

Preface to the Second Edition

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

To participate in a revision of Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion*, first published in 1987, is an occasion of intense humility, but also a grand opportunity. Though not without its critics, the first edition was suitably heralded as the standard reference work in the field, a truly landmark achievement. The work of revision has, at nearly every turn, amplified rather than diminished appreciation for the accomplishment of those original volumes. Dealing firsthand with the conceptual and organizational challenges, coupled with the logistical labors of coordinating the efforts of countless scholars and editors, redoubles a sense of admiration, respect, and gratitude for the makers of the original version of this encyclopedia.

If the making of that original set posed innumerable theoretical, organizational, and practical challenges, the revision of such a work evokes no fewer questions of balance and compromise. On the one hand, the building and remodeling of a work of this wide scope is a preeminently collaborative enterprise. It is born of a vast community of scholars, together participating in an immensely collective project; the interactivity among editors, consultants, and contributors has indeed provided perhaps the most rewarding aspects of this project. Yet, on the other hand, such a large and multifaceted undertaking has a deeply impersonal, even anonymous, quality. Face-to-face meetings among participants are few, schedules fast, authors and editors far-spaced. By engaging the talents of so many people from so many places, large encyclopedias, and even more so their revisions, perpetuate the pretense of anonymous, objective, and interchangeable authors; numerous hands touch every piece, and the target of responsibility either for credit or for blame is not always easy to locate.

Such an encyclopedia requires, in one respect, a large measure of consensus among contributors as to what religion is and what academic students of religion ought to and ought not to circumscribe within their view. But, in another respect, it is a scholarly

consensus of a very broad and pliant sort. Careful reading reveals enormous diversity of perspective among first-edition contributors, far more than is often assumed; and for the revision, even among the principal decision makers, and positively among the contributors, there is a very wide spectrum of opinions as to the most serviceable definitions of religion and the most worthy purview for the field of religious studies.

On the one hand, encyclopedias seem by nature vehicles of convention, destined to simplify, reify, essentialize, and provide falsely stabilized views of dynamic historical eras, religious traditions, doctrines, and practices. Yet, on the other hand, a large percentage of the contributors to this project understand their academic calling to be primarily one of disruption and destabilization; many have explicitly dedicated their careers to complicating and calling to question conventional wisdoms about religion and things religious. Thus in order to capitalize on their talents, contributors were provided explicit instructions, tidy scope descriptions, and specific word allotments, but they were also provided a fair measure of space for improvisation and flexibility. One member of the editorial board framed the balance this way:

The letters to all contributors should include a general statement that we wish to respect their judgment in defining the general contours of each article, and the scope descriptions are meant only to be suggestive, although of course we do hope that we will be taken seriously. Also that we are looking for entries that reflect the current state of the field and that we are hoping that each entry will not gloss over problems of evidence or conceptualization in the current state of the field but will instead frankly acknowledge such problems and make them key parts of the entry in a bid to make the [second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*] look to the future and help to shape things to come.

The intellectual challenges are likewise reflected in more practical tensions and balancing acts. Perhaps most onerously, Page xii | [Top of Article](#) the recruitment of literally hundreds of qualified scholars, available and willing to deliver their work in a timely manner, is no mean task. For some, participation in an encyclopedia of this stature is a high calling, a fortuitous opportunity to engage a uniquely wide readership; others, however, admit far less enthusiasm about undertaking assignments construed as diversions from their more technical research, more public service than privilege. Once aboard, contributors had to balance the standards of accuracy, sophistication, and scholarly nuance that would satisfy themselves and their academic peers with the encyclopedia's incentive to reach a far more broad, less specialized audience.

The balancing of word counts is likewise a constant concern, and the space allotted to various topics is, to some real extent, a telling indicator as to the relative importance of those topics, at least in the eyes of the editorial board. Yet, equations of article length and significance, a familiar assumption among reviewers, are invariably too simple, too little aware of the practical exigencies of accepted and declined invitations, met and missed deadlines, obeyed and ignored editorial recommendations. The most well considered intentions and the clearest of visions are, not infrequently, casualties in the stiff competition for the time of twenty-first century academics. In fact, it is both noteworthy and deeply disappointing that several dozen additional new articles were conceived but

never successfully assigned, and also that at least three dozen promised articles had not arrived by the production deadline, and thus had to be omitted from the revision. Gaps and asymmetries in coverage could, therefore, have innumerable explanations.

