

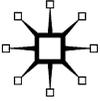
# The New Sciences of Religion

# **The New Sciences of Religion**

Exploring Spirituality from the  
Outside In and Bottom Up

William Grassie

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THE NEW SCIENCES OF RELIGION

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This book is long overdue in two senses. First, the book has been needed to help shape an important field of research and the public understanding of that field, that is, the scientific study of religious and spiritual phenomena. Second, the book has also had a long gestation in my life, really going back over thirty years when I first began to study religion as an undergraduate student at Middlebury College in 1975, including a voyeuristic junior year abroad at the Hebrew University as a “participant observer” of religions in Jerusalem in 1977–1978. In the ensuing decades, my studies and reflections on these big questions continued through formal and informal education, through many encounters and much travel, and through the many personal, political, and practical challenges of life. Given this long and ponderous intellectual and spiritual journey, there are a lot of people whom I should acknowledge. My life has been touched and transformed by them in myriad ways; this book is a result of those transformations.

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## P E R M I S S I O N S

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“The New Sciences of Religion” was a lecture presented at Nanjing University, China, October 2006, and other venues over the years. It was published online by Metanexus in May 2007 and edited and republished in print by *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* in March 2008. This book expands on this essay. Many parts of this argument and some sections of the book have been copied and adapted into chapters one, two, eight, and nine. The project has expanded from a 15,000-word essay into a 100,000-word book.

Chapter three, “The Economics of Religion,” was presented at the Society for the Integration of Science and Human Values (SiSHVa) at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka, on October 17, 2007.

Chapter four, “The Evolution of Religion,” was also presented at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka, November 1, 2007.

Chapter five, “The Neurosciences of Religion,” was presented at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka, on November 22, 2007. This essay was published in *Metanexus* (January 2008) and is available online at <http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/tabid/68/id/10260/Default.aspx> as well as on my personal website. The essay was later translated into Spanish and published in *Tendencias21* <http://www.tendencias21.net/m/index.php#3>. This essay is substantially revised and edited for this book.

Chapter six, “The Medicine of Religion,” was presented for the Society for the Integration of Science and Human Values at the University of Peradeniya, Kandy, Sri Lanka, on January 31, 2008.

Chapter seven, “The Narratives of Religion,” is based in part on research on hermeneutics that was published in William Grassie’s dissertation in 1994, as well as an adaptation of an essay entitled “Entangled Narratives: Competing Visions of the Good Life” presented at a symposium of the US-Sri Lankan Fulbright Commission in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on January 4, 2008. It was published in *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 34, nos. 1&2 (2008). The essay was then republished by Metanexus at <http://www.metanexus.net/magazine/tabid/68/id/10473/Default.aspx>. Chapter seven is significantly revised and edited for this book.

Other bits and pieces, here and there, have appeared in other essays online and in a collection of my essays: *Politics by Other Means: Science and Religion in the Twenty-First Century*. (Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2010.)

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