



## Soteriological Reflections on Adamic Christology

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### **Abstract**

The subject of Christology is indispensable in Christianity because the entire Christian message centers on the person and works of Jesus Christ. As a crucial subject of Christian theology, various Christological models have been espoused by biblical and non-biblical authors. One of the Christological models espoused in the New Testament is Adamic Christology with its focus on the analogy between Adam's sin and Christ's atoning sacrifice. While allusions of the Adam-Christ comparison appear elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 3–4; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:5–18), the most explicit articulation is found in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. Most of the existing literature on the subject focus more on exegetical issues and fail to provide adequate theological analysis of the Adam-Christ comparison. Current interest in soteriological reflections the Adam-Christ comparison has prompted this paper which explores Adamic Christology based on a theological reading of Romans 5:12-21 and other relevant texts on subject. The researcher used a literary research approach comprising textual, theological and historical analyses of data collected from commentaries, articles, books, and dissertations/theses. The main thesis of the paper is that despite remarkable continuities between Adam and Christ on the basis of an ontological inclusivity of all humankind in their vicarious humanity, Christ exceeds Adam in all soteriological respects as the one who reverses the effect of Adam's sin on humanity by bestowing salvific benefits on all who express belief in his saving works. The paper is an interdisciplinary study that contributes to the fields of Systematic theology (particularly on the issues of hamartiology and soteriology) and New Testament studies (especially Pauline studies).

**Keywords:** *Adam; Christ; Adamic Christology; Soteriology; Typology*

## ***Introduction***

Christians traditionally hold that Adam was the first person in human history, and that his sin of disobeying God (Gen. 3) affected all his progeny. Consequent to Adam's sin, God promised a Savior who was to come as a Warrior-King to crush the head of the seed of the serpent who made Adam to sin (Gen. 3:15). New Testament writers identify Jesus Christ as the Savior sent on the head-crushing mission (1 John 3:8). Thus, the New Testament has both explicit (cf. Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22, 45–49) and implicit (cf. Luke 3–4; Heb. 2:5–18) comparisons between Adam and Christ. The New Testament presents a typological relationship between the two figures in which Adam serves as a type of Christ (cf. Rom. 5:14).

The significance of Adam-Christ typology in Pauline Christology cannot be overstated. The Adam motif is, as Dunn (1980, p. 107) states, “a substantial strand in Paul's theology, and even when not explicit its influence spreads out widely and throws a considerable light on his understanding of the Christian gospel.” This motif forms a central part of Paul's soteriology. As an important topic, many scholars have published on the Adam-Christ comparison. The problem, however, is that most of the publications on texts related to Adam-Christ comparison are dominated by exegetical and background issues that tend to overshadow the theological concerns. This study addresses this literature gap by exploring Adamic Christology based on a theological reading of Romans 5:12-21. The choice of this text was informed by its details and unique presentation of the Adam-Christ analogy. The Adam-Christ typology in Romans 5:12-21 is unique in terms of the degree of emphasis placed on the disjunction between the type and antitype (Fee 1987). Nonetheless, relevant portions of 1 Corinthians 15 and other texts are considered at various points to give a broader perspective on the subject matter.

The study is a literary research that collected data from commentaries, articles, books, and dissertations/theses. Exegetical details and background information were avoided in order to give room for theological analysis. After a critical analysis of the subject matter from a theological point of view, the paper found striking continuities between Adam and Christ on the basis of an ontological inclusivity of all humankind in their vicarious humanity. At the same time, it found that Christ reverses the effect of Adam's sin on humanity by bestowing salvific benefits on all who express belief in his (Christ's) saving person and works. The paper ended with implications for Christian soteriology.

## ***Brief Background***

Traditionally, the Apostle Paul is considered the author of the Book of Romans. Apart from the identification Paul as the author in the first verse of the letter (Rom. 1:1), the literary, historical, and theological style found in Romans are also found in Paul's other writings. In addition, major Pauline themes, such as justification by faith, the role of the law, and the universal scope of the Gospel feature prominently in Romans. Furthermore, the early Church Fathers and the broader early Christian tradition align with the attribution of Romans to Paul (Uzodimma, 2018). Their writings consistently affirm Paul as the acknowledged author of this epistle.

Paul's words were transcribed by Tertius (Rom. 16:22). The use of secretaries in letter writing was a common first-century Greco-Roman practice (Fitzmyer, 2011). The letter, likely dated around 57-58 AD, possibly preceding Paul's visit to Jerusalem, is among the New Testament's earliest epistles (Powell, 2009; Fitzmyer, 2011; Gundry, 2012). Paul might have composed the letter from Corinth at the end of his third missionary journey (see Acts 18:23-21:15, especially 20:2-3; Gruenler, 2008). The fact that Gaius, a Corinthian, was hosting Paul at the time of writing this letter (16:3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:14) and his mention of Erastus, a city treasurer (16:23); and Paul's praise of Phoebe of Cenchrea (the port city of

Corinth; 16:1) support a Corinthian origin of this letter. Paul's skillful negotiation between Jewish and Gentile factions suggests a diversity in the background of the audience (Gundry, 2012).

Scholars consider Romans as serving multiple purposes (Powell, 2009; Fitzmyer, 2011; Gundry, 2012). Firstly, it addresses Jewish-Gentile tensions within the Roman church (cf. Rom. 3:20-31; 11:17-32). This tension prompted Paul to seek financial aid from Gentile churches for the distressed Jerusalem church (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9). The letter's emphasis on fundamental Christian gospel tenets reflects a missionary objective (1:16; 3:8; 9:1-2). Additionally, Paul wrote Romans to garner financial support from his audience for his upcoming mission to Spain following his visit to Rome (15:24, 28).

