

**“ADAM, AN IMAGE OF THE FUTURE ECONOMY”:  
ROMANS 5:14 IN THE CONTEXT OF IRENAEUS’ CHRISTOLOGICAL EXEGESIS OF GENESIS 1:26**

Steven DiMattei  
University of Houston  
SBL 2008

INTRODUCTION

It has often been claimed that Irenaeus follows Paul in reading a typological relationship between Adam and Christ as Paul himself had allegedly established in Romans 5:14 when referring to Adam as a *τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος*. Part and parcel to this assessment is the analogous claim that Paul forged a hermeneutical sense from *τύπος* and that the early church, as represented through the works of Barnabas, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, followed Paul in its usage of the term.<sup>1</sup> In fact, at least since Leonhard Goppelt’s foundational work on *τύπος*,<sup>2</sup> scholars have typically approached the epistles of Paul with the hermeneutical conviction that Paul employs the term *τύπος* in two distinct ways: 1) as a personal ‘model’ or ‘example’ to imitate and follow;<sup>3</sup> and 2) as a ‘historical type’ conceived hermeneutically in terms of a historical ‘prefiguration.’<sup>4</sup> It has furthermore been suggested that this latter sense, traditionally attributed to 1 Corinthians 10:6 (and its adverbial form *τυπικῶς* at 10:11) and Romans 5:14, is demanded by the exegetical context (rather than, one might presume, imposed upon the context). No other sense of the term, it is argued, makes sense of the context,<sup>5</sup> and in no other sense did the early church understand Paul’s use of *τύπος* in these passages, such as in the sense of *εἰκῶν*.<sup>6</sup> According to Goppelt, then, Paul’s use of Adam as a *τύπος*

---

1. See, for example, the remarks of E. Earle Ellis, Forward in Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, tr. D. Madvig (Eerdmans 1982): “a typological understanding of Scripture governed the interpretation of NT writers and continued to be followed, more or less closely, by Irenaeus of Lyons and by the patristic school of Antioch”; and Goppelt’s original assessment: “Typology and the typological method have been part of the church’s exegesis and hermeneutics from the very beginning. . . So far as we can tell, Paul was the first to use the Greek word *τύπος* (adj. *τυπικός*) as a term for the prefiguring of the future in prior history. God dealt in a typical way (*τυπικῶς*) with Israel in the wilderness, in a manner that is a pattern for his dealing with the church in the last days. The fortunes of Israel are types (*τύποι*) of the experiences of the church (1 Cor 10:11, 6; cf. Rom 5:14). It cannot be demonstrated that the word had this meaning prior to Paul, and in Barnabas, Hermas, and Justin this usage has become firmly established” (*Typos*, 4-5).

2. See both his 1939 monograph, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh), tr. D. Madvig, *Typos* (Eerdmans 1982) and his 1969 article entitled ‘*τύπος*,’ published in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, VIII (Stuttgart), 246-260, tr. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1972).

3. E.g. 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9; Phil. 3:17; and 1 Cor. 10:6 as literary and/or historical ‘*exemplae*.’

4. In Goppelt’s words, a *Vorausdarstellung*.

5. Goppelt, “*τύπος*,” *TDNT*, 8:253: “This sense [i.e., the hermeneutical] is demanded in Rom 5:14: ‘*Ἀδὰμ ὃς ἐστὶν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος*.’” Yet see: Otfried Hofius, “The Adam-Christ Antithesis and the Law: Reflections on Romans 5:12-21,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 165-206; and Karl-Heinrich Ostmeier, “Typologie und Typos: Analyse eines schwierigen Verhältnisses,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 112-131.

6. Goppelt, “*τύπος*,” 258n.1. I would easily grant this to Goppelt with reference to Paul’s use of the term; both the context of Rom

τοῦ μέλλοντος means that Adam is to be understood as a *Vorausdarstellung*, a prefiguration, of the future Adam. It is to be noted, moreover, that this Adam-Christ typology rests upon the additional interpretive claim that τοῦ μέλλοντος is to be understood in its masculine form, ὁ μέλλων, “he who shall come,” i.e., Christ.

Although this paper does not directly deal with assessing Paul’s use of the expression τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος, it will nevertheless be seen that Irenaeus does not have some Pauline hermeneutical sense of τύπος in mind. In fact, the sense of τύπος that Irenaeus has in mind is one synonymous to εἰκῶν. Additionally, and contrary to modern interpreters of Paul, Irenaeus understands the genitive τοῦ μέλλοντος in its neuter form, τὸ μέλλον, “what shall come.” Consequently, this paper argues that the linking of Adam and Christ in a unified history of salvation by Irenaeus—typically referred to as a (Pauline) “typology”—is not borne out of Paul’s use of the expression Ἄδᾰμ ὃς ἐστὶν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος, but rather Irenaeus’ theological application of it in the context of his Christological interpretation of Genesis 1:26. The expression is perhaps best translated in Irenaeus as: Adam, “an image of the future economy.”

