



PNU University

Religious Texts in English (3)

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امروزه کتاب‌خوانی و علم‌آموزی، نه تنها یک وظیفه‌ی ملی، که یک واجب دینی است.

مقام معظم رهبری

در عصر حاضر یکی از شاخصه‌های ارزیابی رشد، توسعه و پیشرفت فرهنگی هر کشوری میزان تولید کتاب، مطالعه و کتاب‌خوانی مردم آن مرز و بوم است. ایران اسلامی نیز از دیرباز تاکنون با داشتن تمدنی چندهزارساله و مراکز متعدد علمی، فرهنگی، کتابخانه‌های معتبر، علما و دانشمندان بزرگ با آثار ارزشمند تاریخی، سرآمد دولت‌ها و ملت‌های دیگر بوده و در عرصه‌ی فرهنگ و تمدن جهانی به‌سان خورشیدی تابناک همچنان می‌درخشد و با فرزندان نیک‌نهاد خویش هنرنمایی می‌کند. چه کسی است که در دنیا با دانشمندان فرزانه و نام‌آور ایرانی همچون ابوعلی سینا، ابوریحان بیرونی، فارابی، خوارزمی و ... همچنین شاعران برجسته‌ای نظیر فردوسی، سعدی، مولوی، حافظ و ... آشنا نباشد و در مقابل عظمت آنها سر تعظیم فرود نیاورد. تمامی این افتخارات ارزشمند، برگرفته از میزان عشق و علاقه فراوان ملت ما به فراگیری علم و دانش از طریق خواندن و مطالعه منابع و کتاب‌های گوناگون است. به شکرانه‌ی الهی، تاریخ و گذشته ما، همیشه درخشان و پربار است. ولی اکنون در این زمینه در چه جایگاهی قرار داریم؟ آمار و ارقام ارائه‌شده از سوی مجامع و سازمان‌های فرهنگی در مورد سرانه‌ی مطالعه‌ی هر ایرانی، برایمان چندان امیدوارکننده نمی‌باشد و رهبر معظم انقلاب اسلامی نیز از این وضعیت بارها اظهار گله و ناخشنودی نموده‌اند.

کتاب، دروازه‌ای به سوی گستره‌ی دانش و معرفت است و کتاب خوب، یکی از بهترین ابزارهای کمال بشری است. همه‌ی دستاوردهای بشر در سراسر عمر جهان تا آنجا که قابل کتابت بوده است، در میان دست‌نوشته‌هایی است که انسان‌ها پدید آورده و می‌آورند. در این مجموعه‌ی بی‌نظیر، تعالیم الهی، درس‌های پیامبران به بشر، و همچنین علوم مختلفی است که سعادت بشر بدون آگاهی از آنها امکان‌پذیر نیست. کسی که با دنیای زیبا و زندگی‌بخش کتاب ارتباط ندارد بی‌شک از مهم‌ترین دستاوردهای انسانی و نیز از بیشترین معارف الهی و بشری محروم است. با این دیدگاه، به‌روشنی می‌توان ارزش و مفهوم رمزی عمیق در این حقیقت تاریخی را دریافت که اولین خطاب خداوند متعال به پیامبر گرامی اسلام (ص) این است که «بخوان!» و در اولین

سوره‌ای که بر آن فرستاده‌ی عظیم‌الشان خداوند، فرود آمده، نام «قلم» به تجلیل یاد شده‌است: «اقْرَأْ وَ رَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ» در اهمیت عنصر کتاب برای تکامل جامعه‌ی انسانی، همین بس که تمامی ادیان آسمانی و رجال بزرگ تاریخ بشری، از طریق کتاب جاودانه مانده‌اند.

دانشگاه پیام‌نور با گستره‌ی جغرافیایی ایران‌شمول خود با هدف آموزش برای همه، همه‌جا و همه‌وقت، به‌عنوان دانشگاهی کتاب‌محور در نظام آموزش عالی کشورمان، افتخار دارد جایگاه اندیشه‌سازی و خردورزی بخش عظیمی از جوانان جویای علم این مرز و بوم باشد. تلاش فراوانی در ایام طولانی فعالیت این دانشگاه انجام پذیرفته تا با بهره‌گیری از تجربه‌های گرانقدر استادان و صاحب‌نظران برجسته کشورمان، کتاب‌ها و منابع آموزشی درسی شاخص و خودآموز تولید شود. در آینده هم، این مهم با هدف ارتقای سطح علمی، روزآمدی و توجه بیشتر به نیازهای مخاطبان دانشگاه پیام‌نور با جدیت ادامه خواهد داشت. به‌طور قطع استفاده از نظرات استادان، صاحب‌نظران و دانشجویان محترم، ما را در انجام این وظیفه‌ی مهم و خطیر یاری‌رسان خواهد بود. پیشاپیش از تمامی عزیزانی که با نقد، تصحیح و پیشنهادهای خود ما را در انجام این وظیفه‌ی خطیر یاری می‌رسانند، سپاسگزاری می‌نماییم. لازم است از تمامی اندیشمندانی که تاکنون دانشگاه پیام‌نور را منزلگاه اندیشه‌سازی خود دانسته و ما را در تولید کتاب و محتوای آموزشی درسی یاری نموده‌اند، صمیمانه قدردانی گردد. موفقیت و بهروزی تمامی دانشجویان و دانش‌پژوهان عزیز آرزوی همیشگی ما است.

