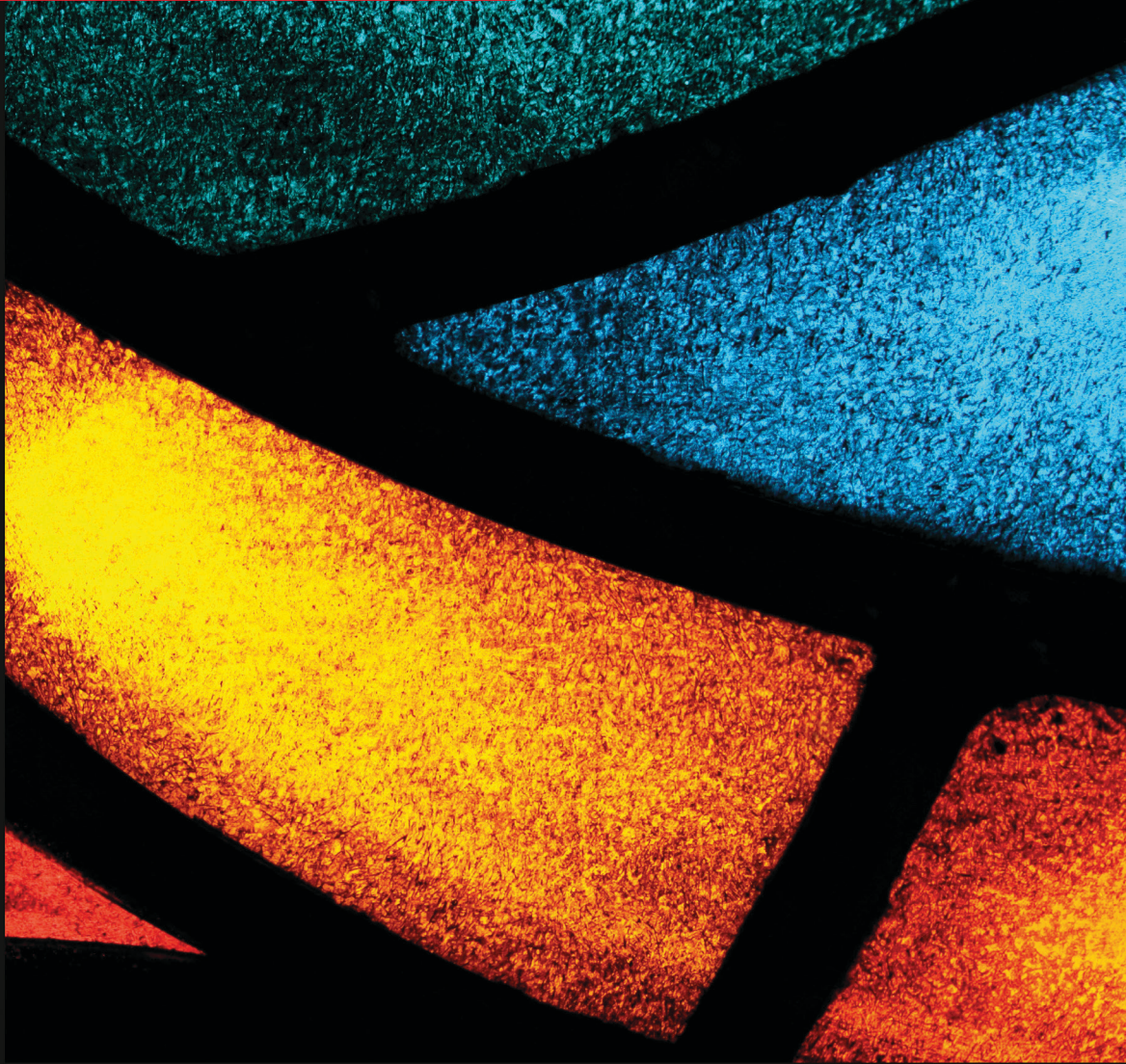




ROUTLEDGE
HANDBOOKS



The Routledge Handbook of Language and Religion

Edited by Stephen Pihlaja and Helen Ringrow

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

The Routledge Handbook of Language and Religion is the first ever comprehensive collection of research on religion and language, with over 35 authors from 15 countries, presenting a range of linguistic and discourse analytic research on religion and belief in different discourse contexts.

The contributions show the importance of studying language and religion and for bringing together work in this area across sub-disciplines, languages, cultures, and geographical boundaries. The *Handbook* focuses on three major topics: Religious and Sacred Language, Institutional Discourse, and Religious Identity and Community. Scholars from a variety of difference disciplinary backgrounds investigate these topics using a range of linguistic perspectives including Cognitive Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, and Conversation Analysis. The data analysed in these chapters come from a variety of religious backgrounds and national contexts. Linguistic data from all the major world religions are included, with sacred texts, conversational data, and institutional texts included for analysis.

The *Handbook* is intended to be useful for readers from different subdisciplines within linguistics, but also to researchers working in other disciplines including philosophy, theology, and sociology. Each chapter gives both a template for research approaches and suggestions for future research and will inspire readers at every stage of their career.

Stephen Pihlaja lives and teaches in Birmingham (UK). He is the author of several books on talk about religion, including *Talk about Faith: how debate and conversation shape belief* (2021). He is interested in how people talk about and understand their own beliefs in diverse contexts.

Helen Ringrow researches gender and religion, particularly in online contexts. She is author of *The Language of Cosmetics Advertising* (2016) and co-editor of *Contemporary Media Stylistics* (2020).