#### THE USE AND MEANING OF ΤΥΠΟΣ IN IRENAEUS

It will be demonstrated that both Irenaeus’ use of τύπος and his “typology” develop independently of any Pauline hermeneutical sense of the term or any alleged Pauline notion of typology.<sup>7</sup> Rather, they are dependent on and influenced by: 1) gnostic uses of τύπος to express cosmological and exegetical relationships between earthly happenings and events in the Pleroma; and 2) Irenaeus’ particular exegetical project, namely to demonstrate against the gnostic “economy” that there is but one unified history of salvation, linking events of the Old Testament with those of the New. It must additionally be borne in mind that the principal goal of Irenaeus’ *Adversus haereses* is to scripturally demonstrate against his gnostic adversaries that the god of the Old Testament and the god of Jesus are one and the same God.<sup>8</sup> The role of Scripture in Irenaeus’ refutation is thus paramount. Accordingly, Irenaeus’ “typology” is primarily an anti-gnostic exegesis, whose aim, in conjunction with his theological premise, is to demonstrate that events in the Old Testament are τύποι of events concerning the advent of Jesus. It is this exegetical trajectory which is usually identified as New Testament typology; however, it is unique to Irenaeus and develops in reaction to

---

5:14 and the general thrust of Paul’s argument certainly inhibit us from understanding τύπος in the sense of εἰκῶν. However, as we shall see, this is not the case for Irenaeus’ use of the term and his reading of Paul.

7. What follows is largely adapted from my “Biblical Narratives,” *As it is Written: Studying Paul’s Use of Scripture*, ed. S. Porter and C. Stanley, SBL: 2008 (68-71).

8. Various expressed: *Ad. haer.* 3.10.2; 4.2.3; 4.1.2, etc.

gnostic uses of τύπος in their cosmological and exegetical thought.

For example, a good part of book 1 of Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* treats Valentinian cosmology, wherein relationships between what happens in the Pleroma and on earth or in the cosmos is expressed through the term τύπος. Thus, for example, the Valentinians claim that the twelve signs of the zodiac are τύποι of the Dodecade. The moon, in making its revolution around the heavens in thirty days is a τύπος of the number of Eons (7.1). Or, in speaking of the psychical Christ, they claim that "our Lord was composed of four elements, thus conserving the τύπος of the primordial and first-begotten Tetrad" (7.2). And in the same paragraph, Irenaeus informs his readers that "Achamoth, their mother, underwent suffering so to display the τύπος of Christ above who extended himself upon the Cross (Stauros); for they declare that all these things below are τύποι of those above" (7.2). In these and similar examples, τύπος simple means "image," "form," or "figure," and generally speaking this meaning is borne from its platonic/Hellenistic cultural context.<sup>9</sup> This conception, however, even extends to their scriptural exegesis:

Concerning events happening outside the Pleroma, here is what they attempt to extrapolate from Scripture. They claim that the Lord came to suffer his Passion in the end times of the cosmos in order to display the passion which occurred to the last of the Aeons, and to make known through his own end, the end of the production of the Aeons. They maintain further that the girl of twelve years, the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, to whom the Lord approached and raised from the dead (Lk 8:41-42), was a τύπος of Achamoth, which their Christ, by extending himself [beyond the bounds of the Pleroma], shaped and led to the perception of that light which had forsaken her. (8.2)

As exemplified above, the use of τύπος in gnostic exegesis is to construct relationships between events of Christ's life and events in the Pleroma.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the exegetical use of τύπος among these "heretics" conceives of no place for the Old Testament, nor its God for that matter. The iconic resemblance is built upon happenings in the life of Christ and those in the Pleroma. Irenaeus, however, in taking up the same term, constructs an exegetical system which highlights, in opposition to his adversaries, the "economy" between happenings in the Old and New Testaments. Irenaeus' typological hermeneutic, in other words, grows out of this socio-religious context, wherein he must demonstrate against his gnostic rivals that there is but one God who instructed Jews and Christians alike on Christ and Christian realities through Old Testament τύποι. In other words, Irenaeus' biblical typology is conditioned on his exegetical and theological project to scripturally prove against his adversaries that the God of Jesus and the God of the Old Testament

---

9. Cf. the works of Philo of Alexandria, and Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora*.

10. Cf. their exegesis of Matt 9:20-21: the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years and who touched the garment of Jesus and was healed, was a τύπος of the twelfth Aeon (*Ad. haer.* 2.23.1); and Lk 2:29 (1.8.4). See also 4.19.1.

are one and the same. The invocation of Paul is part of his exegetical apologetic.

