Chapter 1
Introduction: Positive Psychology of Religion Across Traditions and Beliefs

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Religion has a checkered history within the discipline of psychology. Freud (1929/2005) theorized religion to be an infantile search for bliss and attempts to resolve the Oedipal complex, a form of neurosis and a reaction to feelings of helplessness. More recently, research has noted the negative aspects of religiosity, including the evidence pointing to the positive correlation between religiosity and prejudice (e.g., Hunsburger & Wilfrid, 1995). And in extreme cases, religion has been blamed for negative outcomes, such as withholding of medical care for religious reasons and abuse related to attempts to rid a child of evil, as well as abuse perpetrated by those in religious authority (Bottoms, Shaver, Goodman, & Qin, 1995). On the other hand, however, research has also noted the pervasive appeal of religion. Using a population weighed estimate, Diener, Tay, and Myers (2011) estimated that 68 % of the world's population (about 4.6 billion) believe religion to be an important part of their lives. Indeed, its nearly universal existence and powerful appeal has led some to theorize that humans might be driven by a "faith instinct" (Wade, 2010).

Then, might there be some benefit that can help explain such pervasive appeal? Group evolutionary theory posits that while religion may require and enforce self-sacrifice on the part of the individual, it provides benefits to the social order (e.g., Wilson, 2003; Wright, 2009). For example, Wilson theorized that while forgiveness requires sacrifice on part of the individual, it has benefits for the group, including social unity and intergroup harmony. Others, however, have noted the growing evidence on the benefits of religion to the individual and not just to the social group. While the group evolutionary view might consider forgiveness to be self-sacrificial, research evidence has indicated that forgiveness has considerable benefits to the individual: Outcomes have included fewer self-reported illnesses, decreased

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depression, and greater well-being (Lawler et al., 2005; Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008).

Indeed, as psychology as a discipline has increased its focus on the positive, salutary, and subjective and psychological well-being of individuals and societies, psychology of religion, too, has increased its focus on the investigation of the ways in which religion benefits individuals. Thus, this volume brings together the wealth of findings in the intersection of positive psychology and the psychology of religion. Chapters are devoted to the ways in which different religions promote psychological well-being. Religions include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, indigenous religions of North America, and Hinduism. Of course, these religions are not an exhaustive list religions of the world; but rather, they offer a sampling of different religions practiced today, including many of the major religions in the world, as well as different types of religions, such as monotheistic as well as polytheistic religions. The second half of this volume is devoted to specific aspects of religious practice, such as meditation and yoga, as well as possible process variables that mediate the relation between religiosity and well-being, such as coping and meaning making. While some chapters offer broad theoretical reviews, others provide narrowly focused examples, thus providing complementary views on religion's contribution to well-being. Religion's contribution to emotion regulation as well as fostering of positive emotions, such as forgiveness, gratitude, humility, and ecstasy are also considered in the second section. Below, I provide background on the psychology of religion as well as positive psychology, and review the research on religion's contribution to the science of well-being.

1.1 Psychology of Religion

While Freud may have considered religion to be a neurosis, others have advocated for the importance of religion for understanding individual experiences. James (1901–1902/2002) noted that since belief in God resulted in significant and profound impact on the individual, this impact needed to be better understood, outside of speculations about the existence of God. Unfortunately, the Freudian perspective seem to have held sway for most of psychology's history, and research on religion had languished for many years. In the past several decades, however, the psychological investigation of religion has increased by leaps and bounds (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). A PsychInfo search returned over 23,985 publications on religion or spirituality, with over 15,000 of those since 2003.

Then, what exactly is religion? According to sociologist Durkheim (1912/1995, p. 44), it is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Within the discipline of psychology, some have used religion to refer to the institution and its structural manifestations, such as beliefs and practices, while deferring to the term spirituality to refer to an individual's relation with the divine. Thus, religion might

be considered to be faith communities with teachings and customs that are rooted in spiritual traditions that promote transcendence from the personal to larger realities (see Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). In contrast, spirituality has been defined as the permeating of the sacred into everyday experiences, and existing within or outside the context of a religious community (see Pargament, 2002 for review). Rather than separating out the two and divorcing religion from spirituality, still others have preferred a unified and broad definition that encompasses religion as having both characteristics of organizational structures as well as personal experiences of the sacred (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Thus, in this volume we have also conceptualized religion as combining both, and inclusive of feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviors that support the search for the sacred and receive validation and support from a community of seekers who provide a sense of personal and social identity to the seeker (Hill et al., 2000).