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FOREWORD

Paul Chilton

The first signs of religion-like activity go back some 300,000 years. But religion in anything like its recognisable form probably emerged with the evolution of language in humans, going back 150 to 500 thousand years ago. For religious activity to emerge in a socially collective form, language must have already been developing. In written form, religious feelings appeared around 5,000 years ago. There is, therefore, a very tight link between language and religion—the subject of this enlightening new volume.

Religion is far from being irrelevant in the modern world, even though scepticism, agnosticism, and atheism are alive and kicking. For millions of individuals around the globe religion is a central element of everyday life, a key feature of social, political, and cultural bonding, and the very pivot of identity, not to mention religion's role as a source of personal solace and stability. That is not the whole story, however. There exist, and always have existed, extremely troubling aspects of religion, whether you are a believer or not. One need only think of the Christian Crusades of mediaeval Europe, the wars of religion following the Reformation, continuing in the death and destruction caused by the Thirty Years' War, and three centuries later in the violent Catholic–Protestant political conflict in Northern Ireland. Most obvious today is violent Islamic jihadism, and violent religious conflict in India. These negative aspects of religion also involve the use (or misuse) of religious language and concepts. They certainly deserve the attention of linguists and critical discourse analysts.

The term 'religion' is a relatively recent one in its modern senses. Its most likely etymology lies in the Latin verb *religare*, involving the idea of 'binding', physically or metaphorically. In Roman times the word *religio* meant something general, like moral and social 'obligation' (this word, too, contains the idea of binding and being morally bound), as well as 'reverence' and 'respect'. It was not at that time used to refer to organised religious systems. Its various meanings have developed since, in step with social and cultural change. A major development in the meaning of the term 'religion' occurred during and after the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe. From the Enlightenment on, it gradually became socially and culturally feasible to talk *about* religion, religions, and religious belief in an objective fashion, from outside of a religious framework. In other words, thinkers and writers began to work with a metalanguage. The new scholarly volume that Stephen Pihlaja and Helen Ringrow have so creatively assembled demonstrates exactly such an approach to making sense of the phenomenon of religion, advancing our understanding by

introducing new methods of investigating the intrinsic role of language. Their volume offers novel ways of talking about, analysing, and understanding the relationship between religious feelings and religious language. Importantly, it also shows how new insights into these connections can be applied in a multi-cultural and multi-faith world, where secularity is also spreading. The overarching question is: what does the word 'religion' imply for us today?

To answer this, and similar questions about religion, the first thing that is needed is factual and impartial description. The collection of large amounts of data is now possible thanks to new digital technology. Compiling corpora, and refining methods of analysis, should be a multi-faith endeavour, both in terms of the diversity of faith traditions examined and in terms of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the researchers involved—a combination that the Pihlaja and Ringrow collection admirably exemplifies. The contributors provide a wide range of examples of religious texts, languages, and types of religious activity across a variety of settings. It is in newly emergent settings, produced by our increasingly globalised world, that new challenges for inter-faith communication arise. This is particularly true for education, where different religious beliefs, customs, and languages coexist. Another problematic area is the teaching of English as a second language in societies that are often dominated by a particular religious system. Teaching of a national language necessarily involves introducing vocabularies that can carry underlying cultural assumptions and values that are not consistent with learners' own cultures and values. In these ways, the close relationship between language and religion has produced the contemporary need for new ways of thinking and talking about religion in the teaching and training establishments. There is an idealistic perspective in this kind of practical work since it holds the promise of overcoming the sorry histories of antagonism and violent confrontation that have been generated by religions.

Stephen Pihlaja and Helen Ringrow bring together not only scholars who address the crucial practical problems associated with religions in a diverse and interconnected world, they also bring into view the ways in which the linguistic sciences can begin to address fundamental questions about how, and perhaps why, religious feeling and thinking presents itself in the human mind. Consider just one of the areas that have troubled philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, and others: do different religions have universal characteristics? A new focus on what may be the intrinsic connection between the religious mind and language has the potential to shed new light on religious mentation, religious practices, and religious institutions. There are at least two ways in which research into language and religion can move toward that goal. One is the application of research in cognitive linguistics, including but not overemphasizing the well-known theories of metaphor, and not forgetting that grammatical choices are also a cognitive process. If we think of cognitive linguistics as providing explanatory models for future testing, we enter the domain of neurolinguistics, which will over time provide closer evidence of the way in which language and religion interact in human brains. A second approach, already well advanced in linguistics and literary studies, is the study of genres and their distinguishing linguistic features. Many researchers in the various disciplines that examine religion and religions have noted the prevalence of particular genres that recur across numerous religious traditions. Well-known examples are rituals and rites, chanting and gestures, prayer and meditation, sermons and exhortations, sacred texts, exegesis, and hermeneutics—the list of genres that could be universal is long. What linguists can offer is far more detailed description of religious genres in different languages than has hitherto been available. In the process, new insights will emerge and more precise understandings of what kinds of languaging are universal to religion and what kinds mark differences among them. These are long-term goals for the field of language and religion research—theolinguistics might be one label for it or others may emerge—and they will doubtless change as the field develops.

Foreword

My own interest in the language of religion started when I was a doctoral student writing about a seventeenth-century French religious poet. As I had parallel interests in linguistics, I became intrigued by the peculiarities of religious language and the multi-faceted ways in which it engages thoughts and emotions. It was obvious also that religious language, though purportedly concerned with the eternal, was always rooted in the context of its historical present. Above all, it was clear that understanding religion's hold over human minds and societies was a task that would need many scholars from various academic disciplines, religious inheritances, and linguistic backgrounds. It was only much later that, with my co-editor Monika Kopytowska, we got around to bringing together several scholars who converged on the question of religious language. It seemed too much to hope at that time that this research path might develop further. This exciting new volume edited by Stephen Pihlaja and Helen Ringrow proves me wrong.