Romans 5 is situated in the broader context of Paul's theological explanation of salvation and righteousness. Before this chapter Paul had discussed the concept of justification by faith and the reconciliation of humanity with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). At the beginning of the chapter, he focuses on the benefits of Justification, namely forgiveness, reconciliations with God and access to divine presence (5:1-11). Then he proceeds to 5:12-21 where he focuses on the contrast between the consequences of Adam's sin and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. He espouses the idea that through Adam, sin entered the world, bringing death, but through Jesus Christ, grace and righteousness abound, leading to eternal life. Paul's comparison between Adam and Christ is crucial in shaping Christian theology regarding the doctrine of original sin and the concept of imputed righteousness. It lays the foundation for understanding the universality of sin inherited from Adam and the universal offer of salvation through faith in Christ.

With the above introductory notes the study now proceeds to explore key theological themes embedded in Romans 5:12-21.

### ***Theological Reading of Romans 5:12-21***

#### **Adam, sin and death (vv. 12-14)**

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned — <sup>13</sup>sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. (RSV)*

#### **Adam and the doctrine of original sin**

With allusions from Genesis 3, these verses (Rom. 12-14) draw a comparison between the effects of Adam's transgression and Christ's obedience. The first word "therefore" (also, "because of this" or "for this reason") indicates that Paul is about drawing a conclusion from the preceding text (5:1-11). The first major issue Paul talks about is the effect of Adam's sin on the human race. Verse 12 is particularly determinative: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" (NIV). The interpretation of this text has contributed immensely to the development of what theologians refer to as the doctrine of original sin, which states that Adam's sin made the entire human race sinful. Therefore, the first theological task is to explore this doctrine from a biblical perspective, with particular reference to Romans 5. Before that is done, it is important to discuss various views about the doctrine of original sin.

Theological investigations into the question of the relationship between Adam's sin and that of his posterity have yielded two main groups of theories—imputation theories and non-imputation theories. Imputation theories hold that the whole human race is guilty of original sin because Adam's guilt has been imputed on all his posterity (this will be examined further later). Non-imputation theories reject the idea of the imputation of Adam's sin on his descendants. Two such theories are Pelagianism and Arminianism (Norman, 2007).

### ***Pelagianism***

Pelagianism is a theological theory that emerged in the 5th century AD, primarily associated with the teachings of a British monk named Pelagius (c. 354-420) and his followers. Pelagianism centers on the nature of human free will, original sin, and the role of grace in salvation. All these aspects need to be considered in this work because they are interrelated. For example, one's view on original sin informs their position on the freedom of human will. Pelagianism rejects the idea of original sin and teaches that each person is born morally neutral and has the capacity to live a sinless life if they choose to do so (Erickson, 2013; Geisler, 2011; Shelley, 2001). In other words, human beings are born morally neutral with freedom to will, decide and choose what they want to do.

Pelagius emphasized the inherent goodness of human nature, arguing that humans possess free will and can achieve moral perfection through their own efforts (Erickson, 2013; Norman, 2007). He argues that Adam was created mortal and would have died even if he had not sinned (Geisler, 2011). Pelagius emphasized the inherent goodness of human nature, arguing that humans possess free will and can achieve moral perfection through their own efforts (Erickson, 2013; Norman, 2007).

According to this doctrine, Adam's sin injured only himself and serves as a bad example for any of his posterity to follow (Asante, 2014; Norman, 2007). Pelagianism also holds that God creates the human soul for each person without any intrinsic bias toward sin (Norman, 2007; Shelley, 2001). Therefore, every newborn is free from sin and has the capacity to obey God. In his view, infant baptism is a symbol of the strengthening of human nature that was already good (Slaton, 1973). Whether a new born is baptized or not has nothing to do with original sin. The effect of baptism is not eternal life but "spiritual illumination, adoption as children of God, citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem" (Shelley, 2001, p.897). According to Pelagius, God's grace merely provides guidance and moral teachings but does not play any role in changing human nature. Pelagianism argues that individuals can merit salvation through their own efforts and good deeds.

St. Augustine of Hippo vehemently opposed Pelagianism and argued for the doctrine of original sin and the absolute necessity of God's grace in the process of salvation (Slaton, 1973). First, on the issue of the state in which humans are born, Augustine held that humans are inherently born with a corrupt and evil nature. According to Augustine, the transformative power from bad to good lies solely in the grace of God (Slaton, 1973). The Augustine-Pelagius controversy extensively addressed the issue of human free will, exploring the profound implications of whether individuals possess the freedom to choose their actions. Contrary to Pelagius' assertion that humans were endowed with the equal ability to choose between good and evil, Augustine, while acknowledging human freedom of choice, contends that the capacity to choose the good was only possible when the will received assistance from divine grace (Slaton, 1973). While Pelagius posits that Adam's disobedience was an individual act with no impact on the entire human race, Augustine maintains that Adam served as the representative head of humanity, and his disobedience carried universal consequences (Slaton, 1973).

