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T. J. Chamberlain and C. A. Hall. *Realized Religion: Research on the Relationship between Religion and Health*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation, 2000. Pp. 239. \$15.95 (Paper).

[1] This book presents and discusses research studies on the relationship of "realized religion" to one's well-being, whether one's mental health, physical health, overall attitude toward life, or marital satisfaction. In providing this synthesis of research studies for the reader the book appeals to both the lay and the health professional reader.

[2] The authors, a psychologist and a theologian, provide a solid foundation for the book by beginning with a definition of "realized religion", addressing the historical tension between religion and science, and defining the various types of prayer. The goal of this book is to answer the question - does being religious enhance one's health? They have met that goal with an affirmative "yes." As a nursing professional reviewing this book, I look for two important features in all studies of health. First, the study should be put in the context of the current health care delivery system where all treatment and intervention modalities are being scrutinized from an outcome. Second, the study should adopt an evidence-based research perspective. The substance of this book meets both criteria and can be used by patients, health professionals and policymakers to improve the health of different population aggregates in this country. Also, from a health professional's viewpoint, an asset of the authors approach is their frequent assessment of the methodological soundness of research studies they consider.

[3] In the first section of the book the authors define "realized religion" as present when "the essential elements of religion (faith and trust) are made operational by being brought into "concrete existence" (5). The book is strengthened because the authors discussed the historical tension between medicine and science and also the difficulty in conducting research studies in this area of health and religion that meet the rigorous empirical standards of traditional biological science. The authors forthrightly affirm that their analysis is being written from a Christian perspective of religion and cites studies of Christian populations in this country. They also acknowledge the claim that religion is harmful to one's health. Their

introduction of the above issues in the early section of the book is positive and demonstrates their critical awareness and analysis of these issues.

[4] For the health professional reading this book, there are five major assets. First, extensive citation at the end of each chapter allows the reader to consult the original research studies. Second, as noted earlier, health professionals are expected to practice in an environment of outcome-based research treatment and intervention practices. This book, with its extensive citation of research studies, helps both the current health practitioner and health professional educator in this regard. Third, the authors consistently critique the research studies to facilitate the reader's assessment of current research. Fourth, the authors readily acknowledge the need for more research in many areas where the studies are inconclusive. Fifth, in the last chapter the authors raise many excellent research questions that need to be pursued. For the lay person reading this book, the assets rest partly as described above. Further, the book is engaging to read and is understandable to a lay person. As individuals living in a society which is very focused on preventive health practices, all individuals who read this book will be reflective of evaluating the religious side of their lives to enhance their health status and life satisfaction. This book may well have the effect of furthering personal religious changes in the lives of its readers. Finally, the book poses challenging questions to students of society and religion about the interface of "realized religion" on the aggregate health status of a society.

[6] One limitation in the chapter reviewing the relationship between realized religion and mental health status was the limited discussion on recent research on the biochemical causation of mental illness. This omission detracted from this chapter's substantive content and knowledge for the reader.

[7] Another limitation of the book is its focus on the Christian religion and on research studies of Christian populations in this country. The authors acknowledge this bias of the book and do raise research questions about needed study of other religions and health status relationships. This is particularly important, both for the increased religious heterogeneity in populations of this country and for global health status.

[8] In the past decade Parish Nursing has increased interest by health systems to be involved in congregational health ministries. The synthesis of data presented in these chapters can be of assistance to those individuals also. This book can be of help to current and future patients, to health providers, to scholars of society and religion and to policymakers.

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