1

LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

Stephen Pihlaja and Helen Ringrow

Background

Religious belief and practice are deeply rooted in how we use language. These uses of language differ dramatically in different contexts, from the call to prayer from a mosque at dawn, to the chants of a monk in a monastery, to the recitation of a belief statement with a group of other believers. These kinds of religious contexts and the language that surrounds them are common in many cultures and belief systems. At the same time, language about religion and belief comes up in other contexts as well, when a friend says to another *inshallah* (if God wills it) when talking about their plans for the evening, or a person refers to a blessing in their life. These are ways of talking that implicitly orient towards a religious way of thinking about the world, often in ways that go completely unnoticed by the people interacting. And then there is the presence of religious language in otherwise secular institutions, when politicians subtly, or perhaps not so subtly, make use of sacred texts and recognisable religious language to imply the morality of their position, or sacred texts are used to reinforce otherwise secular governments. Telling where religious language begins and ends is rarely straightforward.

Religious identities are also important parts of how people see themselves and see the world, and consequently how they talk about themselves in this world. Like any other part of identity, consistencies can be seen across different groups, with specific registers relating to particular religions. Sacred languages can be an important part of how people connect with what they believe to be the divine and communities of believers can have shared ways of talking about the world around them. Belief itself and the path to joining a religion is often marked with the recitation of particular words, or ascension to particular beliefs using one's own language to describe an internal state of change. In the same way, language can be an important part of leaving a religious group, and marking a personal change, either to a different faith or to no faith.

Even in this small collection of examples, the breadth of possibility to investigate the relationship between Language and Religion becomes obvious. Religious belief and practice have had a deep and lasting effect on how humans communicate and organise our social world. How language has been and is being used to shape how people think and talk about spiritual experience, and organise beliefs around those experiences, is essential for understanding how social interaction works in many cultures. How it should be studied and, indeed, what it *is* exactly that is being

studied can be difficult to pin down. Language and Religion has long been of interest in different branches of philosophy, sociology, and theology, but has not always had the attention it rightly deserves within Language and Linguistics research.

Religion and religious language have had a consistent, if often somewhat backgrounded, presence in different strands of linguistic (and language-related) study. Most notably, 'Theolinguistics' has a long history (Crystal, 2018; van Noppen, 1981, 2006), as well as religion and spirituality in cognition (Downes, 2011; Richardson, Mueller, & Pihlaja, 2021), sociolinguistics (Omoniyi & Fishman, 2006), metaphor (Soskice, 1985, 2007), translation (Long, 2005; Rawling & Wilson, 2018; Wolf, 2015), social and new media (Bryan & Albakry, 2016), and media/news representations of people of faith (Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Bruce, 2017). The interest in a diverse range of approaches to language and religion has been growing in recent years, with OUP publishing *Language, Religion, and the Human Mind* (2018, edited by Paul Chilton and Monika Kopytowska) and de Gryuter's *Discourse Research and Religion* (Johnston & von Stuckrad, 2021), in addition to several journal special issues (Darquennes & Vandenbussche, 2011; Mukherjee, 2013; Pihlaja, 2017). Within linguistics and language-based research, there is a great diversity in terms of the tools, theoretical frameworks and methodologies used to examine the connections between language and religion. Lytra, Volk & Gregory's (2016) edited collection on *Navigating Languages, Literacies and Identities: Religion in Young Lives* is one great example of the myriad approaches used within this field.

Numerous journal articles and chapters on the topic have also appeared, including many from contributors to this book. Metaphor is a key theme of much of this research, especially in terms of how faith and religious concepts are conceptualised in different contexts (e.g. Richardson, 2012, 2017; Neary 2017). Increasing recent attention has been paid to the language of religion in digital spaces (e.g. Souza, 2017; Bryan & Albakry, 2016) in addition to more traditional contexts such as religious conventions (e.g. Warner-Garcia, 2016) and mainstream media outlets (e.g. Power, 2017; Bruce, 2017). In online and offline spaces (and the blurred places in between), the focus is often on how religious faith is discussed, contested, and (re)presented from within and without faith groups. Stephen's own monographs have also looked specifically at conflict in inter-religious dialogue and among people of faith, often in social media contexts (Pihlaja, 2014, 2018, 2021a, 2021b). Helen's research has examined how women from specific faith groups represent themselves and their beliefs in online communities (Ringrow, 2020a, 2020b).

Other work focusing on religious identity has considered how people of certain faiths communicate their beliefs, often through spoken language and conversation analysis (see for example Joseph, 2004 on the how national and ethnic identity intersect with religion) or how 'outsider' groups portray certain religions in contexts such as mainstream media (see for example Richardson's 2004 work on the (mis)representation of Islam in British news media). Outside of linguistics research, language is also a topic of discussion within theology and religious studies (see for example Hall, 1997 on religious discourse in North America; Malley, 2004 on Evangelical Christianity; and McGuire, 2008 on lived religious practices), but the focus is not often on empirical studies of language in religious experience or doctrine.

Although religion and religious identity are key elements of debates around nationality and nationalism, community, gender, sexuality, violence, and terrorism, linguistic research has not often adequately focused on religious discourse. Sociolinguistic research exploring language variation has often focused primarily on other identity markers over religion, such as gender, race, age, and so forth, but therefore there exists only limited body of work both exploring religion as a discrete identity marker of language variation and exploring how religion intersects with the other identity markers mentioned above. Building on the foundation of earlier work in theolinguistics

and related work (not always explicitly under the ‘theolinguistic’ label), researchers have engaged with a broad range of approaches that focus on the lived experience of religion in community life.