On the concept of original sin, Pelagius' contention that individuals were born without sin, was opposed by Augustine's argument original sin was transmitted from parents to children at birth (Slaton,

1973). Augustine regards sin as a disease that spread to all through Adam. According to Augustine (cited in Schaff, 2022, No, 154) original sin “is the native bent of the soul towards evil, with which all the posterity of Adam . . . come into the world, and out of which all actual sins of necessity proceed. . . . Sin is not merely an individual act, but also a condition, a status and habitus, which continues, by procreation, from generation to generation.” A critical element in the passing on of original sin was identified as concupiscence or lust (Slaton, 1973). Augustine does not view concupiscence itself as original sin, but rather as a weakness inherent in human nature, a result of the fall (Slaton, 1973). It is through concupiscence that the transmission of original sin occurs in infants. Bonner (cited in Hall, 2002, p.152) states: “Concupiscence itself is not Original Sin; it is a wound and a vice of human nature, making it a slave to the devil; can be the occasion of sin, even in the baptized; and is the means whereby Original Sin is transmitted.” Augustine substantiates his doctrine of original sin through three key sources: the scriptures, infant baptism, and personal experience. The scriptural passages he frequently references is Romans 5:12 (which will be considered later in this paper) Genesis 8:21; John 3:6 and Ephesians 2:3 which he argues pointed to the fact that Adam’s posterity inherit his sinful nature and need a new birth. Augustine considers infant baptism as necessary to deal with original sin. He further contends that original sin is demonstrated through the evidence of personal experience. He illustrates this point by using a newborn as an example to showcase how the flaws of human nature become apparent. Even in the youngest infant, one can observe traits such as self-will, anger, and disobedience. This observation leads adults to the undeniable realization that human nature falls short of its intended state. Augustine considers the original sin as punishable, even in the case of infant but was uncertain about the nature and severity of the punishment (Slaton, 1973). Augustine’s demonstration of the weakness of Pelagianism contributed immensely to its eventual condemnation at the Council of Carthage in 418 and at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

### *Arminianism*

The Arminian view (Arminianism) is a theological perspective within Protestant Christianity that is named after a Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) (Ryrie, 1999). The Arminian view is that Adam was created in a state of innocence, not holiness (Ryrie, 1999). Sin, according to Arminianism, has to do with acts of the will. Arminianism holds that Adam’s sin affected his posterity (Norman, 2007; Ryrie, 1999). However, it is sinful pollution that one inherits from Adam, not guilt or sinful nature. John Wesley holds a similar view but differs in other points. Wesley argues that the inherited corrupted nature (Burtner and Childs, 1954). He opines that humankind is totally depraved and unable to fulfill God’s spiritual commands without divine grace. For Wesley, people are responsible only for the actual sins they commit. Wesley reasons this way because according to him, God provides humans with “preventing grace” which neutralizes the inherited sinful nature and penalty and frees everyone from the judicial consequences of Adam’s sin (Norman, 2007). The prevenient grace enables everyone to voluntarily repent and express faith in Christ. Finally, the Arminian view holds that even though infants theoretically inherit depravity, guilt and punishment, they are not condemned eternally because these things are removed by prevenient grace.

Having considered the major positions on the subject of original sin, the paper now proceeds to analyze the text theologically to determine what Paul has to offer.

### **Does Romans 5:12 teach original sin?**

In the verses under consideration (Rom. 5:12-21) Paul makes two key theological assertions. He traces the origin of death to Adam’s sin and attributes the universality of death to the universal sin of humankind (v. 12 cf. v.15, v. 17). The theological challenge in this text is how to relate the assertion that the universality of death resulted from Adam’s sin to the assertion that it is the result of universal sin of

humanity. Augustine's understanding of the word "because" in the last part of verse 12 as "in whom" (based on the Latin version) made him conclude that all human beings were in Adam when he sinned (Norman, 2007; Erickson, 2013). He (mis)interpreted the text to mean "In this way death spread to all men, *in whom* all sinned" (Norman, 2007, p.460; emphasis original). Even though it is clear to contemporary readers that the Latin version was inaccurate in this instance, further theological analyses need to be conducted.

One way to look at it is that, this final clause refers to individual's sin(s) which make(s) everyone incur the same personal guilt as Adam incurred through his sin (Erickson, 2013). Relating this view to the principle of individual responsibility for one's own action and for them alone, the clause would mean death is universal because all are guilty, and all are guilty because all have committed their own sins (Erickson, 2013). This position lacks support from the tense Paul used. If that is what Paul intended, he would have used the present tense (*hamartanousin*) which indicates that an action is continually going on. Another theological problem with this interpretation is that it makes the sin referred to in the expression "all sinned" different from that referred to in the expression "sin entered the world through one man" as well as from that referred to in verse 15 ("many died by the trespass of the one man" and in verse 17 ("by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man") (Erickson, 2013, p.653).

Another way to look at the issue is to understand the last clause in verse 12 in a way that avoids the above challenges and goes in line with verse 15 and 17 (Ridderbos, 1975). Paul's use of the aorist tense ("because all sinned") means that he is talking about past action (Grudem, 2000; Norman, 2007). Paul's use of the aorist suggests that in historical past all humanity sinned collectively when Adam sinned. If he wanted to talk of a continued process of sin (and hence refer to sin committed by individuals), he would have used the present or the imperfect tense. At the time of writing, it was not true that all human beings had committed actual sinful acts, because many people had died as infants without committing any actual sin and some were yet to be born. So Paul was actually talking about the universality of sin in the human race due to Adam's sin which had taken place in historical past. Taking the sin of all humanity and Adam's sin as the same resolves any potential conflict between verse 12 on the one hand and verses 15 and 17 on the other hand. Such reading also resolves the potential problem presented by verse 14 ("death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam") because in that case "it is not imitation or repetition of Adam's sin, but participation in it, that counts" (Erickson, 2013, p.653).

