

P E T E R L A N G

No One Better

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
DR. NORMAN H. YOUNG

EDITED BY KAYLE B. DE WAAL
AND ROBERT K. MCIVER

In honour of the work and legacy of Norman H. Young, this compilation of essays covers a range of topics on the Old Testament, New Testament, mission, sociology of religion, identity, and church history. The Old Testament essays include typological readings of Esther, the goodness of God, and the centrality of the cross in understanding all of Scripture. The New Testament essays reflect research in the Gospel of Matthew, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the book of Revelation, offering new insight into the interpretation of the Apocalypse. Additional essays provide focus on mission, identity, and sociology of religion. This cutting-edge collection breaks fresh ground in research and analysis, bringing the latest scholarship to bear on each chosen topic.

Kayle B. de Waal is Head of Avondale Seminary and Senior Lecturer in New Testament at Avondale College of Higher Education in Cooranbong, Australia. He is the author of three books and numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed articles.

Robert K. McIver is Associate Professor at Avondale Seminary at Avondale College of Higher Education in Cooranbong, Australia. He is the author of six books and numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed articles.

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Norman H. Young: Introduction to His Festschrift

ROBERT K. MCIVER
Avondale Seminary

Norman Hugh Young, PhD (Norm to his friends, colleagues and students) worked for most of his professional career at a small private higher educational institution called Avondale College. His era at Avondale was characterized by an ability to provide an introduction to a speaker that was half roast, half brilliant oratory, and half information that the speaker would much rather not have known. I myself remember Norm introducing me to a group of incoming theology students, and feeling somewhat glumly that not only would I have been glad that some of that information had not been shared with new students, but that after such a brilliant introduction that whatever I had to say would sound very pedestrian. Shortly afterwards I mentioned to the then College President, Geoffrey Madigan, that when I am speaking away from College my fervent hope is that I should be introduced by somebody other than Norm. Geoff responded, “That’s nothing. What you should fear is to be introduced by Don Hansen.” Others, of course, would add Geoff to the list of those who they would prefer not to be introduced by! These are three of the larger-than-life characters whose acquaintance I made, first as a student at Avondale, and then as a lecturer. Nor was the fine art of the introduction confined to just these three! So it is with great pleasure (and some trepidation) that I take up the task of introducing Norm, and of dedicating this book to him in celebration of his long career of academic excellence.

Norm grew up in Western Australia and was working as a fitter and turner when he started attending a series of meetings conducted by Austin Cook, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist. Intrigued and convinced by what he heard, Norm was baptised into the Adventist Church, and within a short time, arrived at Avondale College to train to become a Seventh-day Adventist

minister. One of his fellow students remembers that for the first couple of years at Avondale Norm did not stand out as a student, but that changed in his third and fourth years, when he excelled.¹ Upon graduation, Norm worked for a while in Southern New South Wales, and then took himself off to Manchester in the United Kingdom, where he first completed a Bachelor of Divinity (Hons) and then a PhD. His doctoral supervisor was F. F. Bruce, an evangelical academic working within the University system in England, and who was already supervising the doctorate of Norm's former teacher, Desmond Ford. While based in England Norm met and married his wife Elisabeth. When Norm and Liz moved back to Australia, their marriage was blessed with the addition of two children, Paul and Michelle.

Norm has many fine personal qualities that made him ideally suited to the academic environment. He is meticulous in attention to detail, and relentlessly pursues evidence to support or disprove a position without fear or favour. He has always been a loyal member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, although this did not prevent him from applying his searching gaze to distinctive aspects of Adventist theology and biblical understanding. His PhD topic, "The Impact of the Day of Atonement on New Testament Thought," was no doubt chosen in part because the Adventist understanding of the Day of Atonement in association with Daniel 8:14 did not sit comfortably with what appeared to be the perspective in regard to the Day of Atonement in the New Testament book of Hebrews.