There is little question that Language and Religion remains an important area of interdisciplinary research, with growing interest in the empirical study of language across different branches of linguistics, as well as theology, philosophy, sociology, and psychology. A comprehensive collection of research in the field, however, has until now been difficult to find, with researchers needing to draw on occasional books or articles that may have overlaps in terms of the topic covered, or the methodology used. The result has been an emerging, rich field of research that has not yet been able to be collected in a single volume, encouraging dialogue and curiosity across the different places this work has appeared.

Aims and Overview

Given the increased focus on the relationship between religion and language in various subfields of linguistics, our aim for *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Religion* is to establish a shared space for interaction among the various researchers working in the field. Specifically, this handbook:

- 1) further elaborates and defines Language and Religion as a distinct field of research within the study of language and linguistics;
- 2) provides a range of different approaches to the field from sociolinguistic, anthropological, ethnographic, and cognitive perspectives;
- 3) defines research priorities and suggests paths forward for students and scholars; and
- 4) makes explicit shared goals and interests across researchers looking at different religious traditions and employing different methods.

The common thread of interest in religion, broadly understood, is present in much of the research to date, but because the approaches have varied significantly—a sociolinguist’s understanding and methods for investigating the relationship between language and religion differs substantially from a cognitive linguist’s approach—a common way of talking about the field has not yet emerged. Even categorising the relationship between this work becomes problematic, as terms like *theolinguistics* may not encompass the broad range of research looking broadly at the relationship between religion and language. Likewise, the work goes beyond *religious language* as talk about religious belief or faith is explicitly religious. The point where talk is *religious* can be difficult to delineate.

At the same time, researchers have made useful connections across linguistic approaches, different understanding of religious practice and belief, and spiritual and religious experience, even if direct comparison and contrast might be difficult at times. This handbook is then an attempt to provide a broad and comprehensive overview of the subject of Language and Religion as it has developed across the subfields of linguistic investigations. These different approaches are collected in three key thematic areas: Religious & Sacred Language, Institutional Discourse, and Religious Identity & Community. The handbook is an introduction to an emerging field, with contributors from a wide range of different national and disciplinary contexts, including cognitive linguistics, linguistic ethnography, rhetoric, metaphor studies, and multimodality. For the purposes of this handbook, religion is viewed in its broadest conception as an organised set of beliefs and practices about the divine or supernatural. The goal is to allow for different understandings of language and religion and different approaches to be presented together, so that researchers can benefit from

work done in adjacent fields and begin to make connections with methods and approaches they might not normally use.

This handbook does not focus primarily on theological or theoretical understandings of language but rather aims to explore how language and discourse about religious belief and practice affect the interaction in the day-to-day lives of religious believers and non-believers alike. Throughout the handbook, examples are taken from real-world discourses, where religious and sacred language are used in religious practice, or where religious and sacred language appears in otherwise non-religious contexts. Data includes papal statements, sacred texts, and language from religious rituals, but also includes conversational interaction where religious language emerges without any explicit discussion of religious faith, as in the use of so-called *Allah phrases* in Arabic conversation, or implicit references to religious metaphor in literature. The analysis in this handbook makes clear that language about religious belief and practice, far from being limited to religious contexts and religious people, permeates everyday life in many different contexts.

Taking this inclusive view of religious language and discourse, the handbook provides researchers in linguistics, sociology, theology, psychology, and religious studies with a comprehensive introduction to all the main issues in the empirical study of religious language and discourse. Our objective in compiling the handbook was to create an accessible resource for researchers at many levels of knowledge and experience in language analysis and beyond, from undergraduate students to senior academics, and we have encouraged contributors to write in a way that doesn't require specialist knowledge to understand and engage with an approach. Each chapter has the same core three sections: Introduction and Background, where the main issues and literature related to the chapter topic is introduced; Case Study, where the authors present an approach to and analysis of some specific language data; and Implications and Future Directions, where the authors discuss the key takeaway points from their case studies and suggest new avenues for research. Each chapter also includes four or five articles or books for suggested Further Reading to better understand the topic and approach taken in the chapter.

At the same time as we have ensured this consistency in structure, we recognise that differences in subfields, national backgrounds, and preferences means that not every chapter will be internally consistent, but differences in, for example, spelling conventions will be observed in the different chapters. The contributors for this handbook come from a variety of different backgrounds, from different countries, studying different religious contexts, with different, or no, religious beliefs and practices. In compiling the handbook and working with authors, we have worked to ensure that the presentation and analysis is agnostic in relation to religious belief but is respectful to all the different beliefs and practices that are presented. Contradictory positions, differing understandings, and outright disagreements between contributors should be as present in this handbook as serendipitous connections, shared understandings, and agreements. We recognise and celebrate this diversity, and believe we grow the most when we engage with and seek to understand people who differ from us, whether that difference is religious or academic, in theology or theory, or in religious practice or methodology.

The following sections outline the three main thematic groupings for chapters in the handbook and provide brief descriptions of all the research in the book.