Given the above analyses, it is obvious that Paul makes the following theological points in verse 12. Firstly, as a consequence of Adam's sin all humans were engulfed by sin. This means that Adam's sin made all his progenitors sinful by nature. As Ridderbos (1975, p.96) puts it, Adam's sin "opened the gate of the world to sin." "This happened" writes Ridderbos (1975, p.96), "because 'all sinned,' namely, on account of their connection with the one man; therefore, Adam's sin was the sin of all, and in that sense it can hold for them that they all sinned." Secondly, Paul responds to the theological-philosophical question of the inevitability of death in human life by arguing that the human experience of death is due to sin. He argues this point by depicting sin as a great force that used Adam as the means of spreading itself and brought disaster and death into the human world, the human race (Moo, 1996). Thus, as sin enters the world it comes with its inseparable follower and companion, death. Paul's point is that death was not part of God's original intention and purpose for the world. This contradicts Pelagius' idea that Adam was created mortal. Death is not a natural consequence but a result of the brokenness and fallen state of the world due to sin. Thirdly, Paul displays a double conception of death; namely, the death of humanity as consequence of Adam's first sin and the death of the individual as a result of their own sin (Dunn, 1998).

Paul's claim in verse 12 is elaborated in verses 13 and 14. He makes two crucial theological points in verse 13. Firstly, the world was dominated by the power of sin (brought about by Adam's transgression) before the Mosaic Law was given. The Mosaic Law, which includes the Ten

Commandments and other commandments, was given to the Israelites through Moses. Secondly, in the period from Adam to Moses when the law had not been given, the sin that was present in the world was not put to account because “sin is not counted where there is no Law.” Here, Paul uses the business language of entering of accounts into a ledger to depict God as recording sin in a book (Witmer, 1983). He is not saying sin does not exist in the absence of Law; rather, he is making the point that sin does not have the character of being a transgression or “a sin is not listed as a sin” unless a law is put in place (Witmer, 1983, p.458). This means that without the law, people were still committing sin, but they were not held accountable for it in the same way as those who had received the law. This point reminisces Paul earlier assertion that transgression does not exist where there is no law (Rom. 4:15). The law provided a clear standard of righteousness, making people aware of their sinful actions and their need for forgiveness. Paul is here explaining the role of the Mosaic Law in revealing and highlighting human sinfulness. The law served as a “mirror” that showed people their sin, making them aware of their need for Christ’s redemptive work. Now, since death is the result of sin, and those living from Adam’s time to Moses’s time had no sins charged against them due to the nonexistence of the Law, and in spite of that, died (v. 14), it follows logically that their death resulted not from their personal sins but from Adam’s sin (Ridderbos, 1975). People who lived in the pre-law dispensation died because they sinned in Adam, who is their natural head. This point supports the corporate view of the sin in the last part of verse 12. Since the people who lived after Adam did not repeat what Adam did, there is the need to explain how the sins of these people differed from Adam’s own.

Two major views were found in the existing literature on this view. One view holds that a person who lived after Adam but before the Law committed sin but the one who lived after the Law, committed transgression and their act of disobedience after the Law had been given was a violation of a law or commandment (see Hong, 2010). Another position is that the expression “those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam” simply emphasizes the characteristic of people who lived between Adam and Moses (Moo, 1996, p.333). I am of the opinion that those who lived after Adam did not sin in the same way as Adam did by eating the forbidden fruit; their sin was in other ways. They died because of the sin of one man, Adam. The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that Romans 5:12-14 supports the idea of the spread of sin from Adam to his posterity. Thus, Paul supports the imputation theory, the idea that Adam’s sin is imputed on his descendants.

### **Theories about mode of transfer of Adam’s sin to his posterity**

How then does the sin of one person, Adam, result in the sin of all people? Imputation theorists differ on the question of how Adam’s sin spread to others. The two prominent positions on this are the federal headship and natural headship models.

#### ***Federal headship model***

The federal headship model (also known as the covenantal or representative model) teaches that Adam was the federal head or representative of all humanity. According to this view, God entered into a “covenant of works” with Adam and appointed him as the “federal head” (the representative) of all human beings; therefore, God imputed the consequences of his act to all his descendants (Moo 1996; Talbert, 2002). In other words, Adam acted as a representative of the entire human race in the covenant or relationship between God and humanity; therefore, when he sinned, it was as if all of humanity sinned with him in a legal and representative sense. The guilt of Adam’s sin is imputed, or legally credited, to all of his descendants. Thus, all humans inherit not only the consequences of Adam’s sin (such as a sinful nature and physical death) but also the guilt of his sin so that all people are considered sinful and guilty from birth (Ps. 51:5). It further argues that Adam’s posterity were neither physically nor spiritually present in him because their souls are created individually by God and united to their bodies at birth (Norman, 2007). Calvin (2006, p.250) supported this view when he asserted that: “The

contagion does not take its origin from the substance of the flesh or soul, but because it had been so ordained by God that the first man should at one and the same time have and lose, both for himself and for his descendants, the gifts that God had bestowed upon him.”

### Natural headship model

The natural headship model (also called the seminal or biological model) perceives Adam as the natural head who together with all his posterity, present seminally or physically in his body, sinned (Norman 2007; Talbert, 2002). It posits that Adam’s sin affected all of humanity because all human beings inherit a sinful nature from him through biological reproduction. In this view, the transmission of sin is seen as a natural or biological consequence of being descended from Adam. Augustine, who first propounded the doctrine of original sin, advocated for this position. He believed that traducianism (the idea that the human soul is transmitted from parent to child along with the physical part of the body) better explains the concept of original sin (Norman, 2007; Slaton, 1973). Martin Luther also subscribed to this position and argued that guilt, depravity and condemnation were all transmitted through procreation (cited in Norman, 2007). This position claims support from the letter to the Hebrews where the writer says that Levi paid to Melchizedek through Abraham because Levi was in Abraham’s body when he (Abraham) paid a tithe to Melchizedek (Gen. 14 cf. Heb. 7:9-10). Similarly, Adam committed the rest of humanity to a certain kind of action because the entire human race was in his body. Even though advocates of the natural headship model agree that all humans inherit a sinful nature from Adam, they generally do not believe in the imputation of Adam’s guilt. Instead, they argue that each person becomes guilty of sin when they personally commit their own sinful actions.