Thus he [God] set upon the people the construction of the tabernacle, the building of the temple, the election of the Levites, sacrifices and oblations also, and all the other services of the law. . . However, he instructed a people easily inclined to return to idols, stipulating through repeated appeals to persevere and to serve God, calling them to first principles through secondary, that is, to truths through τύποι, to eternal realities through temporal, to spiritual realities through carnal, and to celestial realities through terrestrial things, as it was also said to Moses: “You shall make all things according to the image (κατὰ τὸν τύπον) of the things you saw on the mountain” (Heb 8:5). For forty days he learned to keep the words of God, the heavenly forms, the spiritual images, and the figures of the things to come, as also Paul says: “For they drank from the rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). And again, after mentioning the events related in the law, he goes on to say: “Now all these things happened to them in τύποι, and were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). Therefore, by means of τύποι they learned to fear God and persevere in his service. Thus they had law, instruction, and prophecy of future things. (*Ad. haer.* 4.14.3)<sup>11</sup>

We should first notice how Irenaeus understands the term τύπος in relation to his pedagogical thesis: the Jews were instructed about truths through τύποι, about eternal realities through temporal realities, about spiritual realities through carnal realities, about celestial realities through earthly things.<sup>12</sup> It became apparent through this list of dichotomies that Irenaeus is working with the same meaning of the term as the Gnostics had, that of “image” or “figure,” and conceptualizing it in the same manner, understanding earthly, corporeal, and terrestrial events as images or figures of celestial and spiritual realities.<sup>13</sup> However, contrary to his rivals, Irenaeus argues, invoking Paul as authoritative representative, that it is rather Old Testament τύποι which bear witness to Christian celestial and spiritual realities, and not those of the Pleroma.<sup>14</sup> This, Irenaeus affirms, was even taught to the Jews; for they themselves were instructed through τύποι, through carnal and earthly things, to comprehend what was to come. Hebrews 8:5 is Irenaeus’ proof-text, and it would do us good to pay particular attention to how Irenaeus reads and understands the term τύπος in this verse and how this meaning is then transferred to 1 Corinthians 10:4, 10:6, and

---

11. Where possible I have followed the few Greek fragments of this passage that remain and the Greek retrogression made from the Latin manuscript by Adelin Rousseau, *Sources Chrétiennes* 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1965). Thus, the Latin manuscript’s *typum, typica*, etc. are translated back to Irenaeus’ Greek: διὰ τῶν τυπικῶν εἰς τὰ ἀληθῆ instead of *per typica ad vera*; κατὰ τὸν τύπον for *secundum typum*; and προτυπώσεις τῶν μελλόντων instead of *praefigurationes futurorum*. Additionally, it would seem that Irenaeus has the “Antiochene” reading of 1 Cor 10:11 (τύποι συνέβαινον), attested in some manuscripts: A D F G sy<sup>b</sup>.

12. Cf. *Ad. haer.* 4.17.1

13. Cf. *Ptolemy’s Letter to Flora* 5.2 and 5.8, where the adjective τυπικός is used to describe the relationship between corporeal Jewish rituals and their spiritual meanings; and Origen, *Comm. Jn.* 10.110.55, where it is expressed that corporeal events are τύποι of incorporeal realities.

14. Cf. Irenaeus’ comments about the Valentinians’ claim that spiritual *typoi* are then further to be understood as *typoi* of the Pleroma, “creating,” Irenaeus affirms, *typoi* from *typoi*, images from images (4.19.1).

10:11. Thus, following from this Hellenistic meaning of τύπος as exemplified through the above list of earthly-celestial dichotomies, Irenaeus then asserts that Moses too was instructed about the celestial temple through its terrestrial τύπος. This hermeneutic is then extended to 1 Corinthians 10:1-11: the Israelites in the desert were also instructed about Christ through the spiritual rock, an earthly “figure” (τύπος is what Irenaeus understands here) of Christ. In other words, Irenaeus understands Paul’s statement that “this rock was Christ” (10:4) through the hermeneutic lens provided to him from his already Hellenized reading of the term τύπος in Hebrews 8:5. This is quite removed from Paul’s own meaning and use of τύπος. Furthermore, Paul does not use the term in reference to the rock of verse 10:4; or, if he does, it is certainly not in the sense here proposed by Irenaeus which, it must be borne in mind, is Irenaeus’ own exegetical creation and aids to substantiate his refutation, that is, to demonstrate upon the authority of Paul that the Jews themselves were instructed about Christ and Christian realities in their own sacred Scripture through earthly and corporeal figures: the rock and the temple. This is then further extended to all the historical events enumerated in this passage: “All these things happened to them in τύποι (i.e., earthly and corporeal figures).”<sup>15</sup> Irenaeus’ reading of Paul, therefore, reveals more of Irenaeus’ exegetical and theological project, than of Paul’s own hermeneutical intention.<sup>16</sup>