Part I: Religious & Sacred Language

This section will provide an extended introduction to the concept of Religious Language and the different approaches to the study of language, religion, and the notion of 'the sacred' from a variety

of perspectives. This section will consider the different ways that language has been treated within different disciplines, including theology, philosophy, and the sociology of religion. The section will also introduce the concept of ‘sacred language’ and how language from sacred texts comes to be viewed as divine (or from the divine), how those languages are protected and preserved, and the challenges of maintaining those languages within a myriad of societal and national contexts. Throughout this section, both religious and sacred language—and their translations—will be discussed critically in relation to how this language may be used to create and exercise power. ‘Religious language’ may be explicitly religious or more subtle, as some of the chapters argue. Particular themes addressed in this section also include the use(s) of language(s) within a range of religious traditions, spirituality outside of institutional religious contexts, and religious and moral issues within interaction in non-religious contexts. It will also discuss the increased presence of digital technologies and mediated communication in interaction around religion and in religious contexts.

This section opens with Bene Bassetti’s *The Learning of Sacred Languages*, exploring the themes of the importance of language sounds, the importance of accurate pronunciation, and the emotionality of the language sounds within a case study reporting on learners of Quranic Arabic and Sanskrit.

Brian P. Bennett’s exploration of *Sacred Languages* brings together discussions of culture, politics, art, technology, history, and faith from a comparative religious perspective, through consideration of the case of Church Slavonic in contemporary Russia.

Nevfel Boz and Zehra Erşahin carry on this theme of discussing sacred languages in different spatial and historical contexts in their chapter on *Digital Media and the Sacred*, where they employ Semantic Network Analysis to unpack the way in which institutional religious organisations in Turkey may be under pressure to conform to more secular discourses on social media.

Manar El-Wahsh considers how prayers can embody certain kinds of religious meanings in *Metaphors and Gestures in Prayers in Islam*, with particular reference to mental spaces and physical gestures in Muslim prayer rituals.

Mohamed Hassan’s chapter explores *Religious Minority Representations in Arabic Language*, with a specific focus on how two Egyptian novels address the complex relationship between national and religious, and individual and collective, identities.

Marwan Jarrah and Sharif Alghazo consider *Pragmatic Functions of Religious Expressions* with a focus on the pragmatic messaging of these expressions in conversation, using the example of Jordanian Arabic to discuss the interplay between religion, culture, context, and prosody.

Charles M. Mueller explores the use of metaphor and metonymy in *Symbols and Icons in Buddhist Worship*, applying a cognitive linguistics framework to Buddhist iconography to consider how the viewer may bring their embedded experiences, cultural knowledge, and religious expectations to this multimodal context.

Also looking at the role of metaphor is Clara Neary in her chapter on *Analysing Metaphor in Religious Discourse in Literature*, exploring the (often implicit) religious language underpinning many literary texts through a specific analysis of figurative language in Hilary Mantel’s novel *Fludd*.

Stephen Pihlaja examines *Language, Religion, and the Digital World*, with examples drawn from Christian and atheist YouTube videos to argue how tracing religious belief over time can be a useful way of showing how and why these beliefs might change with specific relation to the effects of the broader sociopolitical context.

Last, Svitlana Shurma and Wei-lun Lu's chapter on *Variation of Language in Religious Texts* considers the role of grammar in terms of translating Biblical scriptures into different languages, exploring language-specific styles of parallel religious messaging.

Part II: Institutional Discourse

This section focuses on the discourse of established institutions (both religious and secular) that develop and maintain explicit power structures and truth claims using language. This includes the language of interaction between religious institutions and the State, and the religious institutions within the State, and how contemporary governments and different societies and institutions have understood the relationship between the two. The discussion will include how religious institutions operate as governing bodies using language, both in the limited context of religious communities and in larger national contexts where religious and secular law are not separate entities. The section will explore the use of how religious language is used within political, social national contexts (including the role religious language plays in political ideology), with a specific focus on contexts where religion is a part of both tacit and explicit political persuasion. We deliberately define 'institutions' in extremely broad terms in this section, as can be seen in the different chapter foci.

The chapters in this section include the following:

Furzeen Ahmed's chapter on *Religion, Literature, and the Secondary Classroom* sheds light on how students bring their religious beliefs and views into their educational reading practices, with a specific Text World Theory analysis exploring how a British Pakistani Muslim student engaged with issues of defiance and challenging God in a classroom discussion of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Melanie Barbato continues this section with a focus on institutional religious greetings as political communication in her chapter on *Religious Greeting Messages as a Genre of Institutional Communication*, specifically examining the standardised patterns of religious greetings from the Vatican and the White House.

Gavin Brookes, Isobelle Clarke, and Tony McEnery also focus on institutional communication by investigating *Representation of Religion in News Media Discourse* through the application of corpus linguistic and critical discourse analysis tools to British newspaper data, drawing attention to how particular religious identities (specifically Islam and Muslims) might be legitimated or delegitimated.

Clint D. Bryan's chapter on *Pandemic Sermon Rhetoric and Evangelism* considers the rhetoric of Christian evangelical sermons during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the blending of in-group and out-group language that pastors employed to reach live and virtual, and synchronous and asynchronous, audiences.

Anthony J. Liddicoat's chapter on *Language Policies and Religious Practice* addresses how different conceptualisations of the role of language influence how religions approach liturgy and proselytisation, discussing examples from Islam (Arabic) and traditional Catholicism (Latin).

Also exploring Catholic religious contexts is Marzena Makuchowska's chapter on *Politeness in Religious Discourse*, which unpacks the intersections between politeness and religious language through an exemplary analysis of papal speeches in particular relation to face-threatening acts.

Helen Ringrow and Simon Statham's chapter, *Religion in the Discourse of Abortion*, considers how the connections between religious institutions, political parties, and national governments shape the language of abortion rights, offering a particular focus on abortion in Ireland, where a constitutional prohibition on abortion was enacted in 1983 (the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland) and repealed by a referendum in 2018.

