

BECOMING GOD

DEIFICATION FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

LECTURE 2: ADAM

DR. NICKOLAS P. ROUBEKAS

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

Email: nickolas.roubekas@univie.ac.at



ADAM



Genesis: The Desire for Divinity? Transgression & Punishment

But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be *like God, knowing good and evil.*” (Gen 3:4-5)

Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become *like one of us, knowing good and evil*; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, *and live forever*”—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground *from which he was taken.* (Gen 3: 22-23)

Being *like/a* God

Adam:

- a boundary breaker;
- a transgressor of externally imposed limitations,
- one whose mind was now mature (knowing evil, good, and all that lies between);
- Yahweh exiled him so that the newborn god would die.

Genesis Transgression: Questions

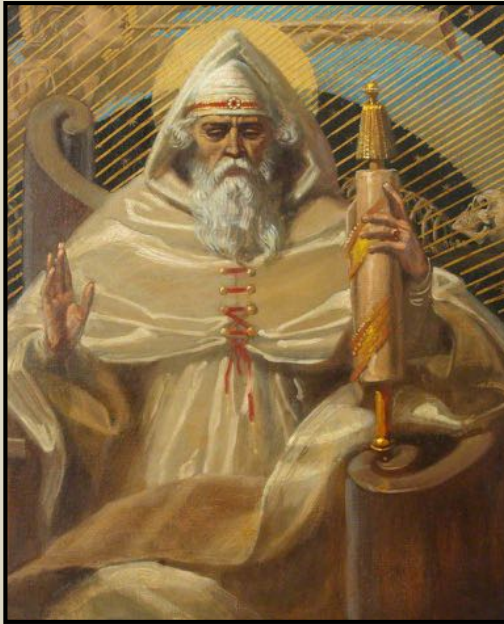
- Does Adam claim to be a God?
- Is this a self-deification case?
- How and why does Adam become a God?
- What constitutes divinity in this episode?
- Symbolic or literal reading?
- Why is it a problem that Adam (and Eve) might become gods?
- What's the story's morale/teaching?

An Alternative Story?

Adam, Adam, do not fear. You *wanted* to be a god; I will make you a god ... I will set you at the right hand of my divinity, and I will make you a god just like you wanted.

Testament of Adam 3.2, 4

Ezekiel's Oracles (ch. 38)



Against Tyre's King (1)

The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord God: Because your mind was exalted, and you said, "I am god; I dwell in the dwelling of gods, in the heart of the seas"—though you are human and not god, still you make your mind like the mind of a god. Behold, you are wiser than Danel! No secret is dark to you! By your wisdom and by your understanding you have made yourself rich. You set gold and silver in your treasuries. In the surplus of your wisdom and by your trafficking, you have a surplus of wealth. Now your heart is exalted because of your wealth.

Against Tyre's King (2)

Therefore thus Lord Yahweh has spoken: Because you make your heart like the heart of a god, for this reason—watch out—I am bringing foreigners upon you—terrifying peoples. They will unsheathe their sword against the beauty of your wisdom, and defile your splendor. To the pit they will bring you down! Then you will die the death of the defiled in the heart of the seas. Will you say, “I am a god” in the presence of your killer? But you are human and not a god in the hands of those who stab you! The death of the uncircumcised you will die by the hands of foreigners. For I have spoken! Oracle of Lord Yahweh. (Ez 28:1-10)

Against Tyre's King / Against Human Deification (Adam) (1)

You were a seal, an image, full of wisdom and abounding in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering: carnelian, topaz and moonstone; beryl, onyx, and jasper; sapphire, ruby, and emerald. Gold was the work of your settings and your sockets. They were established on the day of your birth. You were a cherub, stretched out and overshadowing; and I set you on the holy mountain. You were a god. You roamed amidst stones of fire. You were perfect in your pathways from the day of your birth until iniquity was found in you. In the surplus of your trafficking, you filled your midst with violence. Then you sinned, and I profaned you from the mount of God.

Against Tyre's King / Against Human Deification
(Adam) (2)

I destroyed you, overshadowing cherub, from amidst the stones of fire! Your heart was exalted by your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I thrust you to earth! Before the kings I set you, to make you an object of their gaze. In the surplus of your guilty acts, by the injustice of your trafficking, you profaned your sanctuaries. Then I brought out fire from your insides. It devoured you. I made you ash upon the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who knew you among the peoples were appalled at you. You became a fatality; you are nothing forevermore!

(Ez 28:12-18)

The Alternative Story: Parallels

- a primal human figure
- a Garden of Eden
- a cherub
- precious stones
- an act of primal sin
- an exile from the garden
- a turning to ash or dust

Differences / Problems

- The first human's status
- The cause of his exile
- Ezekiel's primal human is not the man of dust in Genesis
- How can there be a human being who is simultaneously divine?
 1. The problem of dichotomy
 2. The anachronism
 3. The reality in antiquity

Adam the Divine

- Appears in a fantastic garment encrusted with jewels
- Has great wisdom and beauty
- He is blameless
- He walks amid stones of fire
- He is directly called a deity: “you were a god” (Ez 28:14) = cf. Genesis 3:5, “You shall be as gods!”

The Fall

- Gen: act of disobedience / Ez: Adam's proclamation "I am god. I sit in the seat of the gods" (Ez 28:2).
- Ez: Yahweh thrusts or shoves the primal human to the earth / Gen: God sends Adam to work the soil.
- Gen: Yahweh sends the first human into exile / Ez: sends the primordial man to death.
- Both figures, are broken down into the meanest elements of earth: Gen = dust / Ez = ash.
- Gen: Adam must first suffer / Ez: Adam shall die immediately.
- Gen: Adam the man will eventually die / Ez: Adam the divine shall die as a man (cf. Psalm 82: 6-7: "I said, 'You are gods' ... but you will die like a human being).

Ezekiel's Aim

- Combining the divine and the human was like uniting the sacred and the profane: it constituted a pollution.
- God (Yahweh) is in complete control.
- All other deities are demoted / burned to ashes
- Divine humanity is attacked as a wicked perversion.
- Divine and human are fundamentally different.
- “There is only one god!” demands that all the other gods must die.

Deification as a Primordial Desire

- Deification is sought since the beginning of time
- The blurry line between humanity and divinity
- Ancient vs. Modern understanding of divinity/humanity
- Myth/Story as cosmological and social hierarchy
- Desire for deification vs. Proclamation
- Why do humans want to be gods?
- Seeking power / seeking eternity

The Persistence of Adam's Divinity

“When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a *celestial body*, and brought Eve, *one of his wives*, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, *the Archangel*, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—He is *our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do*. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and *will know it sooner or later*.”

Brigham Young (April 9, 1852) in Watt, G. D., *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, His Two Counsellors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, p. 50.

Next: Amenhotep III

