# BRIDGING BUDDHIST – CHRISTIAN LANGUAGE.
# AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELIGIOUS REGISTER

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*Abstract*

This study provides an analysis of two written texts belonging to the religious register from a linguistic perspective, *The Holy Bible, 1611 Edition,* and *The Buddha Replies to the Diva-The Teacher,* compiled from ancient records by Carus, which were added in the annexes. It starts with a short introduction dealing with conceptual delimitations with special focus on such concepts as *register* and *religious register*. The linguistic comparative analysis follows Biber and Conrad's pattern (2009), describing the linguistic features encountered in the two discussed/analysed texts, focusing on those traits particular to one text or another and eventually emphasizing the non-linguistic features of both texts. Our study explores the vocabulary features, content word classes, derived words, verb features, pronoun features, main clauses and subordinate clauses. The study ends with a