Fiona Rossette-Crake's chapter on *Religious Oratory and Language Online* situates sermons within oratory specifically and within religious discourse more widely, using participant frameworks to consider how contemporary social media oratory takes on a 'quasi-religious' register as part of its technologically mediated performance.

In the final chapter of this section, Andre Joseph Theng also considers contemporary online spaces with *Catholicism and Social Media*, drawing attention to issues of authority and hierarchy in globalised media representations of Catholicism through analysis of official and lay social media accounts associated with the Catholic Church.

Part III: Religious Identity & Community

This section will engage with the role of language in creating and sustaining religious identity and community, in both national and diasporic contexts. The research encompasses work primarily looking at conversation and interaction, with perspectives taken from linguistic anthropology and linguistic ethnography, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, and cognitive linguistics, among others. The chapters discuss the role of individual identity in religious communities and, in particular, the tensions inherent in heterodoxy, where individual identity is in conflict with traditional practices and beliefs. The chapters also investigate how particular diasporic communities understand themselves in relation to the larger social world, including the role of religious language and shared national languages in creating and sustaining certain identities. This includes analysis of how different languages and beliefs interact within diverse contexts, where believers from different national and ethnic contexts connect with shared belief and build communities of faith. The chapters discuss the different ways that languages become associated with particular religious identities, be they Arabic and Islam or Yiddish and Judaism. The relationship between ritual language and community is also a focus in several chapters looking at how the learning of ritual language builds and sustains communities, particularly in diaspora contexts.

The chapters in this section include the following:

Amal Alhamazany begins with a chapter on *Religion, Identity, and Second Language* which discusses how attitudes towards learning a second languages (primarily English) in the Saudi Arabian context are affected by perceptions of other languages and the relationship between one's language and one's religious identity.

Samar Alkhalil's work in the chapter *Selling English in an Islamic Society* builds on these ideas by discussing how English education is presented in the Saudi Arabian context and how Saudis understand learning English as it relates to their national and religious identity and how it can be accepted and resisted in different ways.

Iman Abdulrahman Almulla continues talking about the Saudi Arabian context in her chapter on *Narratives and Religious Identity* which looks at how religious identity emerges in and through conversations, exploring how individuals report on spiritual experience and divine intervention.

Anastasia Badder and Sharon Avni continue the discussion of religious identity and specific languages in their chapter on *Jewish Languages and American Jewishness* which describes the relationship between Jewish identity and language, with a focus on how different languages and language varieties are used in the American context for different functions and to index different identities.

Linda Sauer Bredvik then discusses *Multilingualing in Interreligious Encounters*, looking specifically at conversations centered around religion between people who frequently don't share either a first language or the same religion. Creative use of multilingual resources serves to make meaning in spaces where differing linguistic and religious identities are the norm.

Manel Herat continues to look at the role of language in community in a chapter on *Ritual Language, Ritual Community* which shows how Buddhist ritual language in religious practice and in particular rituals around death, plays an important dual role in both reinforcing theological positions and in creating shared, affective experience.

Kate Power's chapter on *Religious Identity in Discourse* looks at how religious identity is understood in how people talk about their own religious identity, looking specifically at how people in rural Canada talk about their religious identity in relation to a majority Christian context.

Kumaran Rajandran continues looking at how people talk about their religious identity, and specifically changes in religious identity, in a chapter on *Conversion Narratives*, discussing how people talk about conversion to Hinduism and the resources they use to explain and justify changes in their religious identity.

Peter Richardson then takes a cognitive linguistic approach to conversion and religious experience narratives in his chapter on *Cognitive Metaphor and Religion* showing how people talk about these experiences using metaphors and explaining this metaphorical language using a variety of different cognitive approaches.

Andrey Rosowsky then discusses *Religious Ritual and Language in the Local Community*, drawing together several of the topical strands in the section, looking at how heritage languages in diasporic communities have shifted while liturgical language remains stable, showing how different languages and language varieties play a role in understanding and presenting religious identities in different ways, at different times.

Conclusion

Across this volume, the capacity for humans to find meaning in their lived experiences is striking. The chapters in this handbook show that religion is, at its best, about the human urge to understand our experiences, work with others to celebrate that meaning, and develop community with those around them. At the same time, the work in this handbook also shows how religious belief and practice, and religious institutions, can be tools for systematic and individual oppression and work to alienate and drive people apart. Language is central to both these sides of religion, and understanding both how community is fostered and thrives, and how division is seeded and fermented, is a central implication of all the research in this book. Analysis of language makes explicit the processes that lead to these different outcomes, and by identifying those processes and understanding how they work, practitioners can begin to encourage language that fosters community, and discourage and challenge language that underpins oppression.

Working through the different chapters, readers will be struck by the diversity of approaches to and understandings of Language and Religion. The field is growing and broadening beyond a niche interest in different linguistic subfields to an established, interdisciplinary subfield in its own right, with scholars bringing unique strengths and perspectives from the world of linguistics and language studies. In the various approaches to investigating the relationships between language, and religious belief and practice, the value of looking at the same phenomenon through different lenses and from different perspectives becomes readily apparent. A cognitive approach to the use of metaphor in religious language, for example, is not opposed to discourse analytic approach—the two complement one another. The handbook shows how interdisciplinary dialogue can be beneficial in helping researchers better understand how their contributions are unique and how they fit into a broader context beyond their own discipline's interests.

This handbook marks a significant milestone in the development of Language and Religion, but it is only the beginning. Across the chapters, we are struck by the potential for future work.