More can be said on this subject if space permitted. For example, having interpreted Paul’s use of τύπος in 1 Corinthians 10:6, 10:11, and Hebrews 8:5 through the influence of a gnostic/Hellenistic meaning and usage of the term, Irenaeus can now extend his typological interpretation to all the scriptural narrative,<sup>17</sup> in particular to the interpretation of all Jewish rites and oblations: “All the gifts, oblations, and sacrifices were received by the people in a figure (*typos*), as it was shown to Moses on the mount (Heb 8:5).”<sup>18</sup> Irenaeus contends that earthly things are indeed *typos* of spiritual things—for how else was god to give the Christians an image of the spiritual (*sprititalia imaginem*). As with the above citation, Irenaeus insists that the Jews misunderstood their own rites and sacrifices by performing them carnally. Moreover, this particular typological interpretation of Jewish rites and sacrifices is already attested in Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora*,<sup>19</sup> the

---

15. The Latin text reads *in figuram*. See also 4.27.3.

16. Cf. Clement of Alexandria’s reading of the same verse (*Paedagogus* 2.101.1-3) where it is clearly articulated that these τύποι are pedagogical *exemplae*—more inline with Paul’s own meaning.

17. See, for example, *Ad. haer.* 4.20.8: “For the prophets did not prophesy in words alone, but also in visions, in their mode of life, and in the actions they performed . . . some the proclaimed by word, others they indicated typically (*typice significabant*) by means of outward actions.” Cf. 4.26.1; 4.32.2; and Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 114.1.

18. *Ad. haer.* 4.19.1. Cf. 4.14.3; 4.17.1.

19. See *Letter to Flora* 5.2 and 5.8, where the adjective τυπικός is used to describe the relationship between corporeal Jewish rituals and their spiritual meanings.

*Epistle of Barnabas*,<sup>20</sup> and the works of Justin Martyr.<sup>21</sup> It can hardly be explained, in other words, through the works of Paul or his use of τύπος in 1 Cor. 10, even though, granted, Paul is apologetically invoked as its founder. In short, Irenaeus' typology is derived from his own unique understanding and application of τύπος, and not from some alleged notion of New Testament typology nor Pauline hermeneutical sense of τύπος. This is likewise the case with his citation of Romans 5:14.

#### ROMANS 5:14C IN IRENAEUS' THEOLOGICAL REFUTATION

Irenaeus is the first church Father to cite Romans 5:14c and to utilize it in his own theological reflection.<sup>22</sup> In the course of a rather lengthy refutation in book III of his *Adversus haereses*, against “those who say that he [Christ] only revealed himself in appearance, and that he was not born in the flesh nor truly made man” (18.7), Irenaeus invokes Paul as a witness against his adversaries, who, in his letter to the Romans, “calls Adam himself a τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος” (22.3). This assertion, moreover, is introduced by Irenaeus as part of his scriptural proof that Christ has recapitulated in himself the first created man by becoming flesh—flesh that, according to Irenaeus, “the Lord recapitulated in himself, thus saving his own work which he himself formed” (22.2). Thus for Irenaeus, the salvation of all flesh including that of Adam by he who will become incarnate in this same flesh in the future (τοῦ μέλλοντος), is somehow already formed in the creation of Adam. This recapitulation of Adam, which is accomplished through the incarnation of Christ in the flesh, is furthermore supported by Irenaeus through a variety of scriptural similitudes (ὁμοιότης).<sup>23</sup> Romans 5:14 is merely one verse among others<sup>24</sup> which Irenaeus cites as evidence for the recapitulation of Adam, and thus also as a refutation against the position of his adversaries. Thus, contrary to a fragmented, distorted, or even absent concept of an Adam-Christ similitude among the gnostics, Irenaeus' refutation is at the same time a precision on and demonstration of orthodoxy.

Irenaeus' refutation extends just about to the end of book III, the goal of which is to oppose

---

20. *Ep. Barn.* 7.3; 7.7; 7.10-11; 8.1

21. *Dial.* 40.1; 41.1; 41.4.

22. Cf. the use of the expression τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος in Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 114.1. The reference, however, is not to Romans 5:14. Rather, the expression designates an ‘image of what shall come’: “For the holy Spirit sometimes brought about that something should be produced visibly, which was the image of the future (τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος γίνεσθαι ἦν), sometimes he uttered words about what was to take place (περὶ τῶν ἀποβαίνειν μελλόντων), speaking as if it was then taking place or had taken place. And unless those who read perceive this art, they will not be able to follow the words of the prophets as they ought.” Likewise, when Justin wishes to specify the coming Christ, this is typically expressed as Χριστὸν μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι (*Dial.* 96.1). Cf. *Epistle of Barnabas* 7.10: τὸν τύπον τοῦ μέλλοντος πάσχειν Ἰησοῦ.

