

**Remaking an Encyclopedia:
Reflections on a Revision of Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion***
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A plenary address at the 2005 Annual Conference of
the American Theological Library Association (ATLA)
Austin, Texas; June 18, 2005

This was subsequently published in the ATLA's *Summary of Proceedings*
(Chicago: American Theological Library Association, 2005).

Indeed, quite early in our planning stage, we [i.e., editor in chief, Mircea Eliade; the board of editors for the original *Encyclopedia of Religion*; and the senior members of the Macmillan staff] realized the possibilities of creating a work that would be both truly encyclopedic and widely useful. At the conclusion of the editorial meeting in which we had reached this happy consensus, Victor Turner remarked with evident delight, "And so, then, we shall let a thousand flowers bloom."

Claude Conyers, Senior Project Editor for
The Encyclopedia of Religion, first edition, 1986¹

I cannot think, without weeping, of that courage that must have failed me when I accepted to undertake this work... Now I must never cease to try and stimulate the ardor of my collaborators, embolden the timid and the modest, activate the zeal of the lazy and the backsliders, extend my investigations beyond the ordinary world of our Protestant writers—in order to investigate the wider history of religions—and quiet their dogmatic and literary scrapping. What a mess of egos to manage and disagreements to mediate! And, among my collaborators, what unwillingness there is to get going and be guided by a common discipline.

Frédéric Lichtenberger, editor of *Encyclopédie
des sciences religieuses* (Strasbourg, 1877-82)²

I begin with a quote from—what else?—the revised second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, specifically, from the entry entitled "Study of Religion: An Overview" by Professor Gregory D. Alles. (This is, by the way, the lead entry to an entirely new block of entries that treat the history of the academic study of religion in some dozen contexts—that is to say, "The Academic Study of Religion in Australia and Oceania," "The Academic Study of Religion in

¹ Claude Conyers, "Introduction" to the *Encyclopedia of Religion* [first edition]; vol. 1, p. xvii.

² This "Editor's Lament" is quoted in Lawrence E. Sullivan, "Circumscribing Knowledge: Encyclopedias in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 70, no. 3 (July 1990): p. 325.

Eastern Europe and Russia,” “The Academic Study of Religion in China,” “The Academic Study of Religion in Japan,” etc.) At any rate, the opening lines of the opening entry to that block read as follows:

Unlike theology, the academic study of religion seeks to provide accounts of the world’s religions from the perspectives that have no confessional (religious) ground or agenda. As an empirical pursuit, [the academic study of religion] is concerned with understanding and explaining what people actually think and do without establishing or enforcing norms for that thought and behavior... [The academic study of religion] aspires to treat all religions equally.³

Now, while that aspiration to non-confessional evenhandedness is actually a very controversial claim at this point, it is, nonetheless, an aspiration that I have worked to embrace in my role as editor in chief of a revised second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. That is to say, as myself a historian of religions—a practitioner of the academic study of religion—I generally avoid confessions, especially public ones. But in this case, perhaps inspired by the rubric of “theological librarians,” I exercise a very atypical inclination to begin with a public confession.

I confess that my feelings about the *Encyclopedia of Religion* have never been neutral. The original edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, which emerged in 1987 (and in which I played no significant role), was in large part conceived and executed by my teachers at the University of Chicago—notably, by Mircea Eliade, Joseph Kitagawa and Lawrence Sullivan. That is to say, at precisely the same time that those scholars were shaping the encyclopedia, they were also shaping my outlook on the study of religion; and, as luck would have it, they finished with both the encyclopedia and me at about the same time. Accordingly, the original 16-volume set emerged at about roughly the same time I began my teaching career at the Ohio State University. And, as I began to emerge from the poverty of a decade in graduate school—before I

³ Gregory D. Alles, “Study of Religion: An Overview”; *Encyclopedia of Religion*, second edition; vol. 13, p. 8761.

bought car or a new couch or a new pair of shoes—I bought a copy of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. I was thrilled to get it; I remember the boxes that it came in. In fact, then, for essentially my entire teaching career, I have had a copy of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* literally at arm's length, and I have appealed to it on more occasions than I can possibly recall.