During Norm's career he was swept up in one controversy, and actively sought engagement with another. The first of these was triggered by a presentation given by his former teacher and colleague, Des Ford. In October 1979, Des had given a talk at Pacific Union College in Angwin California, on the topic: "The Investigative Judgment: Theological Milestone or Historical Necessity?" For some reason, this presentation caught the imagination of many individuals within the Church. This was a time before email and social media. But fax and post were efficient enough that transcripts and recordings of the talk were circulated very widely. For example, I remember visiting a Canberra church in 1980 and meeting with a friend who had transcripts of the talk available quite shortly afterwards, and even at the time I thought that it was remarkable that such information from a talk half way across the globe was so readily available. As a result of this world-wide interest Des was given time by Church leaders to prepare a manuscript stating his position. Norm Young was one of the lecturers from Avondale who joined other Adventist academics and administrators from around the world at Glacier View in Colorado in order to consider the manuscript.²

This was a challenging time for the Adventist church as a whole with many Adventist ministers departing Church employment during this period.³ There was great suspicion about the loyalty of those who wished to engage in academic dialogue about the issues raised at Glacier View. Reflecting back on this period, Norm said that he often had to take the role of “Her Majesty’s loyal opposition,” a role respected in a country like Australia which governed itself according to the Westminster system it had inherited from the United Kingdom. Throughout this difficult period, Norm handled himself in a manner that maintained his friendship with Des Ford, his loyalty to the Church, and his clear-eyed reading of the book of Hebrews in the light of all that was known about it in academia.⁴ Indeed, the book of Hebrews remained a topic that Norm returned to on several occasions in his academic writing.⁵

The controversy in which Norm sought involvement was that of the imprisonment and then eventual release of Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton. Lindy was the wife of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Michael Chamberlain. On 17 August 1980, Lindy and Michael had been camping with their family at Ayers Rock (now usually called Uluru) when their youngest child, baby Azaria, disappeared. Lindy claimed Azaria was taken by a dingo, but in 1982 she was accused and convicted of Azaria’s murder. The initial disappearance of the baby, Lindy’s trial and conviction, and subsequent exoneration generated extraordinary public interest in Australia, something captured in the book *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain*, that Norm Young published in 1989 through Federation Press. This book was the product of Norm’s careful research, and to this day, remains one of the more well-thought-through accounts of the extraordinary events that took place at that time.

It was my privilege to have Norm as a teacher in 1975, and 1980–81, and to work with him for a period of 17 years before he retired in July 2004 (he had begun teaching at Avondale in mid-1973). Between them Norm and Laurence Turner ensured that the Faculty minutes that I presented as committee secretary were accurate in facts and grammar, and he enlivened committees with his dry wit and commitment to excellence tempered with a pastoral care for students. Also significant for me was the fact that Norm, along with Arthur Ferch and Arthur Patrick, had blazed a path that meant that it was natural for me as a young academic working at Avondale to aspire to publishing in the prestigious journals of my discipline, a not inconsiderable achievement working in an institution that for the majority of Norm’s career was structured primarily as a teaching-only institution.⁶ Norm also set a high standard of personal integrity and spirituality.

Turning now to a few thoughts about this book. All credit must go to Kayle de Waal for recruiting not only myself as fellow-editor, but all of the contributors of this book. Thanks goes also to those who refereed the chapters of this book (with the exception of this introduction, all of the chapters in this book have been refereed). Norm, we have all written to celebrate the academic and personal contribution that you have made to our lives. We wish you God's richest blessings!

Notes

1. By some quirk of memory, while I remember the comment confidently enough to put it in writing, I have zero memory of who said it—my apologies to that individual for not citing their name.
2. A manuscript subsequently published as Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment* (Casselberry, FL: Euangelion Press, 1980).
3. In his doctoral dissertation, "Leaving the Adventist Ministry: A Study of the Social Process of Exit," Thesis (Ph.D.) La Trobe University, 1995, Peter H. Ballis discovered that the events surrounding the eventual dismissal of Des Ford from church employment was a catalyst for many of those who left church employment, even if the specific theological issues were not the key driver of their decisions.
4. Norm has succinctly summed up his understanding of what happened at Glacier View in the chapter, "1844 and all that: Contemporary Adventist Discussion on the Sanctuary Doctrine," in Robert K. McIver and Ray C. W. Roennfeldt, eds., *Meaning for the New Millennium: The Christian Faith from an Adventist Perspective* (Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 2000), 286–290.
5. Norman H. Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," *NTS* 27 (1981) 198–210; *idem*, "Where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf (Hebrews 6:20)," *AUSS* 39 (2001): 165–173; *idem*, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19–20 Revisited," *AUSS* 40 (2002): 61–68.
6. Avondale is currently seeking University Status, and now publication is part of the expectations of every lecturer, and research is built into their workload. This was not true for most of Norm's time as an employee of Avondale.