دانشگاه پیام‌نور

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Preface

The purpose of this book is to improve the ability of students in the field of religions studies in dealing with English texts in their own specific area. It has now been widely acknowledged that students need to read a considerable amount of reading materials both intensively and extensively in order to improve their comprehension, reading fluency, and other skills needed for developing their future target tasks. This book has been designed to provide its audience with a good opportunity to practice reading and its important related skills through working with a relatively wide variety of texts. Students may find them interesting, relevant, and useful. One of the fundamental assumptions of this book is that improving students' expertise in reading texts in their disciplinary area is contingent upon dealing with a wide variety of texts and reading exercises.

At the very beginning of every unit, general and behavioral objectives are introduced. To help students get an overview of the passage, they are given passage main points to come to an overall understanding of the text they are about to read.

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of this book is its extensive coverage of new words and their definitions. The reading passages students encounter in this book are relatively long and usually have a wide variety of new words which may be unknown to most students. An attempt has been made to illuminate the meanings of such words along with some other useful information such as their parts of speech or where necessary, their usages. Following new words is the main part of each unit: the reading passage. Reading passages used in this book have been for the most part taken from one major source: The Encyclopedia of Religion. The order of passages in

this book almost corresponds to that of the original book so that students can follow different discussions in a more understandable way. Each of the passages is followed by comprehension exercises: true-false items and multiple-choice items. The purpose of these exercises is to help students check their understanding of the passage.

Language exercises also make an important part of this book as the developer of this text book presumes that content and language are intricately inseparable. Probably, the main purpose of such exercises is to help students learn, remember, and use the words they have encountered in the reading passages. These exercises are sentence completion and matching exercise. A cloze test also follows language exercises. The purpose of this exercise is to help students improve their ability to use the words in the right context especially because this ability has been shown to be directly related to reading expertise and even the whole language proficiency and therefore, this exercise can check a good number of reading skills.

Finally, each unit ends with two translation exercises. In part one, students are asked to translate a paragraph following the text they have already read. In part two, students should try to find good Persian equivalents for some new words they were introduced to at the beginning of the unit. Of course, it must be mentioned that there is a glossary at the end of the book, where students can find the alphabetical list of all new words with their corresponding Persian equivalents. Needless to say, like other textbooks published in Payame Noor University, all answers for different exercises have been provided at the end of the book to help students check their own answers.

I hope this book can take students of studies in religion one step further towards a good understanding of texts in their specific disciplinary area. I would be glad if I could receive the feedback from all students, colleagues, or other interested readers using this book.

Autumn/1394
Alireza Jalali

Unit One

Methodological Issues 1

General aims

This unit is designed to introduce students to the basic methodological issues in the study of religion and help students broaden their repertoire of some key concepts and terms.

Behavioral Objectives

After carefully reading this unit, you are expected to:

1. Come to a relatively good understanding of basic issues in the study of religion and do comprehension exercises 1-2.
2. Learn almost fifty new words by studying and working on this lesson and do language exercises 1-3.
3. Practice translation in a preliminary manner and do translation exercises 1-2.

