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0521581532 - Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture

Frances M. Young

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This book challenges standard accounts of early Christian exegesis of the Bible. Professor Young sets the interpretation of the Bible in the context of the Graeco-Roman world – the dissemination of books and learning, the way texts were received and read, the function of literature in shaping not only a culture but a moral universe. For the earliest Christians, the adoption of the Jewish scriptures constituted a supersessionary claim in relation to Hellenism as well as Judaism. Yet the debt owed to the practice of exegesis in the grammatical and rhetorical schools, especially as Christian scholarship developed in the third century, was of overriding significance. Methods were philological and deductive, and the usual analysis according to ‘literal’, ‘typological’ and ‘allegorical’ is inadequate to describe questions of reference and issues of religious language. The biblical texts shaped a ‘totalising discourse’ which by the fifth century was giving identity, morality and meaning to a new Christian culture.

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FRANCES M. YOUNG

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University of Birmingham*



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*To Maurice Wiles, a great encourager,  
with affection and thanks*

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Generalisation is the death of art.  
It's in the details where God resides.

(These words, attributed to Arthur Miller, playwright,  
appeared as a 'Saying of the Week' in *The Observer*, 9 April 1995.)

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## *Preface*

The Speaker's Lectures in Biblical Studies in the University of Oxford for 1992 and 1993 provided the opportunity to draft most of this book. I was assured that I could use the lectures to try something out, and that is what I did. I trust that this version reflects a more mature, and indeed coherent, stage in my thinking: in Oxford, I contested the whole idea of 'typology' in 1992, only to restore it in 1993!

Although the original drafts provided the basis for what appears here, none has remained unchanged, not least because the integration of the two sets of lectures has effected an almost total transformation of the original order. In several cases, there has been substantial rewriting, with the inclusion of additional material; in some, the omission of repetitive recapping, which was necessary for a lecture audience; and, in most, a recasting of link paragraphs. Furthermore, one previously published paper has been incorporated in slightly revised form, others plundered at various stages.

I am grateful to Professor Ernest Nicholson and those who elected me to the Speaker's Lectureship for giving me the stimulus to develop this work. Others, for whom I have a great respect, did me the honour of faithfully coming to the lectures and offering encouragement; to these too I would express my thanks, especially Professor John Barton, Professor Christopher Rowland and Dr Sebastian Brock. I hope this version will not disappoint them, or Professor Maurice Wiles, my Cambridge *Doktorvater* and career-long mentor. To him I dedicate this volume.

## *Abbreviations*

<i>ACW</i>	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> . New York: Newman Press
addit. vol.	additional volume
<i>Adv. haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>Adv. marc.</i>	<i>Adversus Marcionem</i>
<i>ANCL</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</i> , Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Apost. const.</i>	<i>Apostolic constitutions</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> . Manchester: John Rylands Library
<i>C. Arianos</i>	<i>Contra Arianos</i>
<i>Cat. orat.</i>	<i>Catechetical oration(s)</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum</i> . Turnhout: Brepols
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i> . Turnhout: Brepols
<i>C. Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>C. Eunom.</i>	<i>Contra Eunomium</i>
<i>I/II Clem.</i>	<i>I/II Clement</i>
<i>Comm.</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
<i>Comm. in Ps.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Psalms</i>
<i>Comm. Jn.</i>	<i>Commentary on John</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentary on Matthew</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> . Louvain: Secretariat to CSCO
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> . Vienna: Tempsky
<i>CWS</i>	<i>The Classics of Western Spirituality</i> . New York: Paulist Press
<i>De doct. Christ.</i>	<i>De doctrina Christiana</i>

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<i>Dem. Evang.</i>	<i>Demonstratio evangelica</i>
<i>De princ.</i>	<i>De principiis</i>
<i>De Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
<i>Ep. Barn.</i>	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>
ET	English translation
FC	<i>Fathers of the Church</i> . Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller</i> . Berlin: The Berlin Academy
HE	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
<i>Hom. Cor.</i>	<i>Homilies on the Corinthian Letters</i>
<i>Hom. in Matt.</i>	<i>Homilies on Matthew's Gospel</i>
<i>Hom. Jer.</i>	<i>Homilies on Jeremiah</i>
<i>Inst. orat.</i>	<i>Institutio oratoria</i>
Jaeger	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> . Ed. W. Jaeger et al., Leiden: Brill
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> . Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press
LCC	<i>Library of Christian Classics</i> . London: SCM Press
LCL	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i> . London: William Heinemann, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>Nov. T.</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i> . Leiden: Brill
NPNF	<i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . 1st and 2nd Series. Oxford and London: Parker & Co. Reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
NS	New Series
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i> . SNTS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
<i>Orat.</i>	<i>Oration</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>Praep. evang.</i>	<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
prol.	prologue
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> . Paris: Editions du Cerf
serm.	sermo(nes)
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i> . Papers presented at the Oxford

*List of abbreviations*

	Patristic Conferences. Publishers various: formerly TU, latterly Leuven: Peeters
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromateis</i>
TPI	Trinity Press International
TS	<i>Texts and Studies</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> . Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co.