In other words, I begin by confessing that I have always found the *Encyclopedia of Religion* something audacious, wonderful and inspiring—over 2700 articles (to which the second edition added nearly 600 completely new titles), over 1300 contributors (to which we added about 800 new authors), over 8.5 million works (to which we added more than a million and half more). Yes, I always thought it was great. And especially since it emerged just a little bit before I got started as a teacher of undergraduates—and I have appealed to it on almost daily basis since then—I reecho the sentiments (or maybe confessions) that I have heard from countless others in my profession: namely, that the *Encyclopedia of Religion* provides our safest safety net when we are called to talk about things about which we really know very little. When you are charged, on short notice, to play a rift (for students, or colleagues, or for the local newspaper) on karma, cannibalism, calendars, Kukai, Korea religions, or Christian creeds—nothing serves better to bale you out than the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. As one of my colleagues, inelegantly put it: “*The Encyclopedia of Religion* can really save your ass.” Yes, I confess that I have always loved the *Encyclopedia of Religion*...

Two Hands on a Revision of Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion*

That confession out of the way, one of the elements that that I would like to retrieve from my talk to the Ohio ATLA group comes from the title (or actually sub-title) that I used on that occasion, namely, “Two Hands on a Revision of Mircea Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion*.” I invoked this allusion to ‘two hands’ as a kind of triple entendre: First, I select the image of ‘two

hands' in relation to the challenge of hanging on tight, for instance, on a roller coaster, or maybe hanging on tight to the steering wheel of a log truck as you fly too-fast down a winding and bumpy mountain road. That is to say, even from the outset, I was well aware that undertaking this project was going to be a rough ride. Just how rough I might not have anticipated and just where the biggest bumps would come I couldn't be sure; but I knew from the outset that this was liable to be a kind of rocky and perilous journey, always a little out of control, invariably running a little (or a lot) too fast, so that I would need to hold on tight... with two hands.

Second, I liked the image of 'two hands' insofar as it connotes embracing the task with fullness (and full energy). Again maybe reflecting my own blue-collar inclinations, I imagined the editorial undertaking was, in some part, about vision, abstraction and large ideas, but also that, in larger part, was a kind labor, a labor that would require perseverance and endurance even more than talent and insight. I anticipated even from the beginning that, irrespective of the vaunted title of 'editor in chief,' that role was likely to be more like digging a ditch than painting a picture, and, as all the ditch-diggers among you know, there is just no way to manage a shovel with one hand. This was a type of labor that would require both hands, a full commitment and a readiness to put everything else on hold.

Third and finally—and maybe most significantly—I invoked the image of 'two hands' to reflect the initiative of balance and compromise (or weighing and negotiation) that has been at issue at virtually every point in the revision process. In other words, over and over I found that, rather than delivering pointed and definitive answers, everything in this project seemed to me to operate on a kind of spectrum between poles—oscillating, as it were, between 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand.' There were, in other words, constant acts of balance, negotiation and re-negotiation. But perhaps the most vexing act of balance and compromise—of this game of playing off of 'on the one hand' versus 'on the other hand'—is built into the very notion of

‘revision’ itself. Neither defense nor attack—and certainly neither a defense of nor an attack on Mircea Eliade—revision demands commingled attitudes of respect for and discontent with the original. Neither defense nor attack, to revise requires, on the one hand, that a goodly portion of the previous work will remain intact. As one of the associate editors aptly phrased it, this revision was an exercise in “cooking with leftovers.” This editorial board was *not* afforded a fully fresh point of departure, and we knew from the beginning that a large portion of the first edition would remain intact. 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. And while I will get more specific in a few minutes about where the largest changes and additions came, it is worth noting that the extent of revision and new material on which we eventually settled far exceeded all initial expectations.

At any rate, my larger point is the obvious—but very consequential—observation that revision is, by nature and by design, a balancing and a juxtaposition of old and new elements. Were we afforded a fully new point of departure, the result would be very different; but, in this case, we were challenged with the constant balancing (and admixing) of the old and the new.

