

Reader's Guide

This encyclopedia explores the conundrums addressed in the volume's introduction and it does so by examining a wide variety of religion-and-nature-related phenomena. It also does so in a variety of ways, including through its three distinct entry genres.

Scholarly entries have been written in a standard encyclopedia genre in which the premium has been to introduce a theme, historical period or event, region, tradition, group, or individual, while analyzing its relevance to the overall discussion in a scholarly and balanced way. With these fully peer-reviewed entries, care has been taken to provide readers with sufficient information and recommended readings to enable independent follow-up and further research.

Scholarly Perspectives entries, which are demarcated and are denoted by the symbol SP, afford prominent figures an opportunity to reflect on the religion and nature field in a more personal and reflective way, or their authors may advance an argument in a way that would be atypical in a standard, scholarly encyclopedia entry.

Practitioner entries, which are also demarcated by the symbol P are written by individuals actively engaged in one or another form of nature-related spirituality. They further illuminate the ferment over religion and nature by providing wide latitude for religious practitioners who are interested in religion and nature to express themselves in their own words.

Most entries are easy to find alphabetically. Some that are closely related to longer ones are nestled adjacent to them in "sidebar" entries, which are enclosed in a lined box. Sidebars are designed to illuminate or otherwise extend the discussion in the associated entry.

Because website locations are notoriously ephemeral, unless direct quotes are taken from them they have not been included in the further reading sections. The many groups and individuals discussed in these volumes can, of course, be easily found through internet search engines. The website associated with this project, which is located at www.religionandnature.com, has links to many of the groups noted in the text, as well as to supplementary information related to many of the entries. This information includes graphics, photographs, music, non-English bibliographic resources, and bibliographic information available after the encyclopedia was published. Readers will be able to learn more by visiting this website in the future, which is intended to be periodically updated.

Cross-references follow most entries. These do more than point to directly related entries; they provide contrasts and sometimes unexpected comparative reference points. In this introduction, cross-references are indicated by SMALL CAPS in the text, as are the cross-references in two entries that were written to complement the introduction: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS and RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN.

Indeed, after reading the introduction most readers would do well to begin with these two entries, adding ECOLOGY AND RELIGION, ECOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, and SOCIAL SCIENCE ON RELIGION AND NATURE for an overview of anthropological and other social scientific approaches to understanding the religion/nature/culture nexus. Combined with the adjoining encyclopedia introduction, these entries provide a broad introduction to the religion and nature field.

Of course, some will prefer to begin immediately by paging through the volumes and reading entries that strike their interest, then following the cross-references at the end of each entry. Another approach would be to page through the general index and read entries clustered there, for example, by religion or region. Alternatively, one could follow a particular figure of interest through many entries where she or he might be mentioned, an approach that would illuminate that individual's contributions and influence. The work can be read in other ways as well – regional overviews first, or all the entries on specific traditions or themes. It could also be read chronologically, starting with our entries ON PALEOLITHIC RELIGIONS and then those exploring ancient civilizations, for example, before moving to later periods. Another way to start would be to turn to the volume's list of contributors and read the entries written by writers with whom one is already familiar. The voices in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* include some of the world's environmental, religious, and scholarly luminaries, as well as a wide variety of scholars and religious practitioners from around the world. For many of the contributors, English is not their first language, and their writing reflects some of the grammatical conventions of their mother tongues. We have edited such entries lightly, and hopefully, have retained the sense as well as the feel for the original submission.

The approaches to this work will, little doubt, be as numerous and diverse as the contributors to it and the readers of it.