23. Term attested in several fragments, e.g., fr. 34.

24. Notably: Gn. 1:26; 2:5; 2:7; John 1:14; Luke 3:23-38; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 1:3; and Is. 7:14.

those who inscribe falsely against the salvation of Adam (23.8), thereby arguing for a unified history of salvation between the old covenant and the new, i.e., between Adam and Christ. Irenaeus retorts by affirming that Christ recapitulates in himself not only the first man but all the generations of man. The recapitulation of Adam is therefore central to Irenaeus' reasoning. *It already forms the hermeneutical lense upon which Irenaeus' reading of Scripture rests.* In opposing his adversaries, who claim that there is no salvation for Adam, and, at the same time, that Christ did not receive any flesh from his immaculate birth and did not show himself in the flesh, Irenaeus will emphasize the unity of God's salvation—a plan which is already sketched in the creation of Adam. It is precisely this refutation which defines Irenaeus' typological reading, rather than a meaning of τύπος, or a typology, handed down by Paul.

The section in question (§21.10 ff.) opens with the following thesis: Christ, in becoming flesh, had recapitulated in himself Adam. This section is traditionally titled “the recapitulation of Adam” and establishes itself upon the notion of similitudes or resemblances (ὁμοιότητα) between Adam and Christ, to which, insists Irenaeus, the Scriptures bear witness. This theme was already announced in 4.2, where Irenaeus alludes to the unity of salvation history between Adam and Christ, insisting that the latter had become flesh because of his abundant love for “the work that he himself molded.”<sup>25</sup> One readily sees, moreover, that this notion of Adam as a work modeled by Christ is already founded on a Christological exegesis of Genesis 1:26, which also invokes this same resemblance (ὁμοίωσις). This will formally be presented in 22.3, precisely where we find Romans 5:14. Furthermore, these two verses, as we shall see, bear witness to, according to Irenaeus, the same similitude. Finally, it must be borne in mind that this very similitude is presented against those who claim that Christ was not born of flesh, nor received anything from Mary—a position which ultimately negates the similitude between Adam and Christ. The first of Irenaeus' four similitudes, not surprisingly, comes from Paul.

For as by one man's disobedience sin entered, and through sin death prevailed, so too by one man's obedience righteousness having been introduced shall cause life to fructify in those who in times past were dead (Rom. 5:19, 5:12a, 5:18b).<sup>26</sup>

The first similitude displayed by Irenaeus between these two men is principally a mixture of ideas pulled from Romans 5:19 and 5:12a. Irenaeus starts with verse 19a, “as by one man's disobedience,” and then follows up with verse 12, “sin entered into the world,” which supposes that

---

25. Cf. *Ad. haer.* 3.16.1; 3.18.1; 3.20.2, etc.

26. *Ad. haer.* 3.21.10. Cf. the similitude between Eve et Mary: 3.22.4 and 3.18.7.

Irenaeus has completed Paul's initial analogy in verse 12.<sup>27</sup> The similitude and the internal symmetry is certainly Paul's, but the idea of a recapitulation ("who in times past were dead") is part of Irenaeus' own theological reflection, and refutation. It is introduced in order to connect the end (eternal life brought to mankind) with the beginning (death came to mankind). This connecting of the end to the beginning is accentuated throughout this section by Irenaeus and decidedly emphasizes the notion of Christ recapitulating in himself Adam. The idea of a recapitulation of the first man in or by the second man becomes more clear in the following three similitudes.

And as the protoplast himself, Adam, has his substance from untilled and as yet virgin soil—for God had not yet sent rain, and man had not yet tilled the ground (Gn. 2:5)—and was formed by the hand of God ("for all things were made by him" (Jn. 1:3)), and the Lord took dust from the earth and formed man, so too did he who is the Logos, recapitulating Adam in himself, rightly receive a birth, enabling him to gather up Adam, from Mary who was as yet a virgin. . . . But if the former was taken from the dust, and God was his maker, it was incumbent that the latter also, making a recapitulation in himself, should be formed as man by God, to have a resemblance (ὁμοιότητα) with the former as respects his birth.

