

## Memorial for Franklin W. Young (1915–2010)

Franklin Woodrow Young lived a long, fruitful, and good life. Born in 1915, he was named for then President Woodrow Wilson. As it would turn out, he was also to share his first name with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. What a nice coincidence! Many of us can testify that we have never known a better friend or colleague than Frank Young. I certainly have not, and will miss him sorely. As a scholar and teacher Frank was unfailingly helpful to colleagues and students, especially the many graduate students he taught and advised. At his passing Jean Young described to me what a consistently good person he had been throughout his life, as well as an unfailingly generous and helpful husband and father.

As scholar and teacher Frank loved to study ancient texts, biblical or patristic, and ponder their meaning. He was a careful and unhurried exegete, not prone to jump to conclusions. The author of 1 John wrote: "(2:28) And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence (*parresia*) and not be put to shame before him at his coming (*parousia*). (29) If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him. (3:1) See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (2) Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. (3) And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure." Frank Young was a disciple who abode in Christ, and therefore in God.

This text is about the eschatological future. It is about God, the appearance of God in Jesus, his coming again. It is also about us as God's children. Finally, I propose, it is about Franklin Woodrow Young.

Obviously, this word of 1 John looks forward. It enjoins us as the readers or hearers to abide in Jesus, so that when he is revealed, or appears, we may have courage (*parresia*) and not be put to shame at his coming (*parousia*). This is a deliberate and significant play on words. Both confidence (*parresia*) and the appearance (*parousia*) of Jesus are important for John.

So then, all who have this hope purify themselves as he, "that one" (*ekeinos*) is pure. By "that one" John almost certainly now means Jesus. "Everyone who has that hope"--that includes me, hopefully you, certainly Frank Young--purifies himself. "To purify" here obviously has a moral, rather than a ritual, sense. Frank Young was always purifying himself in this sense. As best I can recall, Frank and I never actually discussed Spike Lee. But Frank was always striving to do the right thing, that is, to purify himself. In that sense Frank himself was the fulfillment of this biblical word.

Let me conclude with some exegetical and hermeneutical pondering, which I think Frank would have approved. For whom was John writing here? John did not write this letter to all Christians, not even for all Christians of his day, that is, at the end of the first century. John wrote for a group of Jesus' followers, a community (*koinonia*) of disciples, probably in Asia Minor, possibly in or near Ephesus. When Christians take it to be addressed to themselves, as we habitually do, we expand the horizon of its purpose and meaning. Here we expand that horizon further and in a different direction: that is, we understand it as a word addressed to us, to people who knew, admired, and loved Frank Young--and as a word about Frank himself.

D. Moody Smith, March 27, 2012