

## Robert Brian Crotty

Robert Brian Crotty was born in Melbourne in 1937. His early years were spent in that city, where he attended Christian Brothers College East Melbourne. At the age of 17, after completing his schooling he decided to become a priest, and from 1955 to 1962 studied at a Roman Catholic seminary in Adelaide, completing a Bachelor of Theology, awarded in 1963 by the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

He travelled to Rome to continue his studies, completing a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in 1964 and a Bachelor of Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in 1965.

He continued his studies in Jerusalem and Rome before returning to Australia in 1967, where he lectured in Old Testament Studies and Biblical Languages at the Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne.

Following his resignation from the priesthood, from 1972 until 1974 he was a lecturer in Old Testament Studies and Classical Hebrew, United Faculty of Theology, University of Melbourne, and also Tutor in Ancient History. While lecturing he deepened his study of history, completing a Master of Arts by research in the History Department of the University of Melbourne in 1974.

In 1975 he moved to South Australia and began his long association with the University of South Australia and its antecedent institutions, taking up the position of Lecturer in Religion Studies at the Salisbury College of Advanced Education.

Robert Crotty would certainly have been well qualified to lecture in religion studies when he took up his position, but he embarked on further study completing the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Education, at the University of Adelaide in 1980.

The topic of his doctoral dissertation was 'A study of paradigmatic systems of religious knowledge and associated religious social groups with special reference to theological education in the Roman Catholic Church'.

With his previous degrees totalling two bachelor degrees, in Theology and Biblical Studies, three masters degrees, in History, Theology and Biblical Studies, and a postgraduate diploma in Archaeology, there can have been few people better placed to have written on systems of religious knowledge and theological education.

After completing his Ph D he rose through the academic ranks of the University of South Australia becoming Professor of Religion and Education in 1996.

Along the way Robert managed the difficult task of combining teaching and research with academic leadership and management.

His leadership roles in the University have included a period as Head of the History and Religion Studies Department, Associate Dean of Research in the Faculty of Education, Dean of Research Degrees in the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences – in which capacity I had the pleasure of being his manager – and following a retirement which proved to be as unconvincing as Dame Nellie Melba's, he returned to the University to take up the positions of Dean of Research Education and then Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Division of Business.

His current position is Director of the Ethics Centre of South Australia, a position to which he is eminently well suited by education, experience and character.

Robert's teaching covered a wide range of topics in religion and religious education. He was particularly sought after as a supervisor of research theses, supervising 20 or so masters and doctoral candidates.

His research focused – and focuses – on two areas. First, the pluriform nature of early Christian communities. His work gave a name and a voice to many of the early Christian groups, other than those who became the dominant group, with whose history we were familiar as if it was the only history of early Christianity. Second, the possibility of a religious education which investigates the nature of religious experience in general rather than instructs the student in the values and doctrines of one particular tradition of religion. His work in these fields has been published in more than half a dozen sole authored research books, from expositions of the gospel in the early seventies to *Beyond the Jesus Question. Confronting the Historical Jesus Problem*, in 2003. In addition he has been a contributing author to many more books on similar topics, as well as publishing almost forty articles and 20 book chapters.

His research was funded by a steady stream of grants from the Australian Research Council from the early 1990s until his first retirement in 2001, while his interests and output have led to positions as Visiting Fellow at both the Centre for Jewish/Christian Relations, at the University of Cambridge, and at the British School of Archaeology in Athens, and Visiting Scholar at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and the Oxford Centre for Post-Graduate Hebrew Studies, at the University of Oxford.

Professor Crotty has been a fine scholar - a productive researcher and a skilled teacher – as well as an excellent colleague. He is respected for his knowledge, openness, earnestness and integrity.

Chancellor, I present Robert Brian Crotty for the title of Professor Emeritus