

Review of Kelly, Michael A CSsR and Mark O' Brien OP (eds). *Wisdom for Life*. (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2005).

This book is a *Festschrift* in honour of Campion Murray OFM, published to mark his retirement from the faculty of Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne. Contributions were invited from faculty members within the colleges of YTU and the invitation was extended to include other scholars associated with YTU. The result is a fine collection of writings from scholars from a variety of theological disciplines.

Part One consists of entries by Biblical scholars, all of whom address contemporary issues in their exegetical or thematic pieces. Part Two is a collection from scholars whose interest lies in history and tradition and whose essays deal with such varied topics as biblical passages, art works and the saintly life. Part Three mainly addresses teaching issues in the Church and the Academy, but moves further afield into cultural issues of spirituality and Aboriginal Dreaming.

Since a detailed review of all the essays is not feasible here, and since my own interests lie specifically in Biblical exegesis, I will focus in particular on Part One, but will offer some briefer comments on entries in Parts Two and Three.

After an introductory section by Cormac Nagle, "Campion Murray, OFM: An Appreciation", Mary Reaburn opens the biblical section with an exegetical piece entitled, "A Journey into the Centre of the Psalter". Rather than dealing with the shape of the Psalter as a whole, Reaburn focuses on Psalms 73-83 as the centre, and she identifies the theme of hope as the heart of the message of the Psalms. In a detailed vocabulary study, she shows the significance of the word "flock", and its related words pasturing/ feeding/ shepherding and shepherd. From this study Reaburn explores the image of God as Shepherd of Israel and its expression of future hope based in the memory of Israel as being God's flock in the past. The image of shepherd and flock encourages hope by connecting with the prophetic traditions of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Zechariah. Reaburn's entry is a careful exegetical piece which offers a convincing and satisfying theology that will be useful to all students of this section of the psalms.

Angelo O'Hagan entices the reader to follow his tracks in his exploration of 1 Esdras entitled "Who is the Superpower? 1 [3] Esdras 3-4". O'Hagan deals with the text as "a witty piece of wisdom rhetoric" (p. 14). The witty piece revolves around the riddle set at the banquet of King Darius where the question is posed to the satrapies present, "What thing is strongest"? The answers given are wine, the king, women and finally the correct answer, truth, delivered by Zerubbabel. O'Hagan considers whether the fourth answer is an addition, but an addition that fits the wisdom convention of "the three and the four". The outcome of the wisdom contest is that King Darius is led to justice towards the captive people of Judea. O'Hagan refers the reader to other writings of the same period where truth and justice are interrelated. The artistry of O'Hagan's language makes this chapter a delight to read.

In his entry, "Odd Bedfellows in a Book: The Satan and Job" Mark O' Brien shows how there are parallels in the questions, the accusations, the proposals and the outcomes of the book. In O'Brien's treatment of the proposals parallels, he revisits the

vexed problem of the translation of *barak* with its possible meanings of bless or curse, and suggests that the author may be utilizing the ambiguity of the word to challenge the reader to re-assess one's understanding of cherished and long-standing theological concepts (p. 29). O'Brien gives a timely reminder that, while the modern reader may find God's treatment of Job indefensible, the book is a debate about theologies of God.

John Hill's entry, "The Threat from the North –Reflections on a Theme Both Ancient and Modern" explores the significance of the north in the book of Jeremiah and offers reflections on how non-Indigenous Australia has regarded the north over the last two hundred years. Hill urges the reader to think of the north as "symbolic geography". He argues that since the threat of evil out of the north is also made against Babylon, Egypt and the Philistines as well as Judah, the implications are that "north" is a code word which indicates divine origin. In a hermeneutical development of his argument, he turns to contemporary Australia and surveys the relationships in history between Australia and countries to the north. Since the north was often seen as a place of threat in the national consciousness of Australia, Hill argues that this bias needs to be acknowledged or fear and prejudice will control the debate. As in the book of Jeremiah, the north may also be seen as a place related to the divine and our fear may be transformed. Hill's entry convinces with its erudite familiarity with the book of Jeremiah and his appreciation of the current political climate of Australia.

The Title of Merryl Blair's entry, "Beautiful in its Time: An Optimist Reads Qoheleth" speaks for itself. Blair refers to the divisions amongst biblical scholars on whether Qoheleth's approach to life is one of pessimism or joy, and comes out on the side of joy. Blair takes her hermeneutical cue from Champion Murray's insight that the key to understanding Qoheleth is 3:11, where Qoheleth claims that God has made everything beautiful in its time, and that wisdom lies in discerning the beauty of the time. I find this entry useful to the extent that I have already placed it on my students' reading list.

