



## Introduction

We will examine how the early church understood typology and biblical interpretation.

*"In the Old Testament, the New is concealed; in the New the Old is revealed." Augustine*

## Early Church Fathers

### Letter of Barnabas

Was the earliest extrabiblical appeal for typology using historical allegory. This letter used allegory to argue that only Christians had a true understanding of the OT scriptures

- Barnabas 8:7, "Now to us indeed it is manifest that these things so befell for this reason, but to them they were dark, because they heard not the voice of the Lord."
- Barnabas 9:7, "For the scripture saith; *And Abraham circumcised of his household eighteen males and three hundred*. What then was the knowledge given unto him? Understand ye that He saith *the eighteen* first, and then after an interval *three hundred* In the eighteen 'I' stands for ten, 'H' for eight. Here thou hast JESUS (IHSOYS). And because the cross in the 'T' was to have grace, He saith also *three hundred*. So He revealeth Jesus in the two letters, and in the remaining one the cross."

### Irenaeus

Used typology to defend Christianity against the gnostics in his treatise "Against Heresy". One major flaw in his exegesis is his strong connection of recapitulation between Adam and Christ.

- "A type and image (of a thing) is sometimes different from the truth, according to its materiality and substance; but according to the habit and lineament it ought to keep a similitude, and to show by things present, things which are not present."

## Two Schools

### Catechetical School at Alexandria (~100 AD - 381 AD) (Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture ch. 1*)

Biblical interpretation Teachings

- Historical Allegorical method

Contributions to this method

- Greek allegorical interpretations influenced Jews and church Fathers of Alexandria
- Many Jewish sects claimed Messiah would, literally, fulfill the prophecies (a physical king that would conquer enemies)

Downfall

- Rulings of Council of Constantinople caused violent riots in Alexandria, which closed the school

Famous theologians

- Clement of Alexandria
- Philo
- Origen



**Exegetical School at Antioche (~200 AD - 553 AD)** *(Fairbairn, Typology of Scripture ch. 1)*

Biblical interpretation Teachings

- Literal historical method

Contributions to this method

- Contended with the Gnostics and their view that Christ was not physical

Downfall

- Heretics of this school anathematized by Council of Ephesus & 2nd Council of Constantinople which closed the school

Famous theologians

- John Chrysostom
- Eusebius
- Arius
- Nestorius

**Next 1000 years**

**Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)** *(Lusk, The Metaphor is the Message)*

Claimed that all interpretation must first be founded upon the historical literal sense.

- Four-fold sense of scripture
  - a. Literal
    1. typological
    2. moral
    3. eschatological
  - b. Spiritual

His view of infused grace diminished the role of the OT and pushed the true meaning of the Old into the New.

**Uses**

- **Consider our presuppositions when approaching the Word of God so that we do not impose our own ideas upon the text**
- **Though God's word has been mishandled, He has given us the means to learn from those who came before us.**
- **God's word has unity in both Testaments and real historical purpose**