1.2 Positive Psychology

The recent boom in positive psychology dovetails with the boom in the psychology of religion because both can provide answers to human flourishing – the characteristics of people who live optimal lives, as well as the conditions that promote well-being. Traditionally, research in positive psychology has been thought of as having three branches – the study of virtues, investigations into lives well lived (eudemonia), and research on positive emotions (hedonia). The study of virtues have included concepts such as forgiveness, gratitude, and wisdom, among others, while eudemonia has included research on meaning, purpose, and self-actualization. Last, research on positive emotions have included research on the benefits and correlates of positive affect (for reviews, see Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Frederickson, 2001; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The study of virtues gained much ground with research by Peterson and Seligman (2004), who worked to create a taxonomy of characteristics that were deemed to be virtuous and a sign of strength across a multitude of cultures. They examined multiple philosophical and religious traditions considered to be historically and culturally influential: Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These were chosen because of their historical and cultural influence, but also because the traditions, mores, and beliefs could be discerned through written texts. Using this method, the virtues found across multiple traditions and thus considered universal were: Courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence. Peterson and Seligman (2004) noted that there are other cultures and traditions that have been influential, but do not lend themselves to analysis because the precepts were not written down, or because a common agreed upon authoritative text does not exist, thus making it difficult to compare and discern virtues.

Courage includes bravery, perseverance, honesty and authenticity, whereas justice include civic strengths, such as fairness, leadership, citizenship or teamwork.

Humanity includes love and kindness; temperance includes forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self control. Wisdom includes curiosity, judgment, creativity and perspective, while transcendence includes strengths that allow for connecting with the larger universe for the creation of meaning, and include concepts such as gratitude, hope, and spirituality. As can be seen from the examples, considerable overlap exists between the universal strengths that are listed here and those strengths that are valued by various religious traditions. Of course, that there is overlap is not surprising, since religious traditions were the mainstays of the historically and culturally influential traditions considered in the discernment process.

Eudaimonia includes research on lives well lived and encompasses life lived in accordance with one's daimon, or true self. As enumerated in the virtues above, a sense of honesty with one's true beliefs (e.g., authenticity) and a life lived in accordance with these beliefs would encompass an authentic life (Waterman, 1993). In addition, meaning and purpose is also an important aspect of living in accordance to one's true self (King & Napa, 1998). Religion plays an important role in the search for an authentic life because religion, through its tenets, provides meaning to its adherents. In addition, many find purpose through their religious beliefs.

Last, research on positive emotions have included benefits of various positive emotions as well as correlates of emotions. For example, Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005) reviewed research evidence on happiness and concluded that high chronic levels of positive affect is not only correlated with better social relationships, income, creativity and productivity, but may in fact play a causal role. That is, while better social relationships might result in positive affect, research seemed to indicate that the causal direction may also include the reverse, such that chronic positive affect may result in improved social relationships, as well as other positive outcomes listed above. Research has included a range of positive emotions, such as gratitude, forgiveness, and humility on subjective well-being, physical health, and other aspects of well-being (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Religion not only provides tenets and strictures about behaviors, it also regulates the types and extents of emotions that is considered valuable (e.g., Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). For example, Christians are expected to express gratitude, while many religions promote the expression of forgiveness. These three branches of positive psychology are intricately intertwined with various aspects of religion. Thus, perhaps it may not be surprising that evidence has indicated that religiosity is correlated with all three aspects of positive psychology. Below, I review the research on the connection between positive psychology and religiosity.