Be that as it may, perhaps the most vexing acts of balance and compromise are built into the very notion of "revision" itself. Neither defense nor attack, revision demands commingled attitudes of respect for and discontent with the original. To revise requires, on the one side, that a goodly portion of the previous work will remain intact; this editorial board was not afforded a fully fresh point of departure. Yet, on the other side, the initiative of revising does afford, even necessitates, changes, reconceptualizations, and wholly new additions that respond both to recent events and to recent trends in scholarship. Revision is, by nature and by design, a balancing and a juxtaposition of old and new elements.

This complex intermingling of first-edition and new components enriches but also greatly complicates the critical use and assessment of these volumes. The synoptic outline of contents, the alphabetical list of entries, and the index provide usefully comprehensive guides, but to discover all that is new and different between the second edition and its precedent can, nonetheless, pose a difficult challenge. The remainder of this preface works, therefore, to direct attention (1) to some of the most prominent new elements of this revision; (2) to the decision-making processes that put those adjustments in place; and (3) to the conventions in this edition that can assist in ascertaining the precise status of individual entries.

ASSESSMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, AND CONVENTIONS

The initial step in the revision process was a comprehensive evaluation of every one of the 2,750 first-edition entries. As though dealing out an enormous deck of cards, each of the original articles was assigned to suitable members of the thirteen-person board of associate editors or the slate of some two dozen consultants. Parity did not apply insofar as a sturdy few were taxed with assessing hundreds of articles, others with only a handful. In the subsequent entry-by-entry review, a relatively small number of articles were completely jettisoned while the huge remainder was assigned to one of three categories.

A first category of entries is composed of those approved to be reprinted with few or no changes. Though roughly 1,800 articles in this set were to remain largely or fully intact, attempts were made to reach the authors of those first-edition entries both with an invitation to modify or update their contribution in ways that they saw fit and with a request that they augment the bibliography with relevant sources that had appeared in the interim. Of course, many of those scholars were no longer active in the profession; others did not reply; and others declined to make any alterations to their original articles. Articles that were, therefore, reprinted essentially unchanged have a designation of "(1987)" following the author's name. In numerous instances, however, first-edition authors did take the occasion to adjust their own articles in small or large ways. For these articles, the attribution of authorship is followed by two dates, for example, Eleanor

Zelliot (1987 and 2005). Additionally, where original authors of articles in this set were unavailable or nonresponsive, many of the respective bibliographies were nonetheless supplemented with relevant new sources; this accounts for those bylines that include the designation “Revised Bibliography,” which signals that a “New Sources” section is appended to the bibliography.

A second category of entries comprises those judged to need significant revision or updating. These articles are perhaps most properly worthy of the title “revised” insofar as they both retain a substantial portion of the original work and introduce substantially new information and/or new conceptual formulations. This sort of revision took one of three forms. In some cases, original authors were enlisted to rework and update their own articles; those articles (not unlike those in which authors voluntarily revised their original articles) are consequently attributed to a sole author but with two dates, for example, David Carrasco (1987 and 2005). In many other cases, the revision was undertaken by a different scholar, which accounts for those articles that are attributed to two authors, for example, Robertson Davies (1987) and Eric Ziolkowski (2005). Irrespective of whether the modifications were completed by the original author or by someone else, the revisions are, in some instances, modest, perhaps addressing recent events or attending to an important new publication on the topic; but, in other cases, the adjustments and reconceptualizations are more thoroughgoing. Page xiii | [Top of Article](#) All of the revisions and “updates” of these sorts do, however, eventuate in entries that are, at once, old and new.

