

to allay any misgivings a historically informed reader might have, especially when sections of *TheoPsych* could be interpreted as being somewhat assertive (e.g., Various Sciences of “Religion,” pp. 126–35). Greater lengths should be taken to avoid any impression that this is the work of a missionary from the land of facts sent to enlighten the backward residents of faith.

Finally, there is the influence of the current paradigm. The most popular option is evolutionary psychology. This approach is noted in the book; the promise of interesting connections being forged with biology, cultural studies, and anthropology is properly identified as clearly worthy of continued exploration. However, this is the third attempt to tie the science of human behavior to biological evolution, the first two (eugenics and sociobiology) having left a rather embarrassing legacy.⁷ Evolutionary psychology has several major problems, and they are not particularly helped when partnered with the evolution of culture.⁸

In summary, this book would better serve collaborative efforts if the picture presented within were not so nice and tidy. In the long run, brutally transparent portrayals will be needed from all collaborators if there is to be hope for building cross-disciplinary theoretical structures that bring us closer to truth. Despite these criticisms, *TheoPsych* is unquestionably an impressive and important offering, one that is well positioned to advance the essential work of cultivating interdisciplinary syntheses. Now, if only more folk in the social sciences would care to understand what theology has to offer them.

Notes

¹For example, Adam S. Hodge et al., “Experiencing Grace: A Review of the Empirical Literature,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 17, no. 3 (2022): 375–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1858943>. Also, see K. I. Pargament and J. J. Exline, *Working with Spiritual Struggles in Psychotherapy: From Research to Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 2021), <https://www.guilford.com/books/Working-with-Spiritual-Struggles-in-Psychotherapy/Pargament-Exline/9781462524310/contents>.

²J. P. Ioannidis, “Why most published research findings are false,” *PLoS Medicine* 2, no. 8 (2005): e124, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0020124>. Erratum in *PLoS Medicine* 19, no. 8 (2022): e1004085.

³Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁴Sigmund Freud, “Some Elementary Lessons in Psychoanalysis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1940).

⁵Raymond B. Cattell, *Beyondism: Religion from Science* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987).

⁶Granville Stanley Hall, *Jesus, the Christ in the Light of Psychology* (New York: Doubleday, 1917).

⁷Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022).

⁸Edwin E. Gantt and Richard N. Williams, “The Triumph of the Will: Evolutionary Psychology and the Conceptual Incoherence of Enhancement,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 62, no. 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167819899009>.

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POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE: Foundations, Concepts, and Applications by Charles Hackney. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021. 344 pages, index. Paperback; \$45.00. ISBN: 9780830828708.

There have been quite a few volumes over the last several years that have attempted to make sense of the relationship between the burgeoning field of positive psychology and the theology and practice of Christianity. Charles Hackney begins this volume by drawing upon the popular definition of positive psychology provided by Shelly Gable and Jonathan Haidt, “The study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing and optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions.” In so doing, Hackney sets the scene for a comprehensive and lively examination of how this booming field of psychology interacts with Christian faith.

Christians have been quite rightly interested in the field of positive psychology for numerous reasons. There is arguably a sense of common purpose between Christian aspirations and those of positive psychology. Both to some extent claim, or at least aim, to produce a flourishing and abundant experience of living, and thereby share an interest in outlining the kind of life that is likely to produce this sort of fruit. Over the last two decades, positive psychology has made its presence felt in almost every sphere of practice: education, business, health, politics, and spirituality, to name a few. Any field of scholarship that claims such a wide and all-encompassing remit will no doubt be of interest to people of faith, partly as a significant cultural phenomenon worthy of attention, but also perhaps as a potentially controversial competitor and usurper of faith.