The diagrams below depict the above two views (Ryrie, 1999).

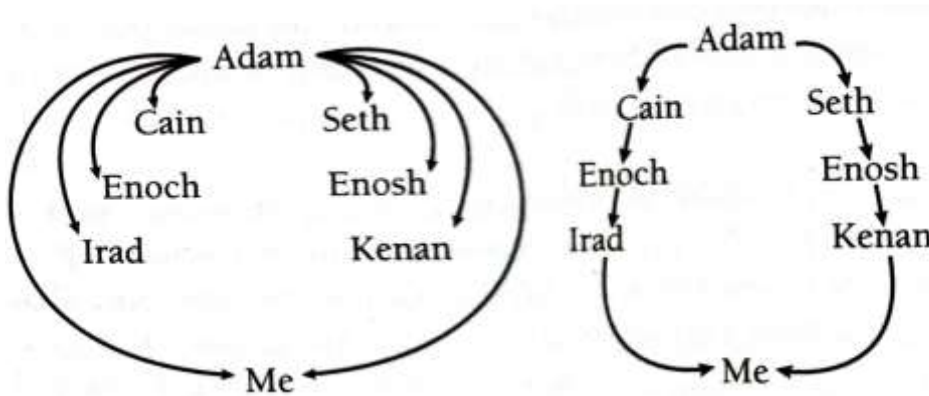


Fig. 1 Imputed Sin (Federal Headship model) Fig. 2 Inherited Sin (Natural headship model)

### Adamic Christology (vv. 14b-19)

Adamic Christology refers to a theological perspective that draws parallels between Adam, the first human in the biblical narrative, and Jesus Christ. This perspective explores the typological relationship between Adam and Christ. It is based on the fact that the eternal Son of God has assumed our common Adamic human nature as the New Adam. To understand this theological concept, it is necessary to examine the background of Paul’s use of the Adam-Christ typology. To this we now turn.

### Background to Adam-Christ Typology in Paul



Biblical typology refers to a foreshadowing in a different stage of redemptive history that suggests the framework or key aspects of a future actuality and loses its unique importance when the actuality comes (Goppelt, 1982). A typological interpretation differs from allegorical reading because the former is historical, that is, a “theological interpretation of history” in the light of further revelation given in the life, ministry and death of Christ (Foulkes, 1994, p.366-367; cf. Osborne, 2001, p.1222). Also, a typological interpretation is always based on essential (that is, theological) correspondence as opposed to accidental correspondence (France, 1971). Biblical typology is also based on divine ordination. Paul highlights this principle when he says that Israel’s experiences in the wilderness are examples to serve as a warning to the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 10:11), and by extension to all Christians. Furthermore, in a typological relation, the antitype is characterized by completeness and finality and always transcends the type in some essential ways.

According to Osborne (2001) New Testament typological relationships comprise either comparison between two historical situations or personalities, or between a heavenly object and an earthly copy). Paul explicitly employs the Adam-Christ typology in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 (see discussions below). What are the roots of Paul’s Adam-Christ comparison? Many scholars link this typological connection to Paul’s Jewish root. A Jewish source is possible because Paul was a Diasporan Jew and had great knowledge about Jewish traditions. He was also a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5), and boasted of his Jewish background in several places (Rom. 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5). In Acts 22:3, Paul identifies himself as a Jew who was thoroughly trained in Jewish laws by Gamaliel. He also reveals his zeal for the Jewish religion. His zeal for Jewish religious traditions is seen in his approval for the stoning of Stephen and his persecution of the adherents of the then new faith, Christianity (Acts 7:57; 9:1ff) (Nsiah, 2022).

Both Dunn (1998) and VanMaaren (2013) trace Paul’s Adamic Christology to Genesis 1–3 and post-biblical Jewish understanding of the Adam figure. Dunn (1998) outlines some key features in Genesis 1–3 which are echoed in Pauline theology. First, he notes that the word *adam* is used as a generic reference to “humankind” or “human being” (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). The Genesis account presents an ambivalence between the use of *adam* for an individual person and *adam* for the entire human race. Paul, like the writer of Genesis, also displays this ambivalence, using *adam* both to represent a single person and humankind in general. He describes “man” as “the image and glory of God” and “woman/wife” as “the glory of the man/husband” (1 Cor. 11:7). Again, Paul’s teaching about the futility of creation in its subjection to corruption (Rom. 8:20-22) echoes Genesis 1–3 where *adam* who was made from *adamah* (ground; 2:7) to till the *adamah* (2:5-9) disobeys God and as part of the penalty for disobedience, the ground is cursed and *adam* would toil to find food until he returns to *adamah* (3:17-19). Based in this Dunn (1980, p.103) concludes that “the allusion to Adam as the one through whom sin and death entered the world is specific, and the treatment of the Adam-Christ parallel and contrast is thoroughly Jewish in character.”

In addition, the Adam-Christ typological tradition can be found in extra-biblical Jewish texts. For example, Davies (1955, p.38-39; see also Kreitzer 1989, p.59-60) links Paul’s identification of Christ as the second/last Adam to “the Jewish idea of the Messianic Age as contrasted with the present evil world.” In 4 Ezra 7:30, this Messianic Age is metaphorized as the first creation: “Then the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings...” (NRSV). This means that the Messianic Age will bring “the re-establishment of the original creation” (Kreitzer, 1989, p.60).