1.3 Religion's Contributions to Well-Being and Life Well Lived

A growing set of evidence has indicated that religiosity is linked to well-being and other positive outcomes. Empirical evidence has shown that religiosity also seems to buffer the practitioner against the negative impact of discrimination, work stress,

and other negative life circumstances (e.g., Jasperse, Ward, & Jose, 2012; Lechner, Tomasik, Silbereisen, & Wasilewski, 2013). It has been suggested that adherents use religiosity to cope with adversity, accept reality, gain courage, confront limitation, and recognize purpose and achieve growth (Mattis, 2002). For example, religious faith provided significant contribution to resiliency for Black emerging adults who are lesbian, gay or bisexual with high internalized homonegativity (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2013). A meta-analysis by Witter, Stock, Okun, and Haring (1985) found mean effect size of $r = .16$ on religion's contribution to positive functioning. More recent meta-analyses have found similar results as well: When 75 recent studies on adolescents and emerging adults were considered, Yonker, Schnabelrauch, and DeHaan (2012) found mean effect size of $r = .16$ for spirituality and well being, similar to findings by Cheung and Yeung (2011) in their meta-analysis just a year earlier.

This positive relation holds across differing measures of religiosity, such as religiosity, church membership, or importance of religiosity (e.g., Hill & Argyle, 1998), although some have found that the strength of relationship varies across specific constructs and measures. For example, for some religious groups, intrinsic religiosity has been found to correlate more strongly to positive outcomes, whereas extrinsic religiosity has at times been found to be linked with negative outcomes, thus resulting in a "watered-down" effect size when research that use varying measures had been lumped into one. In addition to meta-analyses, large-scale datasets and longitudinal analyses have also provided supporting evidence on the facilitative effects of religiosity on well-being. Using a dataset of 34,129 adolescents, Donahue (1995) found that religiosity was positively associated with pro-social values and behavior, and negatively related to suicide attempts and ideation, substance abuse, premature sexual involvement and delinquency, even after controlling for socio-demographic variables (for review, see Dew et al., 2008). In her analysis of longitudinal data, Snell (2009) found a positive effect of youth ministries on well-being, even after controlling for self-selection effects.

Much of this research, however, has been focused on participants living in the United States and in Western Europe, and has largely relied on research on Christians. Indeed, this focus on European-based traditions has been a criticism of Positive Psychology as well (e.g., Bermant, Talwar, & Rozin, 2011). More recently, however, increasing evidence from around the world, representing a diverse range of cultures as well as religions, indicate that the positive effect of religiosity is not limited to Christians from the United States and Western Europe. For example, religiosity predicted well-being for Muslim undergraduates in Egypt and Kuwait, (Abdel-Khalek, 2006, 2012; Sahraian, Gholami, Javadpour, & Omidvar, 2013), Iran (Alavi, 2007) and Ghana (Addai, Opoku-Agyeman, & Amanfu, 2013). In addition, Patel, Ramgoon, and Paruk (2009) found positive relation between religiosity and life satisfaction for Hindu, Muslim, and Christian students in South Africa, while Francis, Robbins, Santosh, and Bhanot (2008) found similar results for Hindu students in the United Kingdom. In addition, Ariyabuddhiphongs (2009) reported similar positive relations for Buddhists in Thailand. Religiousness and trust in God was associated with greater personal happiness for adult Jewish participants

(Rosmarin, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2009) as well as for older Jewish adults (Kalkstein & Tower, 2009). In addition, using a representative national sample of 455,104 individuals from 154 nations representing 80 % of the world population, Diener et al. (2011) found that at the nation-level, religiosity was correlated at $r = .48$ with life evaluations (the correlation coefficients were smaller at the individual level). Indeed, in reviewing research on effects of religiosity on adolescent well being outcomes, Regnerus (2003) found that while some differences existed across religions and denominations, these differences were few compared to the overall positive relation between religiosity and well-being. Thus, a growing body of evidence indicates that the positive association for religiosity and well-being is not just limited to Christians, but valid across cultures and religions.

If religiosity predicts well-being across religions, what might be the mechanism or the process that mediates this effect? In his review of the connection between religion and subjective well-being, Myers (2000) offered two possible pathways: social support provided by organized religion, and the provision of meaning and purpose provided by religious tenets. Research on the benefits of positive emotions have indicated that the nurturing of specific emotions might be another pathway. In addition, Smith (2003) also theorized additional pathways that include strategies for coping and other learned competencies, such as social and leadership skills, and cultural capital earned through religiosity. Below, I highlight some of these pathways.