For scholars at every stage of their careers, the contributors offer new fields to explore and endless potential for collaborative and contrastive study. There is no right or wrong way to understand these relationships, and interaction between scholars taking different approaches or looking at different kinds of discourse and different religious traditions can produce more accurate and more complete pictures of religious belief and practice and how language shapes and is shaped by religion. We encourage readers to use the handbook to pique their curiosity and find connections where they might not normally look, and, at the same time, appreciate how religious belief and practice bring meaning in different ways to different people and recognise the hope that can be gained in the shared values humans find when they go looking for them.

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Metaphors and Gestures in Prayers in Islam

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Religious Minority Representations in Arabic Language

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This study focuses on the role that religion plays in sociolinguistic stratification in Jordan. It provides information about the stages of the emergence of religious affiliation as a sociolinguistic variable. It also sheds light on the underlying causes of sociolinguistic re-stratification in line with sociopolitical and demographic change.

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This is one of the first comprehensive studies to focus on religion-differentiated varieties of Arabic. In this study, Blanc compares three Baghdadi varieties: Muslim Baghdadi, Christian Baghdadi, and Jewish Baghdadi in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon.

Hary, B. & Wein, M. J. (2013). *Religiolinguistics: On Jewish, Christian—and Muslim-defined Languages*. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 220: 85–108.

This study investigates the impact of religion on language. It offers a model of Jewish-defined religiolects, or linguistic varieties analysed for their religious characteristics. It extends and applies this prototype to other religious settings like Christian—and Muslim-defined languages.

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This study analyses some key aspects of Arabic urban linguistics. It discusses the status of urban vernacular Arabic versus national vernacular and points to the problematic use of the concepts of standardization, prestige, and norms in the Arabic setting. It summarizes the main socio-economic characteristics of twentieth century urbanization trends in the Middle East and the various linguistic impacts of this population renewal.

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Variation of Language in Religious Texts

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Religion, Literature, and the Secondary Classroom

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Religious Greeting Messages as a Genre of Institutional Communication

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Representation of Religion in News Media Discourse

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Knott, K ., Poole, E ., & Taira, T . (2014). *Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred: Representation and Change*. Routledge.

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Machin, D . & Niblock, S . (2006). *News Production: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.

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Pandemic Sermon Rhetoric and Evangelism

Campbell, H.A. (Ed.) (2020). *Religion in quarantine: The future of religion in a post-pandemic world*. Digital Religious Publications.

This collection of brief essays from scholars in the Texas A & M Religious Studies department comprises different predictions made when the world found itself in lockdown, both anticipating cultural and religious trends and foregrounding perspectives that academics held mid-pandemic regarding the viability of online religious observance—a boon to researchers.

Huggins, N.J. & Djupe, P.A. (2022). Congregation shopping during the pandemic: A research note. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 61 (3–4), 726–736.
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Huggins and Djupe analyze data from October 2020 surveys, surmising that the shakeup in established contemporary American religious practice brought on by COVID-19 led many churchgoers to investigate other congregations and preachers outside their denominational traditions, irrespective of political influences. This piece suggests a fluidity to American Christian allegiance.

Hutchings, T. (2017). *Creating church online: Ritual, community and new media*. Routledge.

Even though Hutchings mostly explores alternative faith communities on the internet, this book validates online churches as genuine congregations, especially for seekers who find themselves drawn toward the novelty of digital religion.

Pihlaja, S. (2020). The style of online preachers. In H. Ringrow & S. Pihlaja, (Eds.), *Contemporary media stylistics*, 297–315. Bloomsbury Academic.

This chapter highlights how digital sermons can be commodified and shared widely on social media platforms, especially when the self-proclaimed preacher knows the audience well enough to influence their spread.

Yang, S.A. (2021). The word digitalized: A techno-theological reflection on online preaching and its types, *Homiletic*, 46 (1), 75–90.

Yang, a professor at an American Christian university, points out the theological dearth surrounding online homiletics—a gap he fills with Karl Barth’s threefold definition of the divine Word. By providing this theological framework, Yang adds further legitimacy to livestreamed church for those faithful who may have questioned its merit.

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Language Policies and Religious Practice

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Politeness in Religious Discourse

Al-Khatib, M . (2012). Politeness in the Holy Quran: A sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspective. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 9 (4), 479–509. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2012-0027>

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Alsohaibani, A . (2017). Influence of religion on language use: A sociopragmatic study on the influence of religion on speech acts performance. PhD thesis. University of East Anglia.

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The work addresses a number of questions about the influence of religion on communicative behaviour and the ways in which it is linguistically realised in everyday language.

Bouchara, A. & Qorchi, B. (2016). The role of religion in shaping politeness during greeting encounters in Arabic. A matter of conflict or understanding. Anchor Academia Publishing.

This work shows the relationship of politeness to (specific) religion and its possible implications for intercultural communication.

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Religious Oratory and Language Online

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Catholicism and Social Media

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Religion, Identity, and Second Language

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- This volume sets out different theoretical and methodological perspectives concerning the study of religious discourse such as institutional religious, media, and political discourse, and discourse around spirituality. Of particular relevance to this chapter is the use of conversation analysis to examine agency negotiation in interaction, the use of ethnography to study how faith is enacted through people's behaviour, and how metaphor is used to present faith and religious identity.
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Selling English in an Islamic Society

Almayez, M . (2022). Investigating the place of religion within the professional identity construction of two Muslim English language teachers in Saudi Arabia. *Teacher Education and Development*, 9 (1), 1–15. DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2022.2091632

This article sheds light on the manner and extent to which Islam is interwoven with English language instructors' professional identity. Islam, according to this study, plays a significant role in shaping the teachers' relationships with their students and gives a sense of obligation to safeguard students' Islamic values. This study also highlights the contested relationship between English language teaching and Islam in Saudi Arabia. In relation to this chapter, this article adds more insight into how teachers' Islamic identities shapes their foreign language teaching practices.