Hence, while most treatments in the recent upsurge in Christian writing about positive psychology are largely (dare I say) positive, there is also a critical engagement with the field. There is both enthusiasm and disquiet in the secondary literature. It is a cause for celebration that many of the leading scientific contributors in areas such as humility, forgiveness, gratitude, hope, wisdom, and so on, identify themselves as Christians. Nonetheless,

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there is some nervousness that this naturalistic and pragmatic approach to well-being and virtue could steer some away from genuine faith in the divine. Christian scholars are interested, but hesitant – as if they give two cheers for positive psychology.

Needless to say, Hackney covers all of the above clearly and accurately in the first section of this book. While there may have been several excellent books covering this area previously, in my view, this volume has some unique selling points. Firstly, it is a comprehensive introduction to the critical dialogue between positive psychology and Christian thought; Hackney does a very good job of covering many of the major concepts in contemporary positive psychology. Secondly, the reference list alone is worth the ticket price. It takes up over sixty pages and nearly a fifth of the entire volume. For those who want to explore the rich interaction between positive psychology and Christianity further and in more depth, the reference list will be a treasure trove.

Furthermore, the book is well organized, starting with the big picture in theology, philosophy, and psychology, then turning toward more-precise treatments of positive experience, cognition, personality, and relationships. It concludes with two vital areas of interest for positive psychology: its applications in sports education, the workplace, and religion; and an absolutely vital final set of chapters on the second wave of positive psychology (which has given more attention to the important dialectic between the positive and negative in life, a dialectic which prevents positive psychology simply being viewed as the study of positive thinking or a fatuous happy-ology). I particularly liked the title that Hackney offers to this final section: “the positive in the negative and the negative in the positive.” It captures the spirit of the maturing field of positive psychology and makes for some more-nuanced treatments of the questions of sin and eschatology, the absence of which often bother Christians who consider the contribution that positive psychology can make to the life of faith.

It is also worth mentioning the style in which the book is written. It is easy to read, written in simple language, without dumbing down the technical theological and psychological nomenclature necessary for a scholarly treatment of the area. Hackney is not afraid to insert anecdotes and vignettes to enliven and illustrate the treatment of certain areas, and at various points demonstrates a reflexive stance by addressing the reader in the first person. Nor is he averse to a dose of witty humor; his subheading “Repent for the End (of this chapter) is Near” made me laugh out loud.

Overall this makes *Positive Psychology in Christian Perspective* an ideal entry-level text for the first-time

reader. Previous volumes that have aimed to offer a relatively comprehensive analysis of the positive psychology-Christianity dialogue have been mainly multi-author editions or technical volumes written by and for theologians, philosophers, or psychologists. Hackney, however, seems to have pulled off a text that is both comprehensive and accessible. It is unlikely that advanced scholars interested in the field of positive psychology will read the book from cover to cover, but they will still no doubt benefit from dipping into the many pertinent insights that Hackney offers.

I assume that Hackney’s principal audience comprises Christian students, undergraduates and postgraduates, all studying positive psychology for the first time, or wanting a Christian perspective on positive psychology. The increasing number of MAPP (Masters in Applied Positive Psychology) programs internationally often attract Christian practitioners, and Hackney has composed a very good accompanying text for helping them make sense of the alignment of their faith with their studies. For me personally, as a psychology professor working in a secular institution, it is unlikely to be the kind of volume that would appear on a reading list, but I already have in mind several students to whom I will be recommending it when I teach positive psychology in the spring semester. The book would be a perfect recommendation for pastors who are interested or concerned about positive psychology and would like to know more. Perhaps there is no better endorsement than that.

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TECHNOLOGY

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TECHNĒ: Christian Visions of Technology by Gerald Hiestand and Todd A. Wilson, eds. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022. 236 pages. Hardcover; \$49.00. ISBN: 9781666704228.

The product of their 2019 conference of the Center for Pastor Theologians, *Technē* consists of fourteen contributed essays that seek to articulate important elements of the relationship between Christianity and contemporary technology.

The book is organized into two sections: Theological Reflections on Technology, and Technological Reflections on Theology. However, while one might expect a section of articles by theologians reflecting on technology, and then a section of articles by engineers and scientists reflecting on the implications of theology