Balancing, Negotiation and Renegotiation: On the One Hand versus On the Other Hand

That said, then, it is with respect to this kind of oscillating principle of ‘on the one hand’ versus ‘on the other hand’ that I can organize my comments this morning. In that spirit, I direct your attention back to my two opening quotations. The first comes from Claude Conyers, who was the Senior Project Editor at Macmillan for the original *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and who was, in many ways, the kind of nurturing spirit that brought the thing into being. He wrote in the Introduction to the first edition:

Indeed, quite early in our planning stage, we [that is, Mircea Eliade, the board of editors for the original *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and the senior members of the Macmillan staff] realized the possibilities of creating a work that would be both truly encyclopedic and widely useful. At the conclusion of the editorial meeting in which we had reached this happy consensus, Victor Turner remarked with evident delight, “And so, then, we shall let a thousand flowers bloom.”⁴

(You may, by the way, recall that the original *Encyclopedia of Religion* is dedicated to both Mircea Eliade and Victor Turner, both of whom were very much involved in its conceptualization, but both of whom also died before it actually appeared in 1987.)

At any rate, the second quote puts a somewhat less happy spin on the process of editing a large encyclopedia of religion. This one comes from Frédéric Lichtenberger, editor of a nineteenth-century French encyclopedia of religion, who, somewhere midway through the process, wrote:

I cannot think, without weeping, of that courage that must have failed me when I accepted to undertake this work... Now I must never cease to try and stimulate the ardor of my collaborators, embolden the timid and the modest, activate the zeal of the lazy and the backsliders, extend my investigations beyond the ordinary world of our Protestant writers—in order to investigate the wider history of religions—and quiet their dogmatic and literary scrapping. What a mess of egos to manage and disagreements to mediate! And, among my collaborators, what unwillingness there is to get going and be guided by a common discipline.⁵

When I first happened across this quote I found it very funny. But, as I moved through this roller-coaster process of the revision, I also found a very significant measure of truth in Lichtenberger’s so-termed “Editor’s Lament.” That is to say, I found myself, at times, identifying very fully both, on the one hand, with the happy optimism of Victor Turner, and the metaphor of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* as ‘a fertile garden’ where innumerable ideas and notions about religion are allowed to grow. As I had noted earlier, long before I became

⁴ Claude Conyers, “Introduction,” to the *Encyclopedia of Religion* [first edition]; vol. 1, p. xvii.

⁵ “Editor’s Lament”; quoted in Sullivan, “Circumscribing Knowledge: Encyclopedias in Historical Perspective,” p. 325.

involved in this revision process, I had had been persuaded that *Encyclopedia of Religion* was something audacious and inspiring. Moreover, as I got deeper and deeper in my involvements with it, I gain deeper and deeper respect for the accomplishment that the original *Encyclopedia of Religion* represents. When I begin to pull the veil back on this revered set (and put it under a microscope), of course, some cracks and creaky joints emerged—and, of course, the very pretense of so-termed ‘encyclopedic coverage’ puts one in a highly vulnerable position. But, generally speaking, the more fully I understood the challenge, the more fully I appreciated the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. My sense that it was something great was, in large part, reconfirmed. So that is the happy ‘Victor Turner’ side of the equation...

But, on the other hand, there were certainly days (or moments or months) when I felt much more inclined to reiterate the fatigued frustration of Frédéric Lichtenberger when he wrote, “I cannot think, without weeping, of that courage that must have failed me when I accepted to undertake this work...” There were, in fact, countless little crises and at least a couple of catastrophes large enough to nearly sink (or jeopardize) the whole project. Moreover, I have plenty of colleagues who have felt compelled to remind me that, we contemporary academics operate in a (‘post-modern’) critical climate that accentuates the fragmentary, the shifting, the broken, hybrid, transient and partial, a critical climate in which the old-fashioned Enlightenment notion of encyclopedias and so-termed ‘encyclopedic knowledge’ is ludicrous or, at the best and kindest, unfashionable. To imagine in the 21st century that ‘religion’ is something stable and whole, which can be neatly apportioned in categories that run from A to Z, is, my hip (and very persuasive) colleagues tell me, preposterous. So there was also ample reason for a kind of despair on a theoretical level.

Additionally, there were lots of more logistical, procedural and, shall we say, ‘personality’ challenges that evoked Lichtenberger’s tired desperation—and most of these were

connected in one way or another with those many moments when I found myself astraddle (or maybe in the crosshairs of) a very awkward tension—a tension that was much more intense than I had previously imagined—between the corporate world (or ‘the corporate culture’) of Macmillan and the academic world of the scholarly contributors to the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. In fact, directing traffic at that dangerous intersection between the paths of publishers and professors provided perhaps my most serious challenges (as well as my most entertaining anecdotes).