The ὁμοιότητα displayed in this passage, supported by scripture, takes stock of two similitudes or resemblances between Adam and Christ: the manner in which each one is born (i.e., through a virgin) and through the art of whom each one was formed.<sup>28</sup> Concerning the similitude between their mode of birth, Irenaeus draws from Genesis 2:5 on the one hand, which asserts that Adam's creation/generation, indeed his birth (γεννήσις), is from the virgin soil, and on the other hand on the textual allusions to Luke 1:31 ff., Matt. 1:23, and the ever present Isa. 7:14.<sup>29</sup> The second similitude, which asserts that both Adam's creation in the likeness of the Logos and the Logos' birth in the flesh is accomplished through the hands of God, is likewise supported by the Scriptures: for Adam, Irenaeus cites Genesis 2:7 and 1:26 (see the following section), and for Christ, principally John 1:3 and 1:14. Finally, the fact that Irenaeus insists that he who recapitulates in himself possesses the same resemblance in birth (τὴν αὐτὴν . . . τῆς γεννήσεως ἔχειν ὁμοιότητα) with the man formed by God, highlights the fact that this recapitulation is intrinsically connected to, even founded upon, these similitudes, of which both Testaments speak. To reject this similitude, for Irenaeus, is to contradict the Scriptures and Tradition.<sup>30</sup>

Those, therefore, who allege that he took nothing from the virgin do greatly err, so that they

---

27. The infamous 5:12: ὡσπερ δι' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἀμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. . . .

28. See also 3.22.1.

29. See 3.19.1; 3.19.2; 19.3; 20.3; 21.4; 21.5; 21.6; 23.1.

30. Cf. 3.2.3.



might cast away the inheritance of the flesh (τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς κληρονομίαν), and also reject the similitude (τὴν ὁμοιότητα). For if the one from the earth had indeed formation and substance from both the hand and workmanship of God, but the other not from the hand and workmanship of God, then he who was made after the image and likeness (Gn. 1:26) of the former did not, in that case, preserve the similitude of this man. . . (3.22.1)

This passage takes stock of the third similitude. The two births are formed from the same divine hand: Adam, who is fashioned by the hands of God, i.e., the Logos himself, and Christ who becomes flesh incarnate.<sup>31</sup> The recapitulation of Adam is thus accomplished through the fact that Christ himself will be born similarly to Adam. In short, it was necessary that 1) Christ became man in the same fashion that Adam did, i.e., through a virgin; and 2) through the same means as Adam, i.e., through the art of God. Irenaeus is leading his reader little by little to the scriptural verse that explicitly touches upon this theme. Christ preserved the similitude of Adam who was made in his “image and likeness.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, the preexistent Logos formed Adam after his own image and resemblance. It is therefore not surprising that Irenaeus cites Paul, who calls Adam himself a τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος in the context of a Christological exegesis on Genesis 1:26. Christ as preexisting Logos had preformed Adam in the similitude(s) of his future incarnation. Those, therefore, who deny that Christ had received flesh from Mary likewise deny the similitude between Adam and Christ.

It must furthermore be borne in mind that inherent in Irenaeus’ refutation is not only the emphasis placed on the importance of the similitude between Adam and Christ with respect to their mode of coming into the world, but also the salvation of all humanity, i.e., all flesh. For Irenaeus, the position taken up by the gnostics opposes the *raison d’être* of the incarnation of Christ. The salvation of all flesh according to Irenaeus’ reading of Scripture can only lead to a single interpretive conclusion: in becoming flesh, Christ has recapitulated in himself Adam, and likewise all flesh. As scriptural proof of the birth of Christ in and from the flesh, Irenaeus cites Galatians 4:4, “God sent his son born of a woman,” and Romans 1:3, “. . . concerning his son, who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh” (22.1). As if these passages were not sufficient, Irenaeus cites the writings of the evangelists in order to emphasize the human aspect of Jesus’ terrestrial life: he received the nourishment of the earth, experienced hunger, fatigue, sadness, pain, etc. “For all these are signs of the flesh which had been derived from the earth, which he had recapitulated in himself, bearing salvation to his own handiwork” (22.2). It is “for this reason. . .”—namely that Christ has recapitulated in himself all of humanity, including Adam—that Luke, according to Irenaeus, presents his readers with the genealogy of Christ.

---

31. Irenaeus does not cite John 1:14 here, but it is alluded to since it is cited throughout this book.

32. See also: 3.22.1; 3.23.1; 3.23.2, etc.

For this reason, Luke points out that the pedigree which traces the generation of our Lord back to Adam contains seventy-two generations (Luke 3:23-38), connecting the end with the beginning, and implying that it is he who has summed up in himself all nations dispersed from Adam downwards, and all languages and generations of men, together with Adam himself. Thus also was Adam himself termed by Paul “the image of the future”;<sup>33</sup> for the Logos, the maker of all things, had formed beforehand for himself the future “economy” (dispensation)<sup>34</sup> of the human race, connected with the Son of God, for God having predestined that the first man should be of a psychical nature, seeing that he might be saved from the spiritual one. For inasmuch as he had a pre-existence as a saving being, it was necessary that what might be saved should also be called into existence, in order that the being who saves should not exist in vain (3. 22.3).