1.3.1 Social Support and Social Capital

For many religions, organized communal worship, as well as fellowship with other adherents of the religious tradition, help define what it means to be an adherent of that religion. In addition, even if the religion does not define worship as a communal event, social support and a sense of commonality and belonging can also provide support to individual worshippers, as well as provide social capital that may provide benefits. For example, evidence has indicated that it is spiritual support from church members that predicts positive religious coping, as opposed to emotional support from church members, which has no effect on coping (Krause, Ellison, Shaw, Marcum, & Boardman, 2001). In addition, research seemed to indicate that mediation by social support may be especially beneficial to marginalized or minority group members within a given society. Indeed, for single mothers living in economically depressed areas, church membership and attendance provided a positive sense of self, a sense of shared values with a socially valued community, and a sense of belonging (Brodsky, 2000). Similarly, for Asian Americans, social support fully mediated the relation between church attendance and reduced likelihood of major depression (Ai, Huang, Bjork, & Appel, 2013). Emerging research seems to indicate that engaging in religious practices, even if one might not be an adherent of that religion, may have the benefit of providing social support as well. For example, Loving-Kindness Meditation, a meditation technique based on Buddhist meditation

practices, resulted in increased social support, with positive emotions as a mediating factor (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008).

In addition to the benefit of social support, religiosity may also be a source of social capital. For example, Shkolnik, Weiner, Malik, and Festinger (2001) found that for elderly Jewish participants in Israel, religiosity provided social status that resulted in additional social capital, which then led to greater personal efficacy. Similarly, King and Furrow (2004) found that religious activity was related to higher social capital, which mediated positive outcomes for adolescents. In evaluating their multinational data, Diener et al. (2011) found that the link for social support was stronger in cultures where religiosity is positively regarded, thus lending further credence to the social capital theory. Indeed, this may explain some of the null results between religiosity and social support that have been found, especially for non-marginalized groups who perhaps have additional pathways for social support and social capital (e.g., Lewis, 2002).

It is important to note, however, that social support has not always mediated the relation between religiosity and well-being (e.g., Menagi, Harrell, & June, 2008). It appears that when one is expecting church to provide a sense of belonging and community, the failure to reach a sense a connection with other members or failure to fit in has resulted in negative outcomes of alienation (Brodsky, 2000). Thus, it is important to consider other possible intervening variables and mechanisms that might further explicate the relation between religiosity and life satisfaction.

1.3.2 Meaning and Purpose

In addition to social support, religion imparts among its followers a sense of meaning and purpose, which is in turn linked to positive functioning. Meaning in life as a mediating variable in the link between religiosity and well-being is important since the provision of meaning is a basic function of most religions. Indeed, research have found that meaning in life mediated the positive relation between religiosity and psychological health (Steber & Frazier, 2005). This link has been established for different religions as well: Banth and Talwar (2012) found greater relation between religiosity and meaning in life for Hindu yogic population compared to non-yogic population, and Vilchinsky and Kravetz (2005) found that for Jewish Israeli students, meaning in life mediated the positive relation between religious beliefs and psychosocial well-being for those who were high on religious identity as well as those who were high on secular identity. In addition, as with social support, research found that the benefit accrued by this meaning and purpose is especially useful for those facing difficult life circumstances. In a prospective study of survivors of natural disasters, Chan, Rhodes, and Perez (2012) found that pre-disaster religiousness predicted higher levels for post-disaster optimism and sense of purpose, and that this mediated better post-disaster psychological outcomes (see also Furrow, King, & White, 2004).