**The Conception and Organization of the Original *Encyclopedia of Religion*:
Archaeology and Oral History**

Be that as it may—and again not quite certain where the interests of this ATLA group lie—I did nonetheless want to provide at least a little background (or history) concerning the conception of the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Here again I can rely on my ‘one-the-one-hand’ but ‘on-the-other-hand’ format: On the one hand, I might suggest that the ‘archaeology’ of the encyclopedia is a better term than the ‘history’ of the encyclopedia insofar there are surprisingly—and distressingly—very few written records that document the process of decision-making and production that guided the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (which appeared in 1987). Part of the problem owes to the absence of anything like e-mail back in the ‘olden days’ of the 1980’s; and even more of the problem owes to the fact that, through the 1990’s, Macmillan (or more properly Macmillan Reference USA) was bought and sold numerous times by numerous companies. Thus, as we began this revision, there were virtually no Macmillan employees who had worked on the first edition (at least in any major way) that were still around to work on the second edition. Moreover, there was a complete lack of any paper trail of correspondence, rough drafts or minutes from editorial board meetings; in fact, not a shred of written documentation about the first edition emerged (at least not from

Macmillan). The sole extant document of consequence was the CD-ROM of the original edition, and, in fact, that old CD-ROM provided the frame on which the second edition was built.

That is to say, then, on the one hand, the *written* record on the conception and organization of the original *Encyclopedia of Religion* is fragmentary and scattered (though if you wanted a single document that does shed light on that process, I would refer you to the article by Lawrence Sullivan from which I took the Lichenberger quote; or, more recently, a Romanian graduate student at Princeton has undertaken to dig through the Mircea Eliade archive at the University of Chicago to come up with some relevant information, which appears in Eduard Iricinschi, “Mircea Eliade and the Making of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*,” *Archaeus, Etudes d’Histoire des Religions/Studies in the History of Religions*, tome VIII [2004], fasc. 1-4, pp. 365-384). But, on the other hand, with respect to the conception and production of the original *Encyclopedia of Religion*, there is an immense ‘oral history’ concerning the personnel and circumstances that helps to explain various anomalies, gaps and sometimes very fortuitous idiosyncrasies in the first edition. In other words, as news of this revision spread, I found myself (in correspondence but even more in the informal gatherings around meetings and conferences) treated to endless anecdotes about who did what in the first edition—for instance, how this little conversation in the back of a limo on the way to O’Hare Airport had led to entries variously on “Hands”, “Knees” and “Postures and Gestures”; or how articles by a famous French scholar were in fact written by graduate students; or how staff people at Macmillan were called to upon at the very last minute to write various articles when others had dropped the ball; and so forth.

Thus, while the written records are distressingly thin, the oral history—and fund of personal reminiscences—about the production of the first edition is abundant in the extreme. I enjoy very much learning those anecdotal details as they come forward, and I expect that I will

continue to be audience to those sorts of reminiscences for the remainder of my life. So, yes, please let know if you have some anecdote of that sort; I love hearing them.

Mircea Eliade's Role in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*

In any case, the dearth of records notwithstanding, we do have sufficient information to know that the original impetus for the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, perhaps surprisingly, did *not* come from Mircea Eliade. Rather (drawing here on that article by Larry Sullivan), the project was instigated by a publisher with whom Eliade had never before worked, namely Jeremiah Kaplan, then chairman and president of the Macmillan Publishing Company. Right from that initial conception, even before Eliade was on board, Claude Conyers (whom I quote earlier) was in place as the senior editor; and Charles E. Smith, who would later become president and publisher of Macmillan's professional books division, also had a leading role. It was, then, to the best of my knowledge, Charles Smith who, around 1979, began to persuade Eliade—who was at the time 72 years old—to take on the editorship of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* project. And, in fact, in Eliade's diaries and published journals one can find him expressing considerable reticent about getting involved in this. One of Eliade's (1979) journal entries reads, for instance, as he is about to take on the project:

I know that many of my colleagues and former students will doubt the wisdom of my decision. I'm an old man. I have a great many other things to do: works in progress to finish, etc. But I said to myself that it's preferable for an encyclopedia of this kind to be planned and organized by a historian of religions rather than by a sociologist or a psychologist, or even a theologian, however competent he may be.⁶