This joining of the end with the beginning, which we saw in Irenaeus’ exegesis on Romans 5:19 and 12a, is also visible here in his treatment of Luke. Thus it is fairly easy to see how Irenaeus could cite Luke 3:23-38 as justification for the idea that all flesh shall be recapitulated in Christ. To refute the position of his adversaries, that neither Adam nor humanity is saved in Christ’s coming, Irenaeus appeals to scriptural passages wherein Adam and Jesus Christ are presented together, in order to speak of the latter as recapitulating the former. What is of importance to Irenaeus in this passage is that Luke attests that the genealogy of Christ goes back to Adam; but the idea of a recapitulation is Irenaeus’ own hermeneutic. It is precisely this “hermeneutic”—the recapitulation of Adam in Christ—that influences Irenaeus’ reading of Luke, and likewise guides his reading of Romans 5:14. Thus, it is also “for this reason” that Paul, Irenaeus affirms, “called Adam himself a τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος; for the Logos, the maker of all things, had formed beforehand for himself the future ‘economy’ (dispensation) of the human race.” As with Irenaeus’ recapitulation hermeneutic on Luke, one has the sense that here too Irenaeus applies a certain slant in reading Romans 5:14. Does Irenaeus’ reading of Paul do justice to Paul’s own thought? Is there a (Pauline) typology here and does that rest on the term τύπος? Furthermore, how has Irenaeus understood the genitive particle τοῦ μέλλοντος?

It might be useful to outline the direction of Irenaeus’ argument. After having cited the end of verse Rom. 5:14 (τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος), Irenaeus continues by referencing this as an act of creation; “for the maker (*fabricator*) of the universe had preformed (προετύπωσεν)<sup>35</sup> in Adam the

---

33. The Latin manuscript reads *typus futuri*, which is certainly derived from Paul’s Greek τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος. However, the Latin participle *futuri* is less ambiguous than the Greek τοῦ μέλλοντος; the Latin certainly needs to be rendered, “what shall come” or simply, “the future.”

34. Latin: *futuram dispositionem*.

35. It is regrettable that Irenaeus’ Greek does not survive, which would have enabled us to understand better his exegetical thought. The Latin manuscript has “*praeformauerat*,” which Rousseau’s Greek retroversion (*Sources chrétiennes*) yields προετύπωσεν, which is in all probability Irenaeus’ vocabulary here since he uses this term elsewhere. Cf. 3.19: προτυπώσεις τῶν μελλόντων.

future dispensation of humanity.” It is not coincidental that after having cited Ἰδὸν ὅς ἐστιν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος, Irenaeus accentuates the creative role of the maker of the universe precisely in regards to the creation or (pre)formation of Adam, as indeed Irenaeus reads it. The occurrence of Adam, the fabricator or Logos, Genesis 1:26, the term τύπος, and most likely the verb προτυπώ together leads us to think that Irenaeus has understood Paul’s expression in the context of the creation of Adam, that is to say in the context of his Christological exegesis on Genesis 1:26. This interpretation is reinforced through the importance Irenaeus places on Genesis 1:26 which is cited throughout this section,<sup>36</sup> and which highlights even more the interpretive argument that Adam’s birth/creation (γεννήσις) is accomplished in the image and resemblance of the Logos’s future generation (γεννήσις). Consequently, in this exegetical context τύπος can only mean “image” for Irenaeus. The future economy (creation, birth, recapitulation of all flesh) is preformed in Adam precisely because Adam had been formed in the “image and resemblance” of this future dispensation. In other words, the similitude or resemblance between the Logos and Adam is already scripturally asserted for Irenaeus in Genesis 1:26: Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν. The text of Genesis 1:26, therefore, bears witness to the resemblance (ὁμοιότης) between Adam and Christ, namely that Adam had been preformed (προετύπωσεν) by the Logos himself and after his own image and resemblance.