New words and their definitions

aloof **adj.**

not friendly or interested in other people

bondage **n.**

the state of being a slave or prisoner

canon **n.**

a generally accepted rule, standard or principle by which something is judged

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circumscribe v.

define and mark off carefully

climate n.

a general attitude or feeling; an atmosphere or a situation which exists in a particular place

commitment n.

a thing that you have promised or agreed to do, or that you have to do

competence n.

the ability to do something well

convention n.

the way in which something is done that most people in a society expect and consider to be polite or the right way to do it

conviction n.

a strong opinion or belief

debate v.

discuss something, especially formally, before making a decision or finding a solution

discernment n.

the ability to show good judgment about the quality of somebody/something

disentangle v.

to separate different arguments, ideas, etc. that have become confused

hedge v.

to surround or limit somebody/something

indispensable **adj.**

essential; too important to be without

irrespective of **prep.**

without considering something or being influenced by it

judgment **n.**

the ability to make sensible decisions after carefully considering the best thing to do

miscegenation **n.**

the fact of children being produced by parents who are of different races, especially when one parent is white

monument **n.**

a building that has special historical importance

motive **n.**

a reason for doing something

perchance **adv.**

Perhaps

permutation **n.**

any of the different ways in which a set of things can be ordered

pipe dream **n.**

a hope or plan that is impossible to achieve or not practical

precipitate **v.**

make something ,especially something bad, happen suddenly or sooner than it should

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preliminary n.

an action or event that is done in preparation for something

presupposition n.

something that you believe to be true and use as the beginning of an argument even though it has not been proved; assumption

reductionism n.

the belief that complicated things can be explained by considering them as a combination of simple parts

subtle adj.

not very noticeable or obvious

threshold n.

the level at which something starts to happen

vogue n.

a fashion for something

Passage main points

- * Questions have virtually made of “methodology” an independent subdiscipline within the study of religion or rather two subdisciplines, one historical and the other systematic.
- * A prior conviction on the observer’s part that the “essential” component of religion is to be found in one of its functions rather than others has the effect of establishing a scale of priorities within the range of observable phenomena.
- * In the case of religious experience, the personality of the investigator comes to the fore.

- * The evolutionists classified religions historically, geographically, and culturally, systematizing them into various“-isms”, each the rough equivalent of a species in the biological sense.

Reading Passage

Methodological Issues 1

The study of religion is hedged about by conditions and limitations. First, there is the individual student's motive for entering the field—a partly or wholly subjective matter on which it is unwise to generalize. Second, there is the availability of material and the extent to which the investigator is personally equipped to understand and analyze it. But given adequate motivation and access to relevant material, there remain, finally, questions of method. How is the material to be organized and classified? What analytical procedures are appropriate in a given instance? And how far may these procedures be elevated into general methodological principles? Further questions suggest themselves. To what extent do the personal presuppositions of the investigator affect the way in which a given body of material is approached and analyzed? Is the study of religion a “pure” or “applied” science, if indeed it is a science at all? Is it, or is it not, directed toward a goal beyond the intellectual understanding of the given instance? Ought the study of religion to remain aloof from matters involving personal commitment, or may the student be permitted (or even expected) to affirm the value of one religious tradition over against others?

These questions, and many more of a similar kind, have been hotly debated in recent years. Taken together, they have virtually

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made of “methodology” an independent subdiscipline within the study of religion—or rather two subdisciplines, one historical and the other systematic. The historical stream, comparable in most respects to the history of science, examines past methods and approaches, with a view to mapping out the course of the study itself over the past couple of centuries. The other has features in common with the philosophy of science on the one hand and with systematic theology on the other. It has its sights set on the past only to the extent to which yesterday’s methods still remain in force; otherwise it concentrates on what is currently known or assumed about the nature of religion on the one hand and about the presuppositions of the investigator on the other.

Most current methodological issues in the study of religion arise in relation to this second, systematic stream, and are precipitated by the different sets of presuppositions that scholars bring with them into the field. It makes a great deal of difference whether the investigator has been trained initially as, for instance, a theologian, a philosopher, a classical philologist, or a field working ethnologist. It is of more than passing significance whether he or she does or does not assume religion to be of “natural” origin. Presuppositions of this order are seldom clearly stated, and later generations of students may be left to draw their own conclusions. For this reason, among others, a history of ideas approach to methodological issues is virtually indispensable as a preliminary to systematic reflection.

Religion itself is of course notoriously difficult to define and circumscribe. This being so, it is only to be expected that there should be corresponding difficulties in respect of the study of religion. That religion is multifunctional-individual and collective, existential, intellectual, social, and ethical-is universally recognized in theory, while being difficult to apply in practice. Depending on the limits set by the individual investigator, the study of religion may concentrate on a single function or aspect of religion to the exclusion of others. A prior conviction on the observer’s part that the “essential” component of religion is to be found in one of its functions rather than others has

the effect of establishing a scale of priorities within the range of observable phenomena. The sociologist examines one function, the psychologist another, simply as a matter of professional competence and personal choice. The philologist has been trained to interpret words, and in the absence of textual material may be completely disoriented. Specialization of this order is necessary, of course, but may become a danger when alternative methods and approaches go unrecognized and unappreciated or when the range of religion's expressions is narrowed down to what the specialist is capable of mastering: in such cases it is appropriate to speak of "reductionism." To the extent that the study of religion actually is a meeting-point of disciplines (many of which enjoy independent existence in the academic world), it must accept a great diversity of possible approaches and methods.