1.3.3 Emotion

A long tradition of thought has existed within various religions on the rule and mastery of emotions. In their review, Emmons and Paloutzian (2002) noted the intersection of psychology of religion and psychology of emotions. Religion prescribes appropriate emotions and the intensity at which they should be experienced. For example, Schimmel (1997) wrote about the Judeo-Christian teachings on the mastery of destructive emotions, such as anger, pride, and envy. In addition, Watts (1996) discussed the distinction between the charismatic traditions and the contemplative traditions, with the former emphasizing the cultivation of intense positive emotions and the latter focusing on low intensity and calming emotions. Different religions consider specific emotions to be desirable and other emotions to be less desirable (e.g., Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). Intense positive emotions, such as awe or ecstasy, for example, are valued in some religious traditions (Silberman, 2005). In reviewing recent research on gratitude, Nelson (2009) noted that gratitude is considered to be a fundamental virtue in many religions. Other religious emotions include ecstasy, humility and forgiveness. For example, Ayten (2012) found that religiosity is positively correlated with forgiveness among Turkish Muslims. Others have found that religiosity mediated the positive relation between forgiveness and posttraumatic growth (Sahraian et al., 2013; Schultz, Tallman, & Altmaier, 2010).

In addition, religion promotes emotion regulation as well as self-regulation in general. Indeed, McCullough and Willoughby (2009) suggested that the benefits to health and well-being enjoyed by religious individuals may be due to their greater capacity for self-regulation. Watterson and Giesler (2012) experimentally manipulated ego depletion, providing evidence of greater self-regulation among highly religious participants. It is not clear, however, whether those who are high in self regulation are self-selecting into high religiosity, or whether various practices associated with religiosity has the effect of boosting self-regulatory processes. For example, evidence indicated that meditation training can strengthen emotion regulation as well as self-regulation in general (e.g., Geschwind, Peeters, Drukker, van Os, & Wichers, 2011; Sahdra et al., 2011).

1.3.4 Coping

The link between religiosity and coping is one of the more robust areas of research in the psychology of religion. For example, evidence indicated that religiosity promotes coping with chronic pain (e.g., Büssing et al., 2009), and in the aftermath of a natural disaster (e.g., Smith, Pargament, Brant, & Oliver, 2000). Pargament and Park (1995) have noted that religion provides a coping mechanism that is both proactive as well as defensive against difficult circumstances.

In reviewing 73 published studies on the relation between bereavement and religiosity, Wortmann and Park (2008) noted the general positive relation between

coping and religiosity, though they did note some inconsistencies. Other reviews and meta-analyses have also found similar results, especially when effects of positive coping and negative coping were considered separately (e.g., Cowchock, Lasker, Toedter, Skumanich, & Koenig, 2010). For example, a meta-analytic review of 147 studies that examined the relation between religiosity and depressive symptoms found a small negative correlation between the two (average effect size $r = -.09$). But when positive religious coping, intrinsic religious orientation and positive regard of God were considered separately from extrinsic religious orientation and negative religious coping, the strength of relation between religiosity and depressive symptoms rose to between −.20 and −.18 (Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003; see also Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). Others also found similarly strong effects when positive coping was teased apart from negative coping and considered separately. For example, Ano and Vasconcelles (2005) found mean $r = .33$ for positive religious coping and positive psychological outcomes, such as life satisfaction and happiness, with negative coping associated with negative outcomes at mean $r = .22$. Similarly, Chan and Rhodes (2013) found that research on survivors of large-scale natural disasters showed that positive religious coping was associated with posttraumatic growth following a large-scale natural disaster, whereas negative religious coping was associated with posttraumatic stress (see also Gerber & Adriel Schuettler, 2011; Harris et al., 2008).

Cross-cultural data also have found supporting evidence as well: Moussa and Bates (2011) found that religious coping predicted posttraumatic growth for Lebanese college students in Beirut. And for Muslim participants, positive coping was related to posttraumatic growth following stressful interpersonal events, whereas negative religious coping was associated with depression (Abu-Raiya, Israel, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2011).

1.4 Influence on Well Being Across Religions

As noted above, religiosity's effect on well-being is not always positive. Some have accounted for this conflicting evidence as being due to the use of different measures or different definitions of religiosity (e.g., Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Lewis & Cruise, 2006). Others have noted, however, that some of the differences could be due to needing to have a more nuanced and context-dependent understanding of the effects of religion on well being. For example, Gorsuch (1995) found that while nurturing and supportive religions were negatively related with substance abuse, restrictive and negativistic form of religiosity had a positive relationship with abuse. Similarly, while religion can provide social support, it can also increase feelings of isolation and alienation when members feel that they do not fit in with the church community (Pearce, Little, & Perez, 2003).