In another (1981) entry, Eliade recounts a conversation with a former student by noting: "... [Bruce Lincoln] says to me frankly that I made a big mistake in accepting, *at my age*, the

⁶ Eliade quoted in Sullivan, "Circumscribing Knowledge," p. 334.

responsibility of editor in chief of the *Encyclopedia [of Religion]*. (He's right, of course, but my 'sacrifice' has a deep meaning."⁷

Now, for me, Eliade's reticence to get involved in this project raised a fascinating question about the real extent of his 'hands-on' involvement in the orchestration of the first edition. In other words—again playing the 'on-the-one-hand' versus 'on-the-other-hand' game—was he simply providing a kind of large vision and oversight, but not much involved in the minutia of the project? Or was Eliade—now in the very last years of his life, overtaxed with many projects and not in good health—really involved in the nuts-and-bolts decision making? Was he acting like a CEO or maybe an air traffic controller? Or was he actually piloting the ship?

While there really is *not* a whole about this in his journals, I do find references to Eliade's initial acceptance of Charles Smith's proposal for him to be editor in chief, to his commitment to recruit a very strong showing of contributors from outside of the United States, especially Europe, and to his attempt to read drafts of many, though certainly not all, of the articles as they begin to come in. And while I risk taking these comments a little bit out of context, I thought I'd read a couple sets of particularly poignant comments that come in a 1985 entry, about six months prior to Eliade's death, when he is in failing health, and a couple years prior to the emergence of the *Encyclopedia*:

July 1985: "I must admit it: in actuality, I'm doing nothing. That is, although I am working five or six hours every day, I don't succeed in finishing anything... Sometimes I have the impression that I'm threatened by a fast-working senility. I feel detached from all I've loved heretofore: philosophy, the history of religions, literature. I console myself (or I try to) as best I can. I tell myself the last treatments have tired me."⁸

Then August 1, 1985: "The days pass, and, unfortunately, the last months allowed to me are flowing by—while I do nothing. Fatigue, yes, but especially indifference. I have so

⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Journal IV, 1979-1986*, translated from the Romanian by Mac Linscott Ricketts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

many things to do that I know that in no event will I be able to do them all. I'd like, nevertheless, to continue the *Autobiography* and to write the last chapter of *Historie IV*—and I *must*, at all costs, prepare the preface for the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. But if I keep putting things off..."⁹

He did, by the way, write that Preface, which appears in the first volume; but it is very likely the last (or almost last) thing that Eliade ever wrote, and it is a kind of rough document.

At any rate, though this remains a kind of open and debatable question, the more I learn about the situation—and the more anecdotal testimony that I accumulate—on the one hand, the more I am impressed by the deep level of hands-on involvement that Eliade (apparently) really did have both in the framing of the topics and organization of the *Encyclopedia* as well as in the selection of the contributors, especially European-based contributors, of which he was determined to get many. Yet, if the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, in lots of ways, does indeed bear the stamp of Mircea Eliade, I would, on the other hand, make at least a couple quick counter-points. First, even if Eliade was in the lead role, the organization and structure also bears the stamp of other individuals—most notably, Joseph M. Kitagawa, Eliade's long-time colleague at the University of Chicago, who wrote the Foreword that comes after Eliade's Preface, and whose influence is apparent in many aspects of this encyclopedia. Also crucial was the involvement of Lawrence Sullivan, a student of Eliade, who was the sole "associate editor" for the first edition; in fact, there is little question that it was Larry Sullivan who did more than anyone else to combine both the intellectual vision and legwork that made the first edition possible.

Additionally, I would also call your attention to two other relevant points here: For one, besides these references in Eliade's journals to him taking a very strong, hands-on approach to the formulation of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, we also find something of the opposite insofar as he writes (on September 24, 1984):

⁹ Ibid.

Yesterday I began reading those several hundred typed pages: articles for the *Encyclopedia [of Religion]*, sent from New York. I am not always in accord with their authors, but if the documentation is correct and (as much as possible) complete, I give them my okay. I shall not read more than a small part of the pages of those sixteen volumes of the Encyclopedia; I haven't the competence or the curiosity to judge, for example, the history of the Christian sects or the sociology of religious movements in China...¹⁰

In other words, there is lots of the first edition that Eliade did not even have an opportunity to read, let alone police. Moreover, given the absence of any extant record of the production of the first edition, his next comment seems especially naïve: "... I imagine that the Free Press (Macmillan) will preserve the entire archive; it will be possible to know later which texts passed through my hands and how I evaluated them."¹¹ As I noted earlier, no such records have survived.