Judgments of Value. Problems of method in the study of religion are not all of one kind, however. Method may be related to either material or motive. In the former case, the issue has to do with the structure of religion itself, as demonstrated by texts and monuments, myths and rituals, and morals and ethics, as well as by the religious experiences of individuals. Here the problem is that of demonstrating the relationship between these factors in terms appropriate to the setting in which each appears. In the case of religious experience, the personality of the investigator comes to the fore. Today it tends to be assumed that no student is capable of evaluating material dispassionately or "objectively," since every student is in subtle bondage to a period, an ideology, a theology, a social class, and/or a climate of opinion. Presuppositions may or may not be recognized, and it has been one of the main objectives of the phenomenology of religion to recognize and dismiss (or at least "bracket") whatever of a personal nature may perchance give rise to inappropriate value judgments. But skepticism on this point is currently widespread. It is argued that even were a state of freedom from presuppositions attainable (which, by implication, it is not), the

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desirability of such a state is itself a judgment of value. Thus objectivity is a pipe dream, and methodological discussion a necessary meeting place of competing subjectivities. The student may achieve technical competence in respect of religious symbol-systems, but on the hermeneutical level the value-free approach is simply unattainable.

Vocabulary. To a great extent the study of religion over the past three or four decades has involved a determined attempt to settle accounts with an academic past dominated by evolutionist presuppositions. But the attempt has proved difficult. The evolutionists gave the study of religion a basic vocabulary; they classified religions historically, geographically, and culturally, systematizing them into various –isms-, each the rough equivalent of a species in the biological sense. Where religious miscegenation was believed to have taken place, a further –ism- was devised as a label: syncretism.

It has been easier to call in question the easily identifiable presuppositions of evolutionism than to modify its vocabulary. Many popular textbooks today still follow a line little different from that in vogue at the turn of the century. In theory, Hinduism is a highly inappropriate term with which to label a highly complex network of interlocking phenomena; nevertheless, it continues to be used. Objections to such terms as shamanism and totemism have been made repeatedly; the terms have survived.

Response Threshold. Whereas in the past it tended to be assumed that the study of religion involved the discernment of the natural laws by which religion operates—that is, laws that function irrespective of the stance of the student—it has now come to be recognized that the sociology of knowledge is an independent and complex issue in the study of religion. In its most acute form, the question "How can I be sure that the method(s) I am using do justice to the integrity of what I am investigating?" can induce mental paralysis. In a less acute form, it leads to a wish always to defer to the believer's own interpretation of a given tradition—a desire that

becomes the more pressing the more contemporary the object of study.

A "response threshold" is crossed when it becomes possible for the believer to advance his or her own interpretation against that of the scholar. In classical comparative religion this was hardly a problem, since most of the scholar's time was spent investigating the religions of the past and often of the very remote past. Interpretations might be challenged, but only by other specialists working according to Western canons and conventions. Today, by contrast, a greater proportion of study is devoted to contemporary, or at least recent, forms of living traditions. The study of religion often shades into a dialogue of religions, in which the views of both partners are (at least in theory) equally important. The response threshold implies the right of the present-day devotee to advance a distinctive interpretation of his or her own tradition—often at variance with that of Western scholarship—and to be taken entirely seriously in so doing.

Comprehension Exercises

(1) True/ False items: Use the information in the passage and write T if the sentences are true and F if they are False.

1. It is argued that even were a state of freedom from presuppositions attainable (which, by implication, it is not), the desirability of such a state is itself a judgment of value. ☐
2. The systematic stream has features in common with the philosophy of religion on the one hand, and with systematic theology on the other. ☐
3. A method may be related to either material or motive. ☐
4. The functionalists gave the study of religion a basic vocabulary; they classified religions historically, geographically, and culturally, systematizing them into various “-isms”, each the rough equivalent of a species in the biological sense. ☐

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5. Depending on the limits set by the individual investigator, the study of religion may concentrate on a single function or aspect of religion to the exclusion of others. ☐
6. In the case of religious experience, the personality of the investigator doesn't play an important role. ☐
7. The psychologist has been trained to interpret words, and, in the absence of textual material, he or she may be completely disoriented. ☐
8. The student may achieve technical competence in respect of religious symbol-systems, but on the hermeneutical level the value-free approach is simply unattainable. ☐

(2) Multiple-choice Items: Choose the best answer.

