

Tribute to Anthony R. Cross

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On 22 July 2021, our colleague Anthony R. Cross passed away. His contributions to the academy were numerous. Anthony's work walked the lines between history, theology, and biblical studies. He was as comfortable dealing with issues in New Testament studies as he was covering the history of British Baptists. His work on baptism and sacramentalism is perhaps his most well-known contribution. His *Baptism and the Baptists* was a chief part of a renewed interest among Baptists in baptism specifically and the sacraments more generally. The volumes of *Baptist Sacramentalism*, co-edited with Philip Thompson, remain standard works in the field.

Anthony's academic interests were varied, but a common theme runs through his work, and that is a desire to marshal the findings of the academy for the use of the church at large. This is seen most especially in his more recent work on the ministry, most notably in his book *Useful Learning*. Whether it was his willingness to go against the grain of Baptist life because he was convinced that baptism had a sacramental character or his lengthy footnotes giving minute details regarding the points he made in the main text, Anthony did not write simply to put words on paper. He wrote so that he might contribute to the life of the church.

Sitting at Anthony's kitchen table several years ago, I gained some insight into how he understood his work. He spoke of 'the Conversation'. In the academy and church, no one will ever have the final word. Rather, each person makes their own contribution to a conversation that began before them and will continue long after them. It may be a small contribution, or it may take the conversation in an entirely new direction, but the point of academic work is to make a positive addition to the Conversation.

Anthony's contributions to the Conversation are numerous, varied, and valuable. The academy and church are richer for having heard his voice. Indeed, not having his voice leaves a gap in the conversation that will not easily be filled.

Of course, Anthony was far more than his bibliography, as lengthy as it may be. Indeed, he was not first and foremost an academic. He was first and foremost a husband to Jackie and a father to Laura and Katja. He loved his family with an admirable intensity, and his pride in each one was obvious to anyone who heard him speak of them.

His wit could be biting, though it was never cruel, and even when one was on the receiving end of it, one never felt made fun of. He was self-effacing; although he took his work seriously, he did not take himself too seriously. He was funny, willing to be silly to get a laugh out of someone. His own laugh, when he really got going, was infectious.

I cannot finish this tribute to Anthony without mentioning his generosity. Many things cross my mind when I think of Anthony, but his generosity is very near to the top of the list. After his death, I heard story after story of Anthony's generosity with his time, talents, books, resources, and whatever else he might give to help people who needed it. I knew that he had been generous with me, but I learned that I was not unique. He was that way with everyone.

Thank you, my friend. *Requiescat in pace.*