A third variation on this revision theme—and one of the more distinctive features of the second edition of *Encyclopedia of Religion*—is a consequence of those situations in which the original article was assessed as a still-valuable exposition of the topic, worthy of reprinting, but not a treatment that could any longer be represented as state-of-the-art. In many of these instances, the first-edition entry provided a seminal statement on the subject, but was distinctive, or sometimes idiosyncratic, in ways that precluded revision or updating per se. Thus, instead of reworking the original, it was more suitable to retain the integrity of that article by reprinting it unchanged and then augmenting it with a kind of supplementary addendum. For instance, Mircea Eliade wrote the first-edition entry “Sexuality: An Overview,” which articulates a prominent, still-important exposition of the topic, but not one that can be regarded as current in a field of study where there has been enormous activity in the past two decades. The original entry is, therefore, allowed to stand with the parenthetical designation “[First Edition]” and then is complemented by a completely new entry titled “Sexuality: An Overview [Further Considerations],” which focuses attention on research and perspectives that have emerged since the first edition. This pairing of prominent but now dated first-edition entries with new complementary pieces—there are roughly fifty of these juxtapositions of old and new—adds a special texture to the revision; it facilitates a kind of historical, even archaeological, appreciation of the unfolding succession of ideas on a topic. But the same editorial tactic also places a special burden on readers. Accordingly, as a cautionary note, it would, in principle, never be suitable to rely on one of these “First Edition” pieces without reading ahead also to its complimentary, sometimes quite critical, “Further Considerations” counterpart.

In any case, the initial article-by-article assessment of the first edition eventuated also in a third category constituted of those entries for which a topic and title were retained but the actual article was completely replaced. There are well over three hundred of these new renditions of already-standing topics. As a rule, authors of these replacement articles were invited to employ the original entry as a resource but not necessarily a model, that is, to compose an essentially new treatment of the existing topic. Not surprisingly, one can find instances in which there is considerable continuity between the original and present articles while, in other cases, the first-edition article and its new, second-edition iteration share little beyond the title. That is to say, the great majority of these so-termed replacement articles are, for all practical purposes, thoroughly new entries. Consequently, author attribution for these articles includes a parenthetical date precisely like other new articles, for example, Mary MacDonald (2005).

NEW FEATURES AND CONFIGURATIONS

In addition to these various layers of revision and replacement, the second edition introduces entries on nearly six hundred topics that did not appear in the first edition. New topics and titles are added to almost every portion of the revision, but especially noteworthy are those that appear in related sets of articles—or so-termed composite entries. Many of these composite sets, which were also a very prominent feature of the first edition, provide a means of surveying the geographical distribution of a large tradition: The “Buddhism” composite entry, for example, is composed of articles that treat, in succession, “Buddhism in India,” “Buddhism in Southeast Asia,” “Buddhism in Central Asia,” and so on. In many other cases, however, these composite sets are trained on a broad topic or theme such as “Pilgrimage,” “Iconography,” “Music,” or “Soul,” which is then addressed in a cross-culturally comparative fashion. In the main, these thematically configured composites open with a broad overview article, which is then followed by a series of articles that explore that large theme either in different contexts and/or from different angles of view. And, although every sort of composite entry enjoys a measure of revision, it is these thematically linked sets that are subject to the most venturesome innovation and growth. Several permutations and outstanding examples deserve quick comment.

In numerous instances, thematic composite entries that appeared in the original edition were reworked and very substantially expanded. For example, the first-edition “Afterlife” composite entry included an overview and only two area-specific articles, one on Jewish concepts of the afterlife and another on Chinese concepts. In the new edition, however, that pair is complemented by completely new entries on African conceptions of the afterlife, as well as Australian, Oceanic, Mesoamerican, Christian, Islamic, Greek and Roman, and Germanic concepts. The first-edition “Cosmology” composite is similarly expanded with thoroughly new entries on the cosmologies of Africa, indigenous Australia, Oceania, indigenous North America and Mesoamerica, South America, Islam, and finally, so-termed “Scientific Cosmologies.” Or, to cite just one more such example of the enhancement of a standing composite entry, the original cluster of entries under the rubric of “Rites of Passage,” which had included entries solely on Hindu, Jewish, and

Muslim rites, is fleshed out to include new articles on African, Oceanic, Mesoamerican, and Neopagan rites of passage.