Furthermore, 1QS 4:23 and CD 3:20 envisage an Age to Come (the Messianic Age) which will be characterized by defeat of the present and corrupt powers and the restoration of creation to an ultimate pre-fall state (as it was in Genesis 1 and 2), bringing to mind the idea of Messiah as second Adam (Kreitzer 1989). Davies (1955, p.41) argues that the interpretation of the Messianic Age as a new creation leads to the inevitable “thought of Christ as the Second Adam...the counterpart of the Adam whose creation was described in Gen. 1 and 2.” Davies (1955), however, rejects any link between Paul’s

identification of Christ as the second Adam with a pre-Pauline Christian heritage. Dunn (1998) notes that by the time of Paul Adam's sin had become the dominant way of accounting for the human condition. The account of Jubilee 3:17-25, retelling the story of Adam's disobedience and expulsion is one of such examples. The following passage from 2 Esdras 7:118 also support a Jewish root of Paul's Adam-Christ typology: "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants" (NRSV). This text clearly teaches that Adam's sin affected the entire human race, a position Paul espoused in Romans 5:14b-19. (See discussion below)

### Adam-Christ typology

The last part of verse 14 describes Adam as "a type of the one who was to come" (that is, Christ). The term "type" is used in Pauline corpus to stand for "example", "pattern," and "model" (6:17; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:9), and carries an idea of similarity between the original form and the model (Hong, 2010, p.52). One wonders why Paul would say Adam is a type of Christ when there are many dissimilarities in themselves and their impacts on human history. A close look at the text shows that the typology consists in the fact that both Adam and Christ pass to the people they represent, what belonged to them (Adam and Christ). Before considering the text, let us examine how Paul's espouses his Adam-Christ typological relation in 1 Corinthians 15. This will provide a wider perspective on the subject matter.

The Adam-Christ typology occurs twice in 1 Corinthians 5. Firstly, Paul employs the typological relationship to argue for the certainty of the believer's resurrection based on the reality of Christ's resurrection (vv. 20-23). He refers to Christ as the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v.20), meaning Christ's resurrection is a guarantee for the resurrection of the dead. His reference to Christ as the second Adam is based on Christ's shared humanity (15:21). In this sense, human nature is considered as a crucial foundation for Christ's role as the second Adam. The result of Adam's sin—that is, death for all in Adam—and the result of Christ's obedience—that is, life for all in Christ—are argued out in verse 22 (Fee, 1987). The main point is that those in Adam will certainly die just as those in Christ will certainly resurrect and live eternally. Paul uses the Adam-Christ typology again in 15:44-49 to argue for the bodily resurrection from the dead. He argues contrasts the two figures by identifying the first Adam as the receiver of life ("a living being") and the second, as the giver of life ("a life-giving Spirit") (v. 45). The two figures are again contrasted on the basis that the first Adam was "from the dust of the earth" while the second Adam is "from heaven" (v.47).

The Adamic-Christological motif also find expression in Philippians 2:6-11 which focus on Jesus' humility and exaltation. Christ's prior state "in the form of God" and enjoying "equality with God" (v. 6) contrasts his state when "he emptied himself." His divine status is contrasted with the subsequent state of "assuming the form of a slave," "being born in human likeness," and "being found in human form" (v.7). This verse places Christ among humanity, aligning him with the collective image of Adam. Nevertheless, there is a potential contrast in verse 6, highlighting Christ's humility against Adam and Eve's presumptuous desire for illegitimate equality with God (Gen 3:5-6). The Adamic motif also serves to defend Paul's Gentile apostleship (2 Cor. 3:1-4:6) and explain believers' eschatological transformation (Phil. 3:7-21). Paul further espouses the solidarity between Jesus and believers—using the expression "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). Additionally, Paul blends the Adamic motif with the Wisdom motif, portraying Jesus as the image of God and the co-creator (Col. 1:15-20; cf. Heb. 1:3-4). While not presented systematically, Paul's use of the Adamic motif suggests an organized understanding of Jesus in relation to Adam. With this as background, I now turn to Romans 5:15 to continue discussing Paul's thought.

Beginning from Romans 12:15, Paul presents Christ as an antitype of Adam using an ancient rhetorical device called *synkrisis*, that is, the comparative juxtaposition of two figures which end up

praising one (in this case Christ) and blaming the other (Adam) (Talbert, 2002). In this antithetical parallelism, Paul presents Christ's work of redemption as superior in every respect to Adam's work of trespass. He achieves this using the formula "how much more" which alludes to the Christological implications of Jesus' own use of this expression (Matt. 6:30; 7:11). Whereas Adam's sin resulted in death, God's grace has brought the free gift of life for the many through Christ. Paul's use of "trespass" is probably meant to create a phonetic parallel with "free gift", that is, "God's gift" (Moo, 1996, p.333). One sees a clear imbalance in the "judicial result" of Adam's disobedience (leading to condemnation) and Christ's obedience (leading to righteousness and life). Adam's action brought life to an end whereas Christ's opened up new possibilities.

Here, Adamic Christology stems from Paul's deliberate comparison of the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ. The two Adamic figures relate uniquely to God as two different sons of God (Ryken, 2009). The first Adam was not born of human; instead, he was "created in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26-27), signifying that he "bore the likeness of God" as the son of God (Ryken, 2009, p.148). This first son of God fell into sin through the temptation of the serpent (Gen. 3:1-21) and this act corrupted the entire human race.

The word "many" when compared to its use in verse 12 ("the many") seems to signify "all people" ("death came to all people" and "the many died"). Gundry (2012, p.441) notes that the word "many" is a Semitic expression for "all". The idea is that what one person did (whether Adam or Christ) affected not only one person but many. Paul declares that Adam is a type of Christ but the resemblance does not hold in all respects because they differ both in their actions and in the effects of the acts (Lard, 2007).

