old proposal,[58] recently resurrected,[59] the actor who played these two characters--the noble Adapa and the ignoble Adam--was brought to the ancient Near East by west Semitic peoples. On the scene staged by the Mesopotamian artists he characterized man as the noble, wise, reliable, and devoted, but humble, hero who is resigned to live responsibly before his god. However, in the biblical tradition, the characterization came through in quite a different way, which has put its lasting mark

[58] By A. T. Clay, *The Empire of the Amorites*, Yale Oriental Series 6 (New Haven, Conn., 1919); also, *The Origin of Biblical Traditions.*

[59] See the recent suggestions by Shea, pp. 39-41; Dahood, pp. 271-276.

upon the concept of man in the Judeo-Christian tradition--namely, that before God, man is (or rather has become) basically sinful, failing, ignoble and untrustworthy, bent upon usurping the place of his God. This portrayal, to be sure, is not meant to reduce the spirit of man to pessimism and despair, but to remind him that despite all the wisdom, cunning, reliability, and devotion of which he is capable and is duty-bound to exercise, he is also always a sinner whose unpredictability, untrustworthiness, and irresponsibility can never be totally ignored nor denied.[60]

Does the Adapa myth then present us with a parallel or a contrast to the story of Adam? The best answer to this question may well be that Adam and Adapa represent two distinct characterizations of human nature. The parallels we have noted in the accounts may suggest that the two characterizations have a common origin, whereas the contrasts between them may indicate that two branches of Near Eastern civilization took clearly distinguishable sides in the dialogue over human nature. Yet these lines are not so different that the resulting two characterizations of man are unable to dialogue.

[60] It would seem that W. Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust* (Atlanta, 1972), pp. 44-45, takes this aspect too lightly. He correctly observes that the purpose of the fall narrative is not "to dwell upon failure," but to affirm and reaffirm God's trust in man. But he further states, "The miracle grows larger, for Yahweh is willing to trust what is not trustworthy. The gospel out of the tenth century is not that David or Adam is trustworthy, but that he has been trusted" (ibid., p. 45). This is surely good theology, but it hardly succeeds in refurbishing man, as Brueggemann would have us do. The story of Adam's fall, it seems to me, insists that even at its best, mankind is not as good as it ought to be or as we might wish it to be.