

Since the early centuries heretics have tried to reject the OT and its teachings. However, this would refute Christianity, since Jesus Christ always refers to the OT.

Certain scholars often obscure the meaning of Scripture by focusing on the historical situation and saying that OT teachings were not permanent but meant to be changed according to the circumstances. It is true that it is sometimes difficult to separate the permanent moral teachings from those which can change. Christ knew this and that is why on the Sermon on the Mount he tells us

*Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.*

We hear from our Lord that he has not come to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfill it. It is not possible to hold to the NT and reject the OT. The NT tells us that we are to find Christ in the OT, and the Church Fathers also reinforce this. As Lawrence Feingold beautifully puts it

“Hundreds of prophecies of the Messiah can be found in the Old Testament, spanning 2,000 years. Thus, the greatest motive of credibility for the Old Testament is its prophecies of Christ, and the great motive of credibility in Christ is that His coming was foretold in so many marvelous ways. Again, we see that the Old and New Testament witness forms an indestructible harmony, such that each reinforces the other.”

Christ is present throughout all of the OT, but in a hidden way, which is not always clear. For example in Numbers 20 God tells Moses to strike the rock once and then speak to it. The rock foreshadows Christ who was sacrificed once and for all on the Cross. Now the priests only have to ‘speak’ the words of consecration and the sacrifice of Christ will be present at the Divine Liturgy.

Dr Hahn talks about Dei Verbum and how there are four fundamental principles in the OT, all pointing to Christ. These are

1. Divine promises
2. Covenants
3. Prophecy
4. Typology

We hear how the passover lamb, the firstborn son, the exodus, the feast of unleavened bread are deeply connected through typology to Christ and the Eucharist. We sometimes forget the

incredible power of typology, something which was used extensively during the teaching of the catechumens in the early Church.

We next hear about the divine promises which God makes. In Genesis 3:15 God promises enmity between the Woman and Satan, her seed and his seed. Of course this is typology for the enmity between Christ, who is the new Adam, and Satan as well as the enmity between the Theotokos, who is the new Eve, and Satan. It is noteworthy that seed is usually related to men, so in Genesis we already have a prefiguration of the virgin birth of Christ.

In Genesis 9:26 we have the oracle of Noah, after the flood, when he curses Canaan, the son of Ham and blesses Shem. Shem means 'name' in Hebrew and semite/shemite means jew. In Genesis 12:2 we have the call of Abraham, and the promise of a great nation. Christ of course, is descended from Shem, through Abraham. There is also a connection with the tower of Babel, which was constructed by descendants of Ham

*They said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its tops in the heavens, and let us make a name [shem] for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4).*

We see how powerful typology is, and how important it is to understand the OT. So let us not be like the early heretics who rejected the OT, but embrace it, study it, and learn from it as it is written by God for our instruction. As St Paul says in Romans 15:4

*For whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.*