Rohmana, W.I.M. (2020). Immersing Islamic value in English language teaching: A challenge for English teachers. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 4 (2), 47–50.

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This article considers the immersion of Islamic ethics and values in English language teaching in Muslim societies. The study seeks to mitigate the influence of foreign languages on local culture and identity by recommending the integration of Islamic content in English teaching. The article offers solutions for potential negative impacts on Islamic identity due to foreign language learning.

Moskovsky, C . & Picard, M . (2019). *English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia: New insights into teaching and learning English*. Routledge.

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Narratives and Religious Identity

Blum-Kulka, S . (1993). “You gotta know how to tell a story”: Telling, tales, and tellers in American and Israeli narrative events at dinner. *Language in Society*, 22 (3), 361–402.

The study highlights the importance of considering cultural diversity in analysing family conversations and the role of storytelling in maintaining cultural identity by suggesting a tripartite framework of telling, tales, and tellers.

Czarniawska, B . (2004). *Narratives in social science research*. SAGE.

This is an introduction to narrative methodology as an instrument for social science research and offers a practical foundation for the use of these instruments in qualitative research.

Joseph, J.E. (2004). *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. Palgrave Macmillan.

This book provides a comprehensive overview of the role of language choice in the formation of national, ethnic, and religious identity. It examines a wide variety of specific cases from different parts of the world to establish some general principles regarding the relationship between language and identity.

Pihlaja, S . (2021). *Talk about Faith: how debate and conversation shape belief*. Cambridge University Press.

This is an original study that explores a wide variety of texts from new media that look at how Christians and Muslims talk to people inside and outside their own groups about faith and how that impacts how they present themselves.

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Jewish Languages and American Jewishness

Ramati, I. & Abeliovich, R. (2022). Use this sound: Networked ventriloquism on Yiddish TikTok. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221135159>

This article is an example of two emerging trends in the research of Jewish languages. It is first and foremost an analysis of the affordances and nature of TikTok as a new media form. In theorizing new media through Yiddish language practices, Ramati and Abeliovich (2022) demonstrate the ability of Jewish language research to engage across disciplines and contribute to ongoing efforts to de-parochialize Jewish language studies. Further, this article offers an example of cutting-edge research into new modes, meanings, and networks emerging through and in Jewish languages shaped by the novel and specific affordances of new digital technologies, such as TikTok.

Benor, S.B. & Spolsky, B. (2020). Changes in the Sociolinguistic Ecology of Jewish Communities. In S. Brunn & R. Kehrein (Eds.), *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02438-3_9

This chapter offers an analysis of Jewish communities maintaining Yiddish and Ladino for several centuries following migration, and enriching these languages with influences from the local languages in which they were in contact. This chapter applies a language lens to the history of Jewish migration and contributes to discussions about language contact and migration.

Margolis, R. (2021). Forays into a Digital Yiddishland: Secular Yiddish in the Early Stages of the Coronavirus Pandemic. *Contemporary Jewry*, 41, 71–98.

This text illustrates shifts and emerging patterns within Jewish languages and language communities, namely the 'cybervernacular' mode of Yiddish and its users, in the throes of the COVID crisis. In doing so, it invites readers to consider the ways that crisis both forces and affords space for linguistic change and provides a starting point for shifts in Jewish language and language communities in other crises.

Kirschen, B. (2020). Language Socialization and Intergenerational Transmission of Ladino: Three Generations of Speakers in the Twenty-First Century. *Heritage Language Journal*, 17 (1), 70–91.

Kirschen's (2021) article zooms in on changes to ideologies, knowledges, and uses of Judeo-Spanish within a single family across three generations. In doing so, his work provides a rare, detailed portrait of Judeo-Spanish transmission practices and powerfully pushes back against the image of Judeo-Spanish as a dying language of little consequence or interest to younger generations.

Ambert Adler, R. (2021, April 15). Shtisel: How a TV Show on a Haredi Family has Enthralled Jews and Non-Jews. *Jerusalem Post*. www.jpost.com/israel-news/culture/shtisel-how-a-tv-show-on-a-haredi-family-has-enthralled-jews-and-non-jews-665223

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Avineri, N. (2014). Yiddish: A Jewish language in the Diaspora. In T.G. Wiley, J.K. Peyton, D. Christian, S.K. Moore, & N. Liu (Eds.), *Handbook of Heritage, Community, and Native American Languages in the United States: Research, Policy, and Educational Practice*, 263–271. Routledge.

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Badder, A. & Avni, S. (Forthcoming). The successful failure of decoding Hebrew: Reframing literacy in a religious setting. *International Journal of Bilingualism*.

Benbassa, E. & Rodrigue, A. (2000). *Sephardi Jewry: A history of the Judeo-Spanish community, 14th–20th Centuries*. University of California Press.

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Benor, S.B., Avineri, N., & Greninger, N. (2020). Let's stop calling it 'Hebrew School': Rationales, goals, and practices of Hebrew education in part-time Jewish schools. Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education. www.casje.org/HebrewEdPartTime

Benor, S.B., Krasner, J., & Avni, S. (2020). *Hebrew infusion: Learning and community at American Jewish summer camps*. Rutgers University Press.

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Cognitive Metaphor and Religion

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