Paul presents a second antithetical parallelism in verse 16, that is, Adam's act brought condemnation but Christ's brought righteousness. Here, he argues that Adam's reign of death is surpassed and overturned by the new reign of those receiving grace and righteousness in Christ (Jewett, 2007). The first contrast in this verse has to do with source. Out of the source of Adam's sin divine judgment came upon all humans. Amid many transgressions, God displayed his grace and gave his free gift of salvation to humanity. The second contrast sets the one trespass over against many trespasses: "the number of sins taken into account — the judicial verdict associated with Adam was based on one sin" but "the decree of justification that came through Christ came after an untold number of sins" (Moo, 1996, p.338).

Verse 17 takes up the thought of verse 14, the reign of death through one person's trespass and through that person and at the same time expounds the difference between the "condemnation" and the "justification" that began in verse 16. Paul gives another imbalance between Adam and Christ in terms of the two reigns. Here too, he argues from the lesser to the greater (on the superiority of the "Second Man"; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45-47). Contrary to death reigning through Adam's transgression, righteousness (that leads to acquittal and life) reigns in those who are in Christ (Rom. 5:17). Human sin was imputed on Christ (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:24); Christ's righteousness is imputed on believers (2 Cor. 5:21) (Ryrie, 1999). Life in the context of the present verse (Rom. 5:17) may refer to "life of the age to come" (see 2:7; 4:17; 5:10; 6:10, 22-23; 8:11, 13). Here again, "righteousness" is said to be a "gift", meaning Paul is referring to the initial experience of salvation in which a person is put into the right relation with God. It is righteousness that is connected with the impartation of spiritual life.

In verse 18, Paul returns to complete the comparison between Adam and Christ that he began in verse 12 but digressed—this is indicated by the expression "so therefore" which shows a logical sequence. He mentions again that Adam's trespass led everyone to condemnation but Christ's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all persons. The expression "act of righteousness" refers

theologically to the righteous act of Christ in satisfying all that the Law requires which humans failed to satisfy. “Justification” is how God declares those in Christ innocent.

Paul uses verse 19 to explain his statement in verse 18. He declares that just as one man’s disobedience made many sinners, so the obedience of one man makes many righteous. The word “trespass” describes the nature of Adam’s first act of sin, the one act that made the entirety of humanity sinful. It was the means through which or reason why they were constituted by another.

### **Adamic Christology and grace (vv. 20-21)**

Having ended the comparison between Adam and Christ, Paul comes back to the question of the position the law which he introduced in verses 14-15. He argues that “Law came in” (cf. Gal. 2:4”) “to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom. 5:20 RSV) (Moo, 1996, p.346), an argument which is better understood if read together with the next chapters (particularly ch. 7). Based on Paul’s earlier discussions (cf. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13), one could say that the reason why the law increases trespass is that the law throws light on trespass and at the same time triggers sinful desires into new activity (Knox, 1986). The Law, therefore, does not reverse Adam’s act but reveals the “significance” of Adam’s sin more clearly (Moo, 1996). Said differently, “the appearance of the Law made God’s will known [to all], and for the first time, people violated specific commandments of God’s law, just as Adam did. Thus, sin increased” (Matera, 2010, p.140).

The idea that there were many forbidden activities or many commandments by God right from the Fall which made sin attractive to humans and led to an increase in sin as a consequence, cannot be supported by Scripture (Moo, 1996). Neither is the view that an understanding of the Law makes a sinner realize his/her sin and feel condemned supported by the immediate context where “the increase of the trespass is juxtaposed with an increase in grace (v. 20b)” (Moo, 1996, p.347). Considering Paul’s argument in 5:14 (see also 4:15) I am inclined to conclude that the Law was given to Israel to increase the gravity of sin, be it Adam’s or anybody else’s (cf. Rom. 7:13; Gal. 3:19). Paul again opposes any Jewish tendency to think of obedience to the Law as a means to salvation. Yet, the Law remains (7:12). By showing the seriousness of sin (Rom. 7:13) without transforming the sinner, the Law reveals the doom of humanity apart from grace.

God then comes in and freely gives every repentant sinner (who expresses faith in Christ) the gracious gift of salvation, no more counting his/her sins against him/her. This is grace at work, not works of the law. The verb *hyperperisseuō* (used here) means: “an extraordinary degree, involving a considerable excess over what would be expected – ‘extreme, extremely, in an extreme degree, to a very great degree’” (Louw and Nida in Snyman 2016, p.5) or “to be over and above a certain number or measure” (Vincent 2009). Paul’s point is that God’s grace always stretches beyond human sin and does not have any elastic limit. Finally, he concludes that grace is supplied in superabundance so that it might rule like a king through righteousness, leading to eternal life which the believing sinner experiences through the atonement of Christ (v. 21).

### **Soteriological reflections**

The foregone discussions have implications for Christian soteriology, some of which are outlined briefly below. First of all, Paul’s presentation of Jesus in the Adamic motifs implies that every human being is either in Adam or in Christ. In fact, everyone is born in Adam and it takes faith to migrate into Christ. The plight of the fallen human condition was already presupposed before Paul in numerous texts of Hebrew Bible and Jewish *Pseudepigrapha* (e.g. Gen. 1-3; 2 Chron. 6:36; Job 15:14-16; Psa. 53:1-3; 4 Ezra 3:20-27; 7:116; 8:35). It is in line with this Jewish perspective that Paul espouses his pessimistic view of human nature from the Adam’s fall (Rom. 5:12-21). He presupposes humanity’s inherent

downward inclination and the consequent judgment under God's wrath. He does not explain the Edenic fall and curse, knowing that his audience had much information about it (cf. Rom 1 and 3). He explains the struggle of the Adamic humanity under the power of sin in Romans 7 and then explains how life in the Spirit opposes life in the flesh (Rom. 8). He then claims that Jesus as the second Adam reversed what the first Adam introduced in human history.