Other second-edition composite entries—article sets that provide some of the most notable new contributions to the revision—result from cases in which a topic that had received fairly limited coverage in the first edition becomes the subject of a much more extensive block of new articles. For instance, where the original edition had modest-length and broadly-framed articles devoted to “Healing,” “Medicine,” and “Diseases and Cures,” the revision explores those themes far more fully via a composite entry that opens [Page xiv | Top of Article](#) with “Healing and Medicine: An Overview,” which is then followed by fourteen completely new articles trained on healing practices in various regions and traditions, for example, in Africa, in the African diaspora, in the Ancient Near East, in Judaism, in Islamic texts and traditions, in the popular healing practices of Middle Eastern cultures, in Greece and Rome, and so on. A sole first-edition entry on “Ecology” is supplanted by a full constellation of “Ecology and Religion” articles that includes eleven new tradition-specific articles on various ways of conceiving the interrelations between humans, the earth, and the cosmos, as well as thematic entries on environmental ethics and on science, religion, and ecology. “Law and Religion” is also much expanded and fully reconfigured in a set of thirteen articles that address the topic in six different regions or traditions and then in relation to six different sorts of themes, such as law and religion in connection with literature, with critical theory, with human rights, with morality, with new religious movements and, finally, with punishment. And, by the same token, the free-standing entry on “Politics and Religion” in the first edition is replaced by a ten-part composite entry that begins with a broad overview of the topic and then engages intersections of religion and politics in each of several traditions.

Additional composite entries are completely new insofar as they have no direct counterpart in the first edition. The treatment of literature, for instance, an enormous and multi-faceted topic that streams through countless sections of the encyclopedia, was reconfigured in ways that issued in a completely new ten-part composite entry on fiction and religion in various guises. In that case, a lead entry titled “Fiction: History of the Novel” is complemented by all new entries that survey connections between religion and the Western novel, Latin American fiction, Chinese fiction, Japanese fiction, Southeast Asian fiction, Australian fiction, Oceanic fiction, African fiction, and Native American fiction. Another fully new composite entry under the rubric of “Transculturation and Religion” opens with an overview that situates “the problem of religion” within the context of the making of the modern world; subsequent elements of the set address the role of religion in the formation of, respectively, modern Canada, the modern Caribbean, modern Japan, modern India, and modern Oceania. Other innovative new composite entries, though on somewhat more modest scales, engage such topics as “Orgy,” “Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology,” and “Humor and Religion.”

Particularly notable among new composite entries is the twenty-one-part “Gender and Religion,” a wholly new set that deserves special mention not only as the largest such grouping in the revision, but also as part of a three-tiered initiative to engage the abundance of important work that has appeared in that field since the original version. At

one level, the instructions to authors of *every* article for this edition, whether revised or completely new, included an incitement to consider seriously, and to make explicit, the gendered dynamics of the religious doctrines, practices, and institutions under consideration. A second level of revision focused on individual entries: standing articles like “Women’s Studies,” “Human Body,” and “Spirit Possession” were revisited, then replaced or heavily reworked in light of contemporary approaches to gender and religion. Space was opened also for numerous new topical entries such as “Beauty,” “Gynocentrism,” “Lesbianism,” “Men’s Studies in Religion,” “Patriarchy and Matriarchy,” and “Theology”; for several mid-sized composite entries on “Feminism,” “Feminist Theology,” and “Nuns”; and for numerous new biographical entries on women. Finally, at a third and especially ambitious level, the completely new “Gender and Religion” composite entry employs the familiar pattern of an overview article, followed by a succession of region- or tradition-specific articles; but this set is unique in its scale of execution.

New religious movements is yet another area of major growth and reconceptualization. In fact, no segment of the encyclopedia enjoys quite such extensive enlargement. The original five-part composite entry is replaced by an eleven-part set that includes not only a revamped overview and new or reworked area-specific articles on the United States, Europe, Japan, and Latin America, but also thematic and comparative articles on the scriptures of new religious movements and on new religious movements in relation to women, to children, to millennialism, and to violence. Where the first-edition synoptic outline listed a couple dozen supporting articles under the heading of “New Religions and Modern Movements,” the revision includes nearly three times that many. Among the wealth of new topical entries are “Anticult Movements,” “Brainwashing (Debate),” and “Deprogramming”; “Neopaganism” and “Wicca”; “Swedenborgianism,” “Rastafarianism,” “UFO Religions,” “Heaven’s Gate,” “Aum Shinrikyō,” and “Falun Gong.” Similarly abundant new biographical articles address figures ranging from Aleister Crowley, Daddy Grace, Matilda Joselyn Gage, Emma Curtis Hopkins, and L. Ron Hubbard to Jim Jones and David Koresh, to mention just a few.