Be that as it may, I would make one other point in this regard—though I won't elaborate on this as fully as I'd like. It is, I think, much too simple to suggest, as some critics have, that the entire *Encyclopedia of Religion*, even in its original edition, was thoroughly or even decidedly, 'Eliadean' in conception (from front to back). That is to say, Eliade's hurried Preface to the first edition is *not* a very accurate reflection of the methodological orientation of that is at work in lots of the 2700 entries. There was in the first version—and even more so in the revision—a very wide spectrum of methodological approaches at work in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

The Synoptic Outline of Contents: Scaffolding, Map, and/or 'Dirty Laundry'

At any rate, let me move next to say something quickly about the content and organization of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* with reference to the Synoptic Outline of

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

¹¹ Ibid.

Contents—and this can lead me to some remarks about which components of the second edition were most aggressively reconfigured and which experienced a lighter sort of editorial touch.

Now, while I haven't the time to labor too long over the logic of this organizational scheme, I did want to address the Synoptic Outline, for one, because this really does serve as the clearest sort of 'map' of the whole work and, for two, because, from what I have been told, this is a matter of very considerable concern to librarians.

Here again we encounter a certain irony (or discrepancy), or actually a couple of discrepancies. On the one hand, my own non-systematic but nonetheless quite extensive conversations about the *Encyclopedia of Religion* with scholars, including those that are very familiar and generally affirming of the encyclopedia, reveals that lots of them—probably most of them—have never even looked at the Synoptic Outline. In other words, maybe like those people who are inclined to ignore entirely the directions when they assemble do-it-yourself bookcases, lamps or electronics, for many scholars (and perhaps for even more lay users), the Synoptic Outline plays no role whatever in guiding their navigation of the encyclopedia. One great exception to that general neglect of the Synoptic Outline, however, does come in those scholars who have written formal reviews of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*; this group has, I dare say, made quite extensive studies of that outline. That is to say, there is one sort of scholarly audience that is actually more interested in—and interested in attacking—the *structure* of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* than the *content* of the encyclopedia; and for that set of critics the Synoptic Outline (along with the Eliade's Preface and Kitagawa's Foreword) provide the easiest targets for exposing various presumed biases, imbalances and limitations.

By the same token, the editorial board of the revision—a group forced into intimate acquaintance with the Synoptic Outline—themselves became among the harshest of its critics. As one senior board member phrased the problem, the longer that he pondered the Synoptic

Outline—with its weird mix of geographical, tradition-specific and thematic principals of organization—the more problematic and distorting it seemed to be. Hyper-sensitive to the so-called ‘tyranny of taxonomy’—that is, the distortions that are consequent of trying to some force all of the relevant ‘data’ into some sort of taxonomic scheme—all of us became aware of the inadequacies of the Synoptic Outline as a means of imposing order on the unwieldy mass of stuff that is connected with the phenomenon of ‘religion.’ In fact, in the opinion of some board members, the Synoptic Outline—while it may serve as a kind of provisional, in-house scaffolding for us encyclopedia-makers—was actually our ‘dirty laundry’ insofar as we *did* need to have such a heuristic scheme among ourselves, but we ought *not* air it out in public. From that view, laying the Synoptic Outline out in clear view was akin to a boxer leading with his chin, putting oneself unnecessarily at peril... because an outline of this sort is so immediately vulnerable to criticism.

But, on the other hand, Macmillan representatives said quite the opposite. According to them—and this is a perfect context in which to either prove or deny this claim—few aspects of the encyclopedia matter more to librarians than the Synoptic Outline. Macmillan cautioned the self-censoring board that librarians rely very heavily on synoptic outlines, and that there would be some sort of violent revolutionary response among librarians if it were omitted. Precisely what form an insurrection among librarians might take was never entirely clear; but lest you think that ATLA members don’t exercise important influence on these things, the original plan for the second edition was to move the Synoptic Outline to a much more prominent place at the beginning of the set rather than buried at the end (as it was in the first edition). But, owing to logistical matters—especially timing and the fact that the Synoptic Outline was one of the very last features of the revision to be completed—the schematic summary ended up again in the last volume of the set.