Other factor that may mediate the impact of religion on well-being also include the importance of religion within a given culture. As can be seen above, religion can provide social capital, but this would only be of use where religion is valued, and

therefore result in social capital. Research evidence has also indicated support, showing that the relation between well being and religiosity is mediated by the importance of religiosity in that culture. For example, Stavrova, Fetchenhauer, and Schlosser (2013) found that while the overall effect of religiosity on well-being is small, the effect is stronger in more religious countries, and that this relation is partially mediated by increased respect that religious people receive from others in countries that were high on religiosity. Similarly, Lun and Bond (2013) found that spiritual practice and subjective well-being were positively related in national cultures that emphasized religious socialization, with a reverse pattern for countries with less religious socialization.

In addition, it also appears that while religiosity predicts well being across religions, the mediating or moderating variables may vary across religions. For example, some have noted that the link between well being and religiosity may be dependent on various factors, such as whether the religion is internalized, based on a secure relationship with God, and intrinsically motivated. Research have also noted the stronger relationship between well-being and religiosity for those who are internally motivated. However, further research have seemed to indicate that the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity is more suited for Protestant adherents versus followers of other religions or other Christian denominations. This is because while much research has shown a robust relation between intrinsic religiosity and positive outcomes (e.g., Pössel et al., 2011), most of the research had been conducted within predominantly Christian populations. Research that have considered non-Christian or non-Protestant adherents have found a weaker link, or have found extrinsic religiosity to be predictive of well being (e.g., Cohen & Hill, 2007; Cohen et al., 2005; Park, Cohen, & Herb, 1990).

In addition, Fischer et al. (2010) provided evidence that different religious traditions vary in the types of coping strategies that provide the most comfort to their adherents. For example, Fischer and colleagues proposed that while intrapersonal coping mechanisms may be useful for Christians, interpersonal coping strategies might be more helpful to followers of Islam. Examples of interpersonal coping include turning to family members for support, or seeking other types of social support, whereas intrapersonal coping include cognitive restructuring or reframing. Considering a large international dataset, Diener et al. (2011) also found differences across religions. While religiosity predicted positive feelings for Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims even after controlling for age, gender, and individual and societal circumstances, some nuanced differences were found. For example, for Buddhists, religiosity did not negatively predict negative feelings, where as it did for the other three religions; for Muslims, religiosity did not predict life satisfaction, whereas it did for other three. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between different religious traditions while also looking for commonalities in religion's effect on well being, taking care to note that while efficacy of different types of coping might vary across different religions, this does not necessarily mean that some religions provide coping and others do not.

1.4.1 Present Volume

In light of the importance of taking into consideration differences as well as the commonalities across religions, this volume pulls together not only the research on religion's contribution to happiness, it does so keeping in mind the diversity of religions and cultures around the world. Many edited volumes exist on psychology of religion, as they do on positive psychology. This volume, however, is unique in that we examine religion's contribution across multiple religions and take care to examine ways in which intervening variables might vary across different contexts. Of course, this volume is not exhaustive. It does not include all the different religions that exist in the world. It also does not include all of the multitude of practices or variations within and across various denominations within religions. It provides an initial foray, however, for furthering the examination and discussion of the ways in which religions and religiosities enhance the lives of individuals and societies.