Finding Christ in a Godless Text: The Book of Esther and Christian Typology

LAURENCE A. TURNER
Newbold College

The Hebrew text of Esther makes no explicit reference to the God of Israel, nor indeed to any of the gods of the Persian Empire. Also absent is any mention of religious practices such as prayer, circumcision or Sabbath observance, even when, in some instances, they would seem easier to include than to exclude. For example, in Esther fasting is not accompanied by prayer as it habitually is elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. Neh 1:4; Ps 35:14), nor with any expressly stated intention of interceding with God.¹ Such features have troubled many readers who have pondered the book's place in the biblical canon.² Arising in part from such concerns, Esther's godless text has been accommodated to a theistic reading by the use of many strategies.³

My particular focus here is to investigate how Christian interpreters have read the text from an avowedly typological perspective so as to enable an explicitly theistic, or even specifically Christological, reading of Esther. It is a pleasure to offer this study to honour my friend and former colleague Norman Young, with whom I have had many stimulating conversations over the years on the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

The following definition of typology sets out the classic position.

In typology the interpreter finds a correspondence in one or more respects between a person, event, or thing in the Old Testament and a person, event or thing closer to or contemporaneous with a New Testament writer. It is this *correspondence* that determines the meaning in the Old Testament narrative that is stressed by a later speaker or writer. ... It is God who causes earlier individuals, groups, experiences, institutions, etc., to embody characteristics which later he will cause to reappear.⁴

Authorial intention on the part of the Old Testament writer is not required.⁵ Rather, the reader's competencies are all important. As long as the Old Testament is 'read with reverence by those whose eyes have been opened by New Testament truth', then type and antitype will 'answer one to the other'.⁶

My emphasis will be on the broad reception history of Esther, including academic and more popular non-scholarly expositions of the book, and the range of their frequently mutually exclusive typological readings, rather than on addressing the hermeneutical question of how typology should be conducted, if at all.⁷ Nevertheless, some clear implications for this larger issue will naturally arise. It is worth noting at the outset that discussion on the methodology of typology has been underway for a very long time. In the middle of the nineteenth-century Patrick Fairbairn's classic treatment of the topic had as its aim 'to rescue the typology of Scripture, if possible, from the arbitrariness and uncertainty which has hitherto enveloped it'.⁸ That he was less than fully successful can be gauged by the fact that well over a century later Richard Davidson's major work on typology⁹ set out to address a more rigorous methodology for the identification and even definition of Old Testament types.¹⁰

The first Christian commentary on Esther, by Rabanus Maurus, did not appear until the ninth century. Whatever this late appearance might tell us about the status of Esther in Christian circles,¹¹ the volume certainly demonstrates that by this time typology was a well-established hermeneutic within the church for dealing with the apparent discontinuities between the two testaments of the Christian canon. Thus, for Rabanus Maurus, Queen Esther was a type not only of the Virgin Mary but also of the Christian church. Additionally, King Ahasuerus was a prefiguration of Christ. There are some obvious tensions in these correlations. For example, the sexual promiscuity of the king in sleeping with scores of young virgins as a means of deciding which of them would be the next queen does not sit comfortably with the ethical principles of Christ's kingdom (e.g. Matt 5:27–28; John 8:11). In the same way, Esther's prowess in bed which pleased the king does not at first sight suggest the virginity of Mary. But the practice of typology does not require a perfect fit in every detail, for every human being has his or her limitations, as Rabanus Maurus acknowledged.¹² Thus he was able to see Mordecai as a prefiguration of the blessings Christ gave to humanity on the basis that just as Mordecai was highly exalted by the king so too did Christ give the greatest gift of salvation.¹³ And similarly, Queen Vashti was a type of the Jews in the Christian dispensation, for she refused to come into the presence of the king just as the Jews refused to acknowledge Christ for who he was.¹⁴

Many of these same typological correspondences can be traced through the centuries. However, only in recent times has the character of Esther been

seen as the type foreshadowing the great antitype Christ himself. This might not be due entirely to the perceived difficulty of a woman being the type for the Son of God. For example, Tkacz argues that other women from the Old Testament and Apocrypha are used by New Testament authors to serve as types of Christ.¹⁵ What is more, there are many possible elements which might fruitfully have been developed by typologists (such as Esther's willingness to face death itself on behalf of her people). But the fact is that, with one exception,¹⁶ for much of the history of Christian engagement with the text, these opportunities were ignored.

