

What is religion? How does it work? Many natural abilities of the human mind are involved, and crucial among them is the ability to use language. This volume brings together research from linguistics, cognitive science, and neuroscience, as well as from religious studies, with a view to understanding the phenomenon of religion as a distinctive human characteristic.

The book is divided into three parts, preceded by a full introductory chapter that discusses modern scientific approaches to religion and the application of linguistics, particularly cognitive semantics and pragmatics. Part I surveys the development of contemporary studies of religious language and the diverse disciplinary strands that have emerged. Beginning with descriptive approaches to religious language and the problem of describing religious concepts across languages, these chapters introduce the turn to cognition in linguistics and also in theology, and proceed to explore the brain's capacities for language and metaphor from the point of view of cognitive linguistics and neuroscience. Part II continues the discussion of metaphor—the natural ability by which humans draw on basic knowledge of the world in order to explore abstractions and intangibles. Specialists in particular religions apply conceptual metaphor theory in various ways, covering several major religious traditions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. Part III opens new horizons for cognitive-linguistic research on religion, looking beyond written texts to the ways in which language is integrated with other modalities, including ritual, visual art, and electronic media. Readers

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are introduced to a range of technical instruments that have been developed within cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis in recent years. What unfolds is the idea that the embodied cognition of humans is the basis not only of their languages, but also of their religions.