1. That religion is multifunctional- individual and collective, existential, intellectual, social, and ethical -is universally recognized in theory, while being difficult to apply in
 - a. tradition
 - b. practice
 - c. history
 - d. culture
2. Religion itself is of course notoriously difficult to define and to.....
 - a. illustrate
 - b. demonstrate
 - c. circumscribe
 - d. show
3. Taken together, questions have virtually made of "methodology" an independent subdiscipline within the study of religion or rather two subdisciplines, one historical and the other
 - a. systematic
 - b. semantic
 - c. pragmatic
 - d. economic
4. The historical stream, comparable in most respects to the....., examines past methods and approaches, with a view to mapping out the course of the study itself over the past couple of centuries.
 - a. systematic theology
 - b. methodological issues
 - c. philosophy of science
 - d. history of science

5. The study of religion isabout by conditions and limitations.
 - a. tainted
 - b. added
 - c. filled
 - d. hedged
6. It is of more than passing significance whether investigator does or does not assume religion to be of “.....” origin.
 - a. occasional
 - b. natural
 - c. rational
 - d. critical
7. A complicating factor concerns the position from which questions like these are....., either from within or from outside a community of believers. Here a wide range of motives may be brought into play.
 - a. approached
 - b. revoked
 - c. rejected
 - d. favored
8. May become a danger when alternative methods and approaches go unrecognized and unappreciated or when the range of religion’s expressions is narrowed down to what the specialist is capable of mastering: In such cases it is appropriate to speak of “.....” .
 - a. functionalism
 - b. structuralism
 - c. reductionism
 - d. rationalism

Language Exercises

(1) Sentence completion: Complete the following sentences by the words given below.

debated, decades, motive, indispensable, remote, canons, vogue, seldom, precipitated, aloof

1. Ought the study of religion to remainfrom matters involving personal commitment, or may the student be permitted to affirm the value of one religious tradition over against others?
2. To a great extent the study of religion over the past three or four has involved a determined attempt to settle accounts with an academic past dominated by evolutionist presuppositions.

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3. Many popular textbooks today still follow a line little different from that inat the turn of the century.
4. In classical comparative religion interpretation was hardly a problem, since most of the scholar's time was spent investigating the religions of the past and often of the very past.
5. Most current methodological issues in the study of religion arise in relation to this second systematic stream, and areby the different sets of presuppositions that scholars bring with them into the field.
6. Presuppositions of this order are clearly stated, and later generations of students may be left to draw their own conclusions.
7. A history of ideas approach to methodological issues is virtually as a preliminary to systematic reflection.
8. There is the individual student'sfor entering the fielda partly or wholly subjective matter on which it is unwise to generalize.
9. These questions, and many more of a similar kind, have been hotly in recent years.
10. Interpretations might be challenged, but only by other specialists working according to Western and conventions.

(2) Matching exercise: Match the words in column I with their meanings in column II.

Column I

1. subtle
2. commitment
3. indispensable
4. preliminary
5. bondagee.
6. vogue
7. perchance

Column II

- a. perhaps
- b. the state of being a slave or prisoner
- c. to not become involved in something
- d. a building that has special historical importance
- e. a reason for doing something
- f. a fashion for something
- g. a thing that you have promised or agreed to do

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 8. aloof | h. not very noticeable or obvious |
| 9. monument | i. essential ;too important to be without |
| 10. motive | j. an action or event that is done in preparation for something |
| | k. intrinsically |

(3) Cloze test: Read the following text and fill in the blanks with the words given below.

general, questions, permutations, believe, motives, outside

A complicating factor concerns the position from which1 like these are approached, either from within or from2 a community of believers. Here a wide range of3 may be brought into play. There may be a “will to believe” or a determination not to.....4. A given tradition may or may not be assumed to be normative and therefore “true.” There may be a broad acceptance of religion-in-.....5, coupled with a far-reaching skepticism with respect to religions-in-particular. The6 and combinations are almost endless and introduce a highly subjective factor into the method question.

Translation practice

1. Translate the following English excerpt into fluent Persian.

Despite these terminological survivals, it is recognized today that any religious “system” is made up of many interwoven strands, and one of the objectives of the present-day study of religion is to try to disentangle them, historically and functionally. Perhaps this is best done in a narrowly circumscribed setting, along the lines established by anthropologists. But there remains a lively interest in wider but less easily defined questions: the macro-history of religion, the “essence” of religion, religious “truth,” the nature of religious experience, and religion as a human universal.