An innovative new composite entry under the rubric of “Study of Religion” is one of several components designed to engage matters of theory, method, and intellectual history, concerns that were very important for the first edition and remained a priority for the second. Where the original edition had entries focused primarily on the emergence and development of religious studies in Western Europe and the United States, this new “Study of Religion” grouping works to survey ways in which the nature and study of “religion” have been conceptualized and institutionalized also in Eastern Europe, Japan, North Africa and the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. Also in a methodological realm, most of the eighteen first-edition “History of Study” entries (e.g., “Australian Religions: History of Study”; “Chinese Religion: History of Study”; “Egyptian Religion: History of Study”; etc.) were substantially updated or replaced, and entirely new entries were added to address the history of the study of African American religions, Baltic religion, Celtic religions, [Page xv | Top of Article](#) Confucianism, and Germanic religions, along with new entries on the history of the study of gender and religion, of Gnosticism, and of new religious movements. Numerous of the “Methods of

Study” entries were revised, and wholly new offerings include “Ethology of Religion,” “Literature: Critical Theory and Religious Studies,” “Subaltern Studies,” and a two-part set on “Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology.” Of more than one hundred first-edition entries listed in the synoptic outline under so-called “Scholarly Terms,” very few were deleted; some are substantially revised (e.g., “Conversion,” “Dualism,” and “Tradition”); some prominent terms are augmented with “Further Considerations” pieces (e.g., “Mysticism,” “Ritual,” “Religion,” “Sacrifice,” and “Syncretism”); and many others are replaced with essentially new entries (e.g., “Charisma,” “Folklore,” “Religious Experience,” and “Sacred Time”). Completely new offerings under that heading include “Colonialism and Post-colonialism,” “Creolization,” “Globalization and Religion,” “Implicit Religion,” “Invisible Religion,” “Orientalism,” “Spirituality,” and “World Religions.” And with respect to “Scholars of Religion,” another area of special distinction for *Encyclopedia of Religion*, we retained the policy of separate biographical entries only for scholars who are deceased, but nonetheless added more than fifty new names to the list.

The enumeration of important new articles and features could, as they say, go on and on. In the Judaism section, nearly all of the principal articles, the main “Judaism: An Overview” included, are thoroughly rewritten and more than thirty new topics were added. Among the articles on Islam, a high percentage both of the large geographical survey entries and the dozens of shorter supporting articles are revised in variously minor and major ways, and numerous wholly new topics have been introduced. The treatment of Buddhism, including the several composite configurations devoted to that tradition, received especially thoroughgoing reconceptualizations, as well as the introduction of more than two dozen completely new topics, numerous of them focused on Tibet. North American Indian religions was also a zone of especially extensive revision and expansion in ways that reflect the tumultuous changes in that field over the past two decades and the emergence of a generation of native scholars whose presence was largely absent from the first edition. The large lists under “Art and Religion” and, even more, “Science and Religion” were areas of considerable growth and innovation. Yes, the enumeration of new and reworked features could go on and on. It is, to be sure, only via direct engagement of the entries themselves that one can really begin to appreciate all that is new and different between the second edition and its precedent.

In sum, then, it is important to note that the associate editors and consultants—all of whom deserve enormous credit for their expertise, insight, and endurance—worked without any fixed quota as to how much would change and how much remain the same. This open policy proved a proverbial mixed blessing—both an ample benefit and what became a heavy burden insofar as, it is safe to say, the extent of revision and enlargement far exceeded anyone’s expectation. The final tally of new and essentially new entries, in fact, exceeds by fourfold the initial projections, which were only whispered at the outset of the process. Were there anticipation in the beginning that this revised second edition would include, as it does, well over five hundred new topics, nearly one thousand completely new articles, and 1.5 million more words than the original *Encyclopedia of Religion* perhaps fewer would have agreed to participate in the editorial initiative.

The fortuitous result is, nevertheless, a scholarly resource too large and layered for anyone to master or even appreciate fully; no one can attain that vantage that affords a view of the whole. Instead—and happily—individual readers will inevitably be drawn to those parts that appeal to their distinct interests and serve their special purposes. This encyclopedia is, in an important sense, many encyclopedias, each of which emerges in dynamic relations with the persons who read and use it. Moreover, time and again, searching and serendipity blend so that an entry simply happened upon, an article or aspect other than that which you are seeking, evokes the strongest excitement and provides the most satisfying reward. Even those of us with much invested in this revision, continue to read, reread, and experience these volumes with a sense of discovery. It is our sincere hope, moreover, that this new edition can provide other readers that same ongoing sense of exploration and evocation of interest.

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