The Second part of the book, "Finding Wisdom in History and Tradition", contains entries on such varied characters as Joshua (John Mansford Prior), Paul of Tarsus (Christopher Monaghan), Margaret of Antioch (Claire Renkin) and Thérèse of Lisieux (Aloysius Rego). Prior's entry on Joshua provides some useful reflection questions for discussion, raising important issues about militancy in the bible, and how those questions must be confronted in this age of terrorism and economic and political oppression. Prior also raises questions of the place of women in this book where male soldiers are the chief actors. Monaghan's treatment of Paul explores the way the theme of the passion is interwoven into the fabric of the Pauline or Deutero-Pauline letters. Monaghan also looks at how the theme relates to other key Pauline concepts, including the Pauline theology of creation, with its implications for the environment. It is rewarding to find a sometimes neglected aspect of Paul's writings being given attention here. Renkin's look at Margaret of Antioch gives fascinating insights into the world of art and the way in which the masculine facial expressions and physical stance of Margaret identify her as a woman of valour in the context of her times. Rego studies the life of Thérèse of Lisieux from the point of view of wisdom embodied and discovered through relation with the person of Jesus Christ.

The Third and final part of the book deals with “Finding Wisdom in the Academy and Church Today” and contains entries on “Knowledge and Wisdom” (Michael A Kelly), “The Life of Wisdom” (Tony Kelly), “Wisdom and Folly: Preaching Christ Crucified” (Norman Young), “Whatever Happened to Doctrine? Ninian Smart’s Schema of Seven Dimensions of Religion and the ‘Spirituality Revolution’ in the West” (William M. Johnston) and, finally, “Aboriginal Dreaming as a Text” (John Hilary Martin). Michael A Kelly’s entry is a useful one for educators, dealing as it does with the historical variations in education in the cathedral and monastic schools, or the pursuit of *sapientia* or *scientia*, as Kelly puts it, (P. 130) and the inheritance this has bequeathed to contemporary Protestant and Catholic theological education. Tony Kelly explicitly takes wisdom as the topic of his entry and identifies three kinds, namely, wisdom as one of the gifts of the Spirit, philosophical wisdom and theological wisdom, and he deals with each of these. Kelly begins with Pope John Paul’s *Fides et Ratio* and its reference to Aquinas’ theology of the role of the Spirit in wisdom. Kelly refers to the concept of “connaturality” as a way of understanding how a sense for the divine mysteries comes about. In Norman Young’s entry, “Wisdom and Folly: Preaching Christ Crucified”, he offers a theological reflection on what is involved if ongoing proclamation of Christ crucified is to be authentic. In “Whatever Happened to Doctrine”, William Johnston offers a nuanced look at the phenomenological approach of Ninian Smart to the study of religion and explores its relation to the “Spirituality Revolution” in the West. Finally, John Hilary Martin, in a sensitive and skilled way, explores similarities or otherwise between the Biblical historical narrative and Aboriginal Dreaming and shows how text is constituted by the oral narratives that are formed from the deeper meaning of the Aboriginal Dreaming.

This book is a collection of offerings by some of Australia’s most scholarly theological community and is a worthy tribute to Campion Murray. I do take issue with a couple of aspects of the book. First, the term “wisdom” is interpreted so widely as to lack specific meaning. Sometimes the term is interpreted from a particular Biblical perspective and refers to Biblical wisdom literature such as Job and Qoheleth, or wisdom sayings such as those to be found in 1 Esdras, but at other times the word is used in such an overly-general sense as to be interchangeable with many other terms. This approach is indicated in the book’s very broad title, *Wisdom for Life*. Other entrants do, however, specifically address their understanding of the word, notable among these being Tony Kelly and Aloysius Rego. The outcome of this lack of precision in terminology is that any scholarly entry on any subject might have found its way here. This reflection leads me to my second qualm. The book is a discrete collection of very varied topics of theology, religion or spirituality. However, it is clearly separated into disparate sections and readers who are pressed for time can simply read the section pertinent to their interests.

These quibbles aside, the quality of the entries is high. I have already incorporated the biblical entries into my reference lists for students who will find it very readable, and for my own pleasure and enlightenment I have returned to many of the other entries more than once. Rather than recommending the book to a particular readership, I will suggest that is a rewarding book for anyone with a liberal interest in all matters theological.

