Language and Religion
Language and religion are intimately connected. Without language, religion would not be possible.

I. Interpretation
Language is used to teach and interpret religious beliefs, many of which are expressed as oral or written texts.

_Stories do not interpret themselves._
We humans have to interpret their meaning.

_There is no inherent right or wrong interpretation of religious texts; there is only tradition._
The ability to interpret the same texts differently is the basis for new denominations arising even in the same religion.

“And the flood covered the whole land.”

_Sharing Interpretations brings unity._
It is the sharing of a traditional set of interpretations that gives a religion unity, but even within a given religion the interpretations may change over time.

_Cultural relativistic versus ethnocentric interpretations_
Original meanings versus interpretations that are meaningful to later peoples.

_Language changes bring religious changes._
Since language itself changes with time, religious understandings may change for purely linguistic reasons.

“Avoid the very appearance of evil.”

II. Diversity Within Religion

_Geographical Diversity._
Dutch versus other Catholics

_Social Diversity_
For example the top versus the bottom of social status and their religion.
Theology School and “Sunday School”

Change over time.

Brigham Young and “modesty”

Southern Baptists and Slavery

III. Attitudes Toward Diversity

Hinduism

Judaism (orthopraxis)
“Two Jews, tree opinions”

Christianity
Heresy and Orthodoxy

IV. Language in Religious Practice

Liturical Orders
More or less invariant sequences encoded by persons other than the performers.

Restricted versus elaborated codes

Linguistic taboos (“anti-rituals”)

Sanctity as expression of the unspoken order
The sacred as not to be questioned.
V. Language in Ritual

Prayer

Song and chant

Exhortation

Reciting the code (liturgical responses)

Glossolalia

VI. Paradox in Religious Thought

Origin of humans
Anthropomorphic creators

Christianity and the problem of evil

VII. Sacred Texts

Oral texts

Written texts

Sacredness of the texts
Islam and Arabic
Hebrew burial of worn texts

Translating Ancient texts
Canon (which documents are sacred
Textual basis (which early version)
Interpretation (meaning of the ancient language)
Style (e.g., literal or idiomatic; formal or informal)

VIII. Language and Idealology

Max Mueller
Religion as disease of language

Linguistic Relativity
Creation itself demands a creator
Language change and religious meaning

2 Thessalonians 5:22 “Abstain from the very appearance of evil”