One reason for this might be that Mordecai as a type of Christ overshadowed all other contenders. After all, the means of execution erected by Haman (a type of Satan if ever there was one), was first prepared for *him*. Yet, another issue concerning Haman might have wielded even more influence. Thornton points out that the Septuagint version of the book presents Haman as having been crucified, a position taken also by Josephus and some of the Latin fathers. In the boisterous celebration of Purim, in mixed Jewish-Christian communities, the holding aloft of an effigy of a crucified Haman would be taken as a provocation by Christians. At the same time it would be a stumbling block to Christian witness amongst Jews for whom the most prominent crucified character would be the vilified would-be exterminator of Judaism.¹⁷ It is possible that this situation explains, in part, the relative neglect of the book in many early Christian communities. The full typological potential of the book, including that of Esther as a type of Christ, was not realised because the book itself was marginal.

However, the twentieth-century saw a number of authors explore the typological potential of Esther in general, and the Esther/Christ correlation in particular. Wilhelm Vischer's consistently strong Christological focus found numerous examples of the Christian gospel prefigured in the narrative. Mordecai's challenge and Esther's eventual willingness to risk her life for her people (4:13–14), suggests the words of Christ in Luke 9:24, 'For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.' Her subsequent words, 'If I perish, I perish' (4:16), resonates with the willing death of Christ. Her elevation to be queen and the victory of the Jews are associated with the resurrection of Christ and his second coming respectively. Perhaps most surprisingly, Haman being impaled on a tree is the type of which Christ's crucifixion is the antitype, though Haman's death is only a provisional solution ('eine vorläufige Lösung').¹⁸

Vischer's examples and interpretations appear to many to be arbitrary, dealing with isolated details rather than with the overall thrust of the narrative.¹⁹ Specifically from a Christian perspective, Anderson, writing within

the sphere of the Biblical Theology movement, criticises Vischer for reading so christologically that he requires not merely to assume the unity of Scripture, but more specifically its uniformity. His hermeneutic denies the differences between the old and new covenants and collapses them into one. From a Jewish perspective, Vischer the Christian has been likened to Haman the Agagite, in that Vischer's approach makes Esther theologically palatable only by recommending the demise of its author's faith.²⁰ While Haman's strategy was genocide, Vischer's demands the Jewish acceptance of the salvific power of the cross of Christ.

Beckett is a recent example of a detailed typological reading of the book. He approaches the text using a classical typological hermeneutic.

First, the Old Testament types—prophet, word, priest, sacrifice, king, servant, judge, and others—are all signs or symbols, icons or windows through which we may look to the fullness made visible (as recorded for us in the gospels) in Jesus.

Second, each, and every type is fulfilled in Jesus, completed in his incarnation, death and resurrection. It is in this way that we may “see Jesus” (Jn. 12:21) in the whole Bible.

Third, the nature of this revelation is that it is cumulative. As it unfolds we are able to build up the complete picture made known to us in all its fullness in Jesus (Heb. 1).²¹

For him, Esther is not only a type of Christ,²² but also in becoming queen she is the successful typological fulfilment of the failure of King Saul.²³ Unlike some other Christian expositors, he sees Esther rather than Mordecai as fulfilling the typological role of prophet-priest mediator in her diplomatic moves for her people before Ahasuerus. This is because Beckett sees Mordecai as a negative character, a type of our sinful human nature. The consequences of his pride and vanity require Esther's mediation, just as Christ mediates with the Father on behalf of sinful humans.²⁴ In this respect Mordecai is similar to Haman, who represents all the fallenness of the first Adam, while Esther prefigures the salvific second Adam.²⁵ Such clear typological correspondences, allied to an acknowledgement of the hiddenness of God in the book, and its typological significance, allow Beckett to see in the narrative of Esther a broad foreshadowing of the Christian gospel:

Here is a God who, rather than answering the cries of his people by intervening on their behalf, accomplishes his purpose invisibly and answers their prayers for deliverance by entering into their reality himself, by going down into the disaster of their history with them, and then and only then raising them to life with him.²⁶

The book, therefore, marks a significant shift away from an ‘interventionist’ model of God to one in which he refuses to manifest his power overtly in the world—a move which culminates in Christ’s refusal to come down from the cross.²⁷ Beyond this general foreshadowing, however, Beckett claims that the activity of Esther herself exemplifies the fullness of both the humanity *and* the divinity of Christ,²⁸ and does so in some detail. Christ’s humanity is shown in Esther’s display of wisdom in the dangerous situation in which she and her people find themselves. His divinity shines through the submissiveness she shows to the king.²⁹