It is not difficult, moreover, to understand τύπος in the sense of “form” or “image” in the exegetical context of the creation of Adam. Philo of Alexandria, for example, affirms that within the creation narrative of the first man, Moses added to κατ’ εἰκόνα the expression καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν (Gn. 1:26) in order to present a clear image (τρανὸν τύπον) of the Logos (*Opif.* 71).<sup>37</sup> Or, during an exegesis on Genesis 1:26, the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* (6.11) explains that the *gnosis* of this verse concerns the new creation, wherein the Lord will create for the faithful another image or form (ἄλλον τύπον).<sup>38</sup> Or again, in book III of the *Sibylline Oracles* (3:27), Adam at his creation is mentioned as “an image of the form of man” (τύπον μορφῆς μερόπων). At any case, the comprehension of Adam as an image of Christ refutes the position of the Gnostics. In the gnostic cosmology that Irenaeus presents in book I of his *Adversus haereses*, the term τύπος is frequently employed in the sense of a corporeal image modeled after an incorporeal archetype. The Gnostics even claim that the psychic Christ is the τύπος of the pneumatic Christ (7.2). Obviously this gnostic cosmogony has no place in it for Adam, nor the salvation of humanity from Adam. It is in opposition

---

36. Not only the textual allusion made here, but see also 3.23.1 and 3.23.2.

37. Likewise: *Her* 230 et *Mut.* 31.

38. Cf. Philo, *Somn.* 1.129: in the struggle between Jacob and God, Jacob receives a new form (καινὸν τύπον).

to this gnostic ‘economy’ that Irenaeus insists that Christ as preexisting Logos formed beforehand Adam in his image and, consequently, Adam carries the image (τύπος) of his future incarnation. The goal of his refutation is thus to bring correction, and orthodoxy, to the Gnostics’ error: Christ is the fulfillment of what had begun with Adam, who in turn is an image of Christ’s future incarnation, i.e., the future economy whereby all flesh will be recapitulated.

We can imagine the following scenario: the Logos formed Adam from the virgin earth, a carnal being, made in the image and likeness of the Logos, which then serves as a model of the Logos’ future incarnation as a carnal being from the virgin Mary.<sup>39</sup> Adam as the image of the future economy is visible in the context of Irenaeus’ Christological exegesis of Genesis 1:26 and in connection to the similitudes established by Irenaeus between Adam and Christ. Thus the Latin manuscript’s *typos futuri*, standing in for Irenaeus’ original Greek, following Paul here, (τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος, can only be rendered in English as “an image of the future.” Furthermore, the context of Irenaeus’ use of this verse suggests that he understood *futuri* in the neuter: “for the Logos, the maker of all things, had formed beforehand for himself the *futuram dispositionem* of the human race.” It is apparent Irenaeus here invokes all the similitudes previously mentioned in his argument. For example, the Logos had preformed in Adam his proper generation through the virgin Mary, in modeling Adam from the virgin earth, which furthermore reinforces Irenaeus’ recapitulation of all flesh—an integral part to the future economy. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the argument that this future is preformed in Adam is proper to Irenaeus, which was formulated as a reaction to the gnostics. Paul called Adam “an image of the future economy” because, according to Irenaeus, Paul, like Luke, connects the end to the beginning in the process of a recapitulation: already preformed in Adam was the future salvation of all flesh. In the end a nice refutation of the gnostics who eliminate Adam/humanity from their soteriology.

## CONCLUSION

As we noted in the introduction, modern commentators have insisted that Paul not only forged a hermeneutical sense of the term τύπος, thereby creating typological exegesis, but that he also bequeathed this sense to the early church. However, our reading of Irenaeus does not corroborate

---

39. Cf. *Démonstration* 32 : « Pourquoi la naissance virginale ? Or, d’où provient la substance du premier homme ? De la volonté et de la sagesse de Dieu et d’une terre vierge (similitude avec la naissance du Christ) : “car Dieu n’avait pas encore fait pleuvoir,” dit l’Écriture, avant que l’homme fût fait, “et il n’y avait pas encore d’homme pour travailler la terre.” C’est donc tandis qu’elle était encore vierge que “Dieu prit du limon de la terre et en modela l’homme” pour qu’il fût le point de départ de l’humanité. Comme c’était cet homme même qu’il récapitulait en lui-même, le Seigneur reçut donc une chair formée selon la même économie que celle d’Adam, en naissant d’une Vierge par la volonté et la sagesse de Dieu, afin de montrer lui aussi une chair formée d’une manière semblable à celle d’Adam et de se faire cet homme même dont il est écrit qu’il était, à l’origine, à l’image et à la ressemblance de Dieu ».

this claim. In fact, the meaning of the term in Irenaeus' understanding of Romans 5:14 is that of "image,"<sup>40</sup> and it reflects gnostic uses and meanings of the term. In fact, it is not even the term τύπος which defines Irenaeus' "typology" but rather the hermeneutic direction supplied by his theology of recapitulation in the context of a Christological exegesis on Genesis 1:26. Irenaeus' "typology" is not derived from Paul; this furthermore sheds doubt as to whether or not Paul actually conceived of an Adam-Christ typology or a hermeneutical sense for τύπος. In sum, Irenaeus' reading of Paul reflects little of Paul's own intention in referencing Adam as a τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος, and more of Irenaeus' own theological and exegetical aims.

---

40. Contra Goppelt, τύπος, 251.