Woman scholars still represent a minority in today’s academy. Those writing from a feminist point of view are in a smaller number still. This is certainly true in the study of religion, yet paradoxically some of the liveliest discussions are taking place here and few are the colleges and universities without a “Women and Religion” course on offer. This is a definite growth area in Women’s Studies and the stream of publications which continues to appear in feminist theology, women’s spirituality or on women and world religions does indicate that a paradigm shift is occurring in religious studies which for so long have simply been “men’s studies” rather than an inclusive enquiry into both women’s and men’s religious experiences, beliefs and practices. But as more and more women are entering the academy and taking full part in its activities, an increasing amount of critical and constructive feminist scholarship of great quality is produced which questions the underlying assumptions of the traditional approaches to the study of religion. However, these new perspectives and results of women’s scholarship are slow to enter mainstream academic publications of great visibility and prestige.

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A good example of this is the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Published in 1987 it has quickly established itself as an important reference work which is widely used in universities and public libraries around the world. Masterminded by Mircea Eliade until his death in 1986, it presents to us the rich diversity, the extraordinary variety and complexity of different religious worlds and phenomena in their historical and contemporary forms. The *Encyclopedia*, produced in a record time of five years, is in many ways a remarkable achievement based on the collaborative effort of 1357 contemporary scholars from all over the world, though it possesses a strong North American orientation. Eliade has many well-known publications to his credit and the *Encyclopedia* is his last and greatest project for which he will no doubt be remembered for years to come. It was his stated aim to present in this reference work “a selection of all the important ideas and beliefs, rituals and myths, symbols and persons, all that played a role in the universal history of the religious experience of humankind... within the limits of our present knowledge.”

A selection it certainly is. A full assessment of the project as a whole would need to weigh up carefully what criteria were used in the selection and interpretation of data included in the *Encyclopedia*. Such a critical assessment will have to be undertaken one day but goes beyond the limits of a brief article and is not my purpose here. All I want to do at present is to address some questions to the *Encyclopedia* from a feminist perspective and enquire how far women are represented as subjects in their own right, but also as objects of enquiry in the study of religion. More important still, how far have feminist themes, methodology, and hermeneutics found an entry into the selection of articles and their presentation?

Let us begin with the most obvious, external criteria and look at the number of women contributors to the *Encyclopedia*. On my count there are about 175 women among the 1357 international scholars who wrote entries for the *Encyclopedia*. This figure can only be approximately established from the published list of contributors as some first names are only given as initials whilst others are ambiguous as they can apply to either sex. However, if we take this approximate figure as a basis for comparison, we have somewhat less than 13% women contributors. This is probably less