The first section provides an in-depth consideration of the ways in which different religions contribute to human thriving and well-being. Of course, given the finite number of chapters and pages, this section does not review all the different religions in the world. However, a wide range of different religions are reviewed here, including those stemming from different regions and encompassing monotheistic as well as polytheistic traditions. In each chapter, the author(s) discuss the ways that each religion contributes to the thriving and well being of its followers. In addition, the authors provide background information about the religion itself, so that readers who may not be familiar with the specific religion discussed therein may gather initial understanding about that religious tradition. In Chap. 2, Schnall, Schiffman and Cherniak provide a close view of the ways in which Judaism promotes each of the character strengths related to the virtue of transcendence. In doing so, Schnall and colleagues provide much evidence from Hebrew texts and other religious evidence to provide the reader with an understanding of Judaism as well as its contribution to the building of character strengths, focusing specifically on appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality/religiousness. In Chap. 3, Worthington and colleagues review the ways in which Christianity, in theory and in practice, contribute to the well-being of its adherents. This chapter provides a discussion of the ways in which religion contributes to the well-being of individuals as well as the flourishing of societies. For example, Worthington and colleagues discuss ways in which virtues promoted by Christianity, including self-control, love, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, reconciliation and compassion, help build better relationships within a community. In addition, direct contributions to society, through promotion of education and the arts, are discussed. This broader perspective allows readers to understand the myriad of ways in which religions contribute to the thriving of not just individuals, but to communities and societies. In Chap. 4, Abdel-Khalek provides a detailed description of Islam, its major tenets, and its five pillars of belief and practice: testimony, prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, alms giving, and pilgrimage. Through detailed description of the major tenets and guiding practices, Abdel-Khalek guides the

reader through an understanding of Islam. In addition, Abel-Khalek reviews much of the research literature on religiosity and well-being in a Muslim context.

While the first set of chapters include religions that have roots in the Middle East, the next set of chapters include those that arose in the Indian subcontinent. In Chap. 5, Young and Sarin provide a review of Hinduism and its relation to positive psychology. The authors review core Hindu belief of attaining liberation from the cycle of birth and death through righteous living and karmic justice. They also review various practices theorized to be related to well-being, and include ways in which a belief in an interconnected universe discourages social comparisons that negatively influence well being, and the ways in which the practice of prayer, meditation, and communal gathering enhance well-being. In addition, authors review psychology literature that connect these practices to research evidence. Chapter 6 by Cassaniti provides present day examples of the ways in which Buddhism as it is currently practiced contributes to the well-being of its followers. Cassaniti's ethnographic case study of the daily lives, beliefs, and rituals of a small community of adherents in rural Thailand provides a historical and cultural context for the review of the research evidence in clinical psychology and neuropsychology on various Buddhist practices, including mindfulness, self-construal, and the cultivation of calm emotions. In Chap. 7, Ahluwalia, Locke and Hylton provide an in-depth explanation of Sikhism, the fifth largest organized religion in the world. The chapter begins with a history of Sikhism as well as its major tenets and practices, which, among others, include the maintenance of uncut hair, which is considered a gift from God, the keeping of a comb, and a small symbolic sword as a reminder to fight for freedom and justice. In addition to this detailed description of Sikhism, Ahluwalia and colleagues also provide examples of the ways in which Sikhism contributes to the well-being of its adherents. In addition, this chapter provides several examples that illuminate how religious beliefs and traditions translate into everyday practice during current times, including an example of thriving in the face of hardship and discrimination. Last, Chap. 8 focuses in on North America for in-depth overview of American Indian traditional ways. In this chapter, Rouse discusses indigenous traditional ways as a system of science and knowing, and also responds to the cultural appropriations of traditional ways that have resulted in two dimensional perspectives devoid of substance, and explains that these appropriations often result in misguided and sometimes harmful results. This chapter also pulls together the varieties of ways of knowing that exist within the different sovereign American Indian nations, and offers a different perspective on the virtues as conceptualized in Peterson and Seligman (2004). In discussing the virtues identified by Peterson and Seligman, Rouse provides an alternate virtue of interconnectedness that defines wellness as balance within a relational existence and self-knowledge. As noted previously, a discussion of all the different religions currently practiced today would be prohibitive, and beyond the scope of this volume. However, as can be seen from the chapters, much overlap, as well as differences, exist in the ways in which different religions foster well-being. For example, community and social support, as well as meaning-making and emotion regulation appear to be a oft-mentioned theme. These different pathways are discussed more fully in Part II.

