

Response by Frank Moore Cross to the Presentation of an 80th Birthday Volume of Essays

To Wally Aufrecht, Jo Ann Hackett, and all who have assembled at this meeting on Palaeographical Studies in the Ancient Near East,¹ I should like to say that you cannot imagine the depth of my disappointment at not being with you in person this afternoon. At 80, one's health sometimes takes over—in my case, a back damaged by a series of episodes of folly, notably, falling out of a tree when a limb I was sawing suddenly broke. At the moment, I can be vertical or horizontal in posture, but anything in between causes spasms of exquisite pain.

I have no idea what Professors Aufrecht and Hackett may have said to you about me. I guess, however, that for the most part their remarks have been favorable. If so, I thank them heartily. Professor Aufrecht is one of Canada's extraordinary richness of distinguished scholars in this field, more *per capita* than in any other colony of England. And although Professor Hackett began her scholarly journey at Indiana, she properly came to Harvard where, among other things, she has won its prize for teaching and become its second-best epigraphist.

I have seen the material in the volume. I am very proud of it. The title *Eye for Form* sounds mildly titillating. The subject matter, while exciting, does not quite live up to the suggestive title.

I must express heartfelt thanks to all of you here, and especially to those who are former students of mine in epigraphy, a number now my colleagues, of whom I am inordinately proud. I am also indebted to colleagues abroad who labor in our esoteric discipline and to other academic friends who have contributed to my Festschrift. It will be a volume I shall turn to often in my ripening years when I am low and need a lift.

1. Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 2001.