For Beckett, the collective effect of these connections between Esther and Christ points beyond the text and our understanding of God and provides a new context for understanding not only the contentious issue of ‘female priesthood, but far more importantly for the role, place, value, equality and status of women in God’s universal, restored kingdom’.³⁰

Building on these insights of Beckett, Wells has recently also reflected on the implications for our understanding of the incarnation. While he concedes that Esther is not ‘like Jesus ontologically’, this stricture does not prevent him from positing that ‘the sequence of chapters in the book of Esther discloses an interesting illumination of Christ’s incarnation’.³¹ In Christian theology the consecutive sequence within the human-divine dilemma is creation—fall—covenant—incarnation. Wells takes ‘the fall’ to occur when Haman’s decree creates the crisis for the Jews, by which time Esther’s elevation as queen (i.e. ‘the incarnation’), has already occurred. This reverses the normal sequence of fall followed by incarnation. Wells concludes, ‘in other words, there would have been an incarnation had there been no fall’.³²

The hermeneutics of Beckett and Wells require not only a general relationship between type and antitype, but a detailed correspondence in fairly advanced details of Christian theology. Thus, the same objections can be levelled at their suggestions as have been brought against Vischer’s. While all typological readings are retrospective, this particular species displays an over-enthusiastic Christian appropriation. For example, the characteristics of Esther’s behaviour mentioned above, taken as representing Christ’s humanity and divinity are surely too broad in themselves, and too frequently found in diverse Old Testament texts, to be applied confidently to this specific aspect of Christian theology. The implications for the general status of women and their place in Christian ministry are, of course, no stronger than the debatable foundation formed by the typological argument. Such arguments in favour of more inclusive Christian ministry are certainly arguable on other grounds, but opponents are unlikely to be persuaded by typology.³³

Wechsler takes matters a step further. Acknowledging the work of Gerleman, he accepts thematic and structural relationships between Esther and Exodus, in particular between the feasts of Purim and Passover.³⁴ Beyond this, however, he argues for detailed typological correspondences between Esther's fast and the central New Testament event of the atoning death of Christ. To establish his argument he engages in a detailed chronological study of the book in order to establish the precise dates covered by Esther's three-day fast. Concluding that it started on 14 Nisan and ended before sunset on 16 Nisan, he is then in a position to establish parallels between her acts and those of Christ at the time of his crucifixion, occurring at Passover.

Wechsler argues for six sets of *shadow/substance* correspondences. 1. Esther's fast lasted three days and started on 14 Nisan; Christ's 'period of death' started on 14 Nisan and was of three days duration. 2. Fasting is associated with 'humiliation' and 'death', thus Esther's fast places her in a 'state of death'. 3. Christ's death was a period of 'humiliation' and 'affliction'. Esther's period of 'affliction' ended on 16 Nisan; as did Christ's. 4. Esther concluded her fast and before going to the king was 'clothed in royalty'; after his 'period of death' but before appearing before God the Father, Christ was resurrected 'in glory'. 5. Esther came to the king 'on the basis of her fast' and was accepted by him; Christ came into the presence of the Father 'on the basis of His atoning sacrifice' and was accepted.³⁵

These correspondences allow Wechsler to arrive at his final and most complex *shadow/substance* pairing.

Shadow: The result of Esther's acceptance by the king was the salvation of her people, of which salvation Gentiles also took part (Esth. 8:17) through initiation (by physical circumcision) into the community of faith. *Substance:* The result of Jesus' acceptance by the Father is the salvation of His people (i.e. 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' Matt. 15:24), that is, Jews who are circumcised not only physically but also spiritually through faith in Him (Rom. 2:28–29). Gentiles may also take part in this salvation through initiation (by spiritual circumcision, Col. 2:11) into the (remnant) community of faith (Acts 11:18; Gal. 3:8).³⁶

Utilising a similar hermeneutic, Rossow suggests that Esther concretises Paul's assertion that 'all things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom 8:28).³⁷ This provides the theological framework within which to process typologically the book's raw material. Thus the king's question, 'What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?' (6:6), contains the generic terms 'man' and 'king', which stand for 'us' and 'God' respectively. The king's question alludes to a potential action which is a type of the salvific grace available to those in need of salvation. God accepts sinners by no merit on their own part, honouring them by clothing them in the royal garb of