Part II provides a closer look at some of the pathways and variations that speak to the effect of religiosity on well-being. The first chapter in this part provides a broad international perspective on the relation between religion and well being. In Chap. 9, Tay, Li, Myers and Diener review research evidence from across the world to consider whether the positive relation between religiosity and happiness is a pan-cultural phenomenon. Authors propose several mechanisms that support this relation, including mechanisms at the individual level and social level that enhance well-being, such as promotion of pro-social behaviors, and religion's role as a bulwark during difficult times. In Chap. 10, Park and Hale-Smith review religious and spiritual meaning systems and their relation to the well-being of adherents. In doing so, the authors review ways in which different meaning systems, such as karma, or belief in eternal life after death, are related to well being. In addition, Park and Hale-Smith also propose specific pathways by which the imbuing of meaning by religion may result in well being. The five pathways are self-determination, fulfillment of existential needs, self-regulation, coping through meaning making, and fostering of positive psychological states.

The next two chapters, on the other hand, focus on specific religious practices that have been linked to well-being: Chap. 11 provides a review of meditation, focusing on mindfulness, while Chap. 12 focuses on mind-body practices, focusing on yoga. In reviewing the research on mindfulness, Lykins provides an extensive review of the growing body of literature on the therapeutic effects of mindfulness training interventions. In noting that mindfulness results in the creation of an altered state of consciousness, Lykins also broadens the conversation to review additional practices from other religious traditions that induce altered states of consciousness. Chapter 12 by Gerbarg, Gootjes and Brown reviews various mind-body practices, specifically focusing on yoga. In reviewing the literature, the authors provide research evidence from physiological psychology and theorize a neuropsychological explanation for the relation between mind-body practices and enhanced well-being. In addition, the authors provide case study examples of the ways in which yoga and other mind-body exercises have been used as a therapeutic tool for recovery from mass disasters.

Next set of five chapters concern religion and emotions. As noted earlier, emotion and emotion regulation may explain a large aspect of the link between religiosity and well-being. Chapter 13 on emotion regulation by Vishkin, Bigman and Tamir provides a big picture review of the multiple possible pathways by which religion influences emotion, and provides supporting research evidence, as well as examples from different religious traditions. The authors propose that religion influences the regulation of emotions by delimiting which emotions are of importance within a specific religious tradition, influencing self-regulation, beliefs about emotions themselves, the use of emotion regulation strategies, and the creation of communities that support the usage of those strategies. Additional chapters on humility (Chap. 14, Woodruff, Van Tongeren, McElroy, Davis, & Hook), gratitude (Chap. 15, Wirtz, Gordon, & Stalls), forgiveness (Chap. 16, Rye & McCabe), and ecstasy (Chap. 17, Hood) provide extensive reviews of the literature on each emotion and ways that each might serve to mediate the relation between religion and well-being. Of course, while some emotions, such as gratitude, have been the subject

of much research, others, such as humility and forgiveness, represent emerging areas of research. As such, these latter chapters provide less review of the research literature and more theory building and making connections within the religious context. All of the chapters, however, provide broad overviews and provide examples from across various religious traditions.

Finally, the last two chapters in this volume round out the discussion by providing specific examples of the ways in which religion provides comfort and well-being to individual adherents when faced with difficult life circumstances. In Chap. 18, Feuille Bockrath, Pargament and Ostwald review the existing research on the role of religiosity in resilience and coping in the aftermath of a stroke by survivors as well as their caregivers. The experience of a stroke, because it raises existential questions about life, loss of control, and meaning, provides a interesting perspective and prism through which religion's role in psychological well being can be examined. Last, in Chap. 19, Okazaki and Abelmann examine the ways in which religion is used to forge positive meaning in the face of adversity by immigrant youth. Using grounded theory, the authors provide in-depth look at the process, using qualitative data from ethnic minority young adults living in the United States.

The chapters provide not only a broad overview of the ways in which religion contributes to well-being, they do so by considering the commonalities and differences across religions. Of course, it is important to note that because a strength is emphasized in one chapter, or is not discussed in a different chapter, this does not mean that a particular religion does not provide a pathway to well-being in similar ways. Each of the chapters speak to different strengths, virtues, and pathways; and as such, the chapters speak to the variations in religions and contributions. In sum, this volume includes perspectives from religions having roots to different regions in the world and representing different types of religions and ways of knowing. In addition, the chapters consider a wide range of possible intervening variables that may mediate and/or moderate the relation between religiosity and well-being, taking into account the diversity of religions and contexts.

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