Paul's Adamic Christology underlines that a life outside Christ is life without salvation. In other words, a life without Christ is lifeless. This fact comes to bare when one considers John Henry Newman's use of the phrase "Second Adam" in the hymn "Praise to the Holiest in the height" which reads in part:

O loving wisdom of our God!  
When all was sin and shame,  
A second Adam to the fight  
And to the rescue came

The hymn clearly identifies the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God in salvific terms. Christ, the Second Adam, was sent into the world of sin to rescue humanity from the bondage of sin. The sin and shame that engulfed the world necessitated a war/fight (between Christ and Satan) in which the second Adam became victorious (cf. Col. 2:15). Torrance (2008, p.73), therefore, rightly observes that "Jesus Christ is the last Adam, the one who...brings to an end the bondage of Adam's sin, breaks its power and opens up a new and living way to God." Irenaeus is quoted to have said "The Son of God... was incarnate and made man; and then he summed up in himself the long line of the human race, procuring for us a comprehensive salvation, that we might recover in Christ Jesus what in Adam we had lost, namely the state of being in the image and likeness of God" (O'Collins, 2018, p.79).

Secondly, there is a strong connection between the righteousness of Christ and the life of his people just as there is between the sin of Adam and the death of his posterity living without Christ (Ridderbos, 1975). This has to do with two different modes of existence, the mode of existence of the old man and of the new man, which are determined by two different periods. As a result of the sin of one man (Adam) in the Garden of Eden, the entire human race sinned and died; similarly as a result of the act of righteousness of one man (Christ) on the cross, all believers are made righteous and offered eternal life (Gundry, 2012). This leads Schreiner (1998, p.275) to argue that "the parallel between Adam and Christ suggests that people are constituted as sinners or righteous not by virtue of their own sin or righteousness but by the sin of Adam or by the righteousness of Christ, respectively." This suggests that individuals are characterized as sinners or righteous not due to their personal actions or righteousness, but rather by the impact of Adam's sin or the righteousness of Christ, respectively. This perspective underscores the idea that humanity's moral standing is profoundly influenced by the actions of these archetypal figures rather than being solely determined by individual choices or behavior.

Thirdly, the idea of the imputation of Adam's guilt on his descendants raises the question of fairness. It seems God is not fair if he considers people guilty because of Adam's sin. On this, it must be noted that the primary basis of God's final judgement will be actual sins committed, not one's "share" in Adam's sin (cf. Rom. 2:6; Col. 3:25) (Grudem, 2000). Even though Paul speaks of the universality of sin due Adam's sin, he also details with the way this universal and corporate character of sin is individualized in the life of all human beings. Therefore, the corporate view of sin in no way reduces the responsibility of Adam's descendants. Each individual has to give account of his/her life to God (Rom. 14:12; cf. Gal. 6:5). In addition, to consider the imputation of Adam's guilt on us as unfair also requires one to also consider the imputation of Christ's righteousness on repentant sinners as unfair. The procedure involved is just the same: "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19 NIV). There is imputation of righteousness just as there is imputation of guilt. The guilt of Adam's sin affects every descendant of Adam. Thus, everyone born of Adam is guilty due to Adam's sin. Similarly, everyone born

of God/Christ is made righteous because of the righteousness of Christ. The new birth, however, does not come as “automatic” as physical birth. One has to accept God’s gracious gift of salvation by responding to the gospel call. This explains why not everyone may benefit from Christ’s atonement despite its sufficiency in saving all persons.

Fourthly, Adamic Christology emphasizes divine grace in salvation and hence contradicts any form of work-based salvation theology (that is the theological view that work contributes to one’s salvation). According to Adamic Christology, humanity is inherently sinful and incapable of achieving perfect righteousness through personal efforts alone. The theological study underlines that salvation come from God as a gracious gift. The more one sins the more the grace of God increases. Human works contribute nothing to the justification before God (Eph. 2:8-9). Work-based salvation theology can lead to legalism, where individuals become overly focused on adhering to rules and regulations rather than relying on God’s grace. It can result in a legalistic approach to religious practices and rituals. Instead of focusing on a genuine relationship with God, individuals may become preoccupied with performing rituals or adhering to specific rules as a means of salvation. Such tendency is evident in the following assertion by Adeboye (2003, p.44): “Anybody who is not paying his/her tithe is not going to heaven. Some people have taught you that if you do not pay your tithes, God will not give you blessings. This is true, but a little more serious, you do not pay your tithes, and you do not go to heaven.” Instead of relying of tithing, Sabbath observation, and sacrifices for salvation, Adamic Christology teaches that the redemptive work of Christ as the primary source of salvation.

## **Conclusion**

The comparisons between Adam and Christ highlights a corporate solidarity of all humankind in their vicarious humanity whereby Adam stands as the head of fallen humanity and Christ, the head of redeemed humanity. Thus, Adamic Christology focuses, not on individuality but on redemptive-historical and corporate dimension of humanity. The parallelism drawn between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 does not imply an equal status for these historical figures. Christ is portrayed as surpassing Adam, undoing the effects of Adamic sin and death definitively. The only similarity lies in the shared humanity of all humankind, with each person having a corporate identity linked to either Adam's or Christ's human nature. On the issue of sin, it has been established that sin is both existential and phenomenological reality. Existentially, sin is an inherent part of the human condition, shaping our very existence from birth. The experience of sin is not confined to abstract notions or theological discourse but is observable and tangible in the behaviors and choices of individuals. The Adamic Christology espoused in this paper implies that Christ is the answer to this existential and phenomenological reality. Through Christ people and communities are renewed ethically, demonstrated by improved divine-human, human-human and human environment relationships.

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