

limits the quality characteristics to eight. Interestingly, all but one of Macchia's characteristics can be found in Schwarz, indicating that different researchers are arriving at the same basic qualities for healthy churches. Macchia's research would have been more objective if his quality characteristics had arisen out of his research, as Schwarz's did, rather than from untested experience followed by research to discover whether they were valid. However, even though his methodology is flawed and his research was limited to New England, the results are confirmed by Schwarz's more extensive research on all six continents.

The strength of this work lies in the descriptions of each of the quality characteristics. It will help a church discover and better understand what is needed in each of the areas. Unlike Schwarz, Macchia does not offer a tool for a church to evaluate itself, but he does provide excellent discussion guides for each of the characteristics, which a church can use to enhance its self-understanding.

While Macchia does not connect church health with church growth as Schwarz does, he makes an excellent addition to the list of quality characteristics: stewardship and generosity. This is hinted at in Schwarz's "functional structures," but the expansion that Macchia gives is commendable.

If Macchia had published his findings before Schwarz, his research would have received a better evaluation, but since it follows of Schwarz's major contribution, it must be judged in that light. As such, it falls short in several areas: the scope of the research, the extensiveness of the research, the correlation with church growth, and the failure to provide a church with an instrument to evaluate its health. Its strength lies in its confirmation of the principles of church health through study of New England churches, which confirms that church health needs to be an important component of American church life. Like Schwarz, Macchia is committed to a "principle" approach to church health rather than the more traditional "model" approach. This is commendable in that it helps make the book applicable to any church situation. It is well worth reading by anyone who is seriously interested in pursuing church health as a basis for church growth. As such, it is a welcome addition to the literature rapidly developing in this field.

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RUSSELL BURRILL

Marsden, George M. *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 142 pp. Paperback, \$11.95.

A decade ago George Marsden had established himself as one of the foremost historians of American Fundamentalism. With the publication of *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*, it was obvious that a major shift in the focus of his attention had taken place. *Soul* is a historical study of the declining influence of Protestantism in several of the mainline universities—the subtitle tells the story. In the concluding chapter Marsden goes beyond historical analysis and makes two positive proposals. The first is that Christian intellectual perspectives should be accorded the same opportunity for presentation and discussion as other views. "Ultimately," he reasons, "there seems no intellectually valid reason to exclude religiously based perspectives that have strong academic credentials" (431). And he goes on to

suggest that some such should actually prove to be the starting point for fruitful intellectual inquiry. Secondly, he appeals for recognition of the particular contributions made by religiously-sponsored colleges and universities, which, among other things, have demonstrated that a Christian worldview can provide perspectives that enrich the life of the mind.

The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship takes up the issue regarding the Christian intellectual life in the academy where *Soul* left off, and develops the themes adumbrated in the proposals made in the final chapter of that study. It commences with a charge:

Contemporary university culture is hollow at its core. Not only does it lack a spiritual center, but it is also without any real alternative . . . (and is) unable to produce a compelling basis for preferring one set of principles over another" (3). This stinging charge is followed by a statement of the thesis of the study: "The proposal is that mainstream American higher education should be more open to explicit discussion of the relationship of religious faith to learning. Scholars who have religious faith should be reflecting on the intellectual life. . . . The incoherence of mainstream higher education prompts us to reexamine the assumptions on which modern education has been built and to consider constructive alternatives. . . . I am advocating the opening of the academic mainstream to scholarship that relates one's belief in God to what else one thinks about. Keeping within our intellectual horizons a being who is great enough to create us and the universe, after all, ought to change our perspective (3, 4).

The central purpose of the study is clearly stated, "The main point of the present volume . . . is to provide some positive guidelines as to what I have in mind when I urge that Christian perspective . . . be accepted as legitimate in the mainstream of the academy" (8). It is addressed to two main audiences—to scholars who are puzzled about the proposal that religious concepts of reality should be accepted as worthy of serious consideration in the intellectual life of the academy, and to Christian scholars who accept Marsden's thesis but want to know more about possible ways of responding to the challenge.

Marsden discusses the constraints and arguments that have contributed to the quiescent stance of Christians in academia and goes on to suggest ways in which a Christian perspective can make a difference. The broadest, he suggests, is that a Christian worldview can contribute to the establishment of agendas that merit attention. It provides a basis for moral judgments and challenges much that is taken for granted, including naturalistic reductionism and concepts of the autonomous transcendent self. By way of example, he discusses the implications of the Christian doctrines of creation, of the incarnation, and of spiritual dimensions of reality and of the human condition for intellectual understandings of reality.

Having made overtures in the direction of possible fruitful avenues of intellectual pursuit in the integration of faith and learning, Marsden turns to the practical matter of fostering academic communities which can provide stimulation and encouragement in the search for themes and avenues of expression in this enterprise. A brief appendix, "Getting Specific," brings the study to a close. In this

he lists publications which may be helpful and gives examples of academics, in a variety of fields, who have successfully employed Christian perspectives to add breadth and depth to their work.

Much has been written in recent years about the failure of the educational establishment to generate an intellectual center which defines meaning and purpose and moral value. *Outrageous* differs from most of these in that having sharply voiced this concern, it gets down to the business of providing suggestions, both intellectual and practical, for a positive approach. Marsden seeks a way forward by promoting understanding of why things have come to be as they are, and thus also promotes approaches that are sensitive and appropriate to the contemporary ethos.

As indicated, the book is addressed to Christian scholars in mainline academia and to faculties in church-sponsored institutions who are confronted by pressures, both practical and intellectual, as well as internal and external, to conform to the dominant academic ethos. The influence of this study may very well be greatest in the encouragement it provides to the latter. Marsden has rendered the Christian academic community an enormous service, and this study should be a highly useful resource for faculty discussion, colloquiums on the integration of faith and learning, and the conscious maintenance of a Christian worldview. It should be in all university libraries as well as those of denominational education advisory boards.

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RUSSELL STAPLES

Murphy, Roland E., and Elizabeth Huwiler. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, New International Bible Commentary, vol. 12. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. xv + 312 pp. Paperback, \$11.95.

This volume consists of two independent commentaries: Murphy on Proverbs and Huwiler on Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. Thus there is some redundancy. For example, both authors introduce Wisdom literature in general before introducing their particular wisdom texts. Both describe in detail the many contradictions in their texts. The reader might wish they had read each other on this topic, for much of the "problem" of contradictions in Ecclesiastes evaporates when seen in light of the rhetorical method of Proverbs.

These commentaries are intended to bring the biblical text in touch with modern lives. However, while the target audience reads the Bible for religious content, Murphy does not seem completely comfortable writing a commentary for someone "who is also religiously inclined" (7). He is not quite prepared to assist readers who take more than an academic interest in the text. Though Murphy's comments are often insightful and helpful, they also require more of the lay reader than most other works in this series. These commentaries are not extensively annotated, so the scholar is advised to look elsewhere for detailed analysis and references.

While scholarly analysis is kept as simple as possible, it is in the more academic portions of the commentary that Murphy is in his element. Murphy understands the biblical Wisdom texts and their traditions to be postexilic, even though many of the parallels in surrounding cultures are far older. There are undiscussed assumptions behind this conclusion. Murphy is probably skeptical about the survival of both