Selective Adjustments and Additions in the Revised Second Edition

NOTE: This portion of the plenary address was devoted to a speedy inventory of which portions of the revised second edition were most heavily changed and which experienced a somewhat lighter editorial hand. Because that part of the talk was, in large part, a rushed summary of the section of my Preface to the Second Edition entitled “New Features and Configurations” (vol. 1, pp. xiii-xv), instead of repeating the oral summary here I refer you to that portion of the actual second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, which provides a somewhat fuller and more accurate synopsis of the most salient adjustments.¹²

Nonetheless—though the ‘numbers game’ is nearly always misleading—it is notable that the revised second edition is roughly 1.6 million words longer than the original. Moreover—and while this is a statement that would require lots of qualification and fine-tuning (because the simple counting of articles tends to mislead as much as it reveals)—it might be helpful to note that the second edition contains roughly 3200 entries (3195 to be more exact) and nearly 1000 of those are either completely new headings (about 595) or completely rewritten old headings (about 353). That is to say, in the broadest strokes, roughly one-third of the entire encyclopedia was rewritten; moreover, there were also lots of adjustments and revisions in that remaining two thirds: In some of those cases, the adjustments took the form of first-edition authors updating their own work; in some cases, first-edition entries were updated and/or revised by different authors; in some 50 cases, especially significant but nonetheless outdated first-edition entries were allowed to remain intact but were then supplemented with an entirely new “Further Considerations” piece; and in other cases, first-edition entries remained intact but were supplemented by additional bibliography. (Again, I refer you to my “Preface to the Second

¹² Lindsay Jones, “Preface to the Second Edition”, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, second edition; vol. 1, pp. xi-xv.

Edition” for a fuller accounting of the process and distribution of changes.) In short, while I and the editorial board never really relied on quotas or precisely targeted percentages—instead we operated with a more flexible aspiration to change that which needed to be changed—the eventual extent of modification and addition far exceeded the initial expectations of the board, and even more of Macmillan.

Be that as it may, even to begin to gain a full and accurate appreciation of all that has changed and all that has remained the same would require a detailed (and, I concur, very tedious) cross-checking of the respective “Synoptic Outlines of Contents” and/or “Lists of Articles” from the first and second editions—though that too would reveal a decidedly incomplete picture. In fact, to quote myself, “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.”¹³

Concluding Comments: Flowers, Egos and Confessions

Poor excuse for a circle that this casual presentation may be, I wanted for my closing thought to return to the juxtaposition of the two quotations to which I alluded earlier—Claude Conyers’ happy and optimistic one about the *Encyclopedia of Religion* as a kind of garden wherein all sorts of flowers might bloom and the more dire one from Frédéric Lichetenberger about “the mess of egos” he had to manage and disagreements he had to mediate. I return to the juxtaposition of the enthusiastic and the sour—but only to reaffirm my affinity with the former. That is to say, in the end—now that the completed revision sits on the library shelf—I am very pleased to align myself with Victor Turner, and with what Conyers interpreted as Turner’s

¹³ Ibid., p. xv.

“evident delight” at undertaking this massive project. Had this been *my* project—if I were in it alone—I’m sure that I *would* have grown depressed, exhausted and overwhelmed, because I did feel the occasional emergence of all three of those sentiments. But then, when I was able to open my e-mail in-box and find messages from Italy, Finland, Yugoslavia, Britain, Latvia, Nigeria and Japan..., from Harvard, Yale, Syracuse, Missouri, Chicago, Loyola and even the other side of Ohio State..., all weighing in with their contributions to the revision, I was bolstered and invigorated.

At the beginning of the process I was surprised—even amazed—that I had somehow found myself at the lead position on this huge project; and now that the revision is complete, my sense of wonderment has, if anything, increased. For whatever reason, I got my chance to, as the slogan goes, “do something big,” and I have at no point in the process taken my good fortune for granted. Alternatively, I come to realize (and to appreciate) that, once again, like so many times in my teaching career, the *Encyclopedia of Religion* has baled me out. The *Encyclopedia of Religion* has once more saved me and enriched me—not just with a gap-filling article—but this time with a giant infusion of life and challenge and energy and purpose. For a historian of religions of my ilk, there could be no happier burden than the re-making of this encyclopedia. Yes, I confess: I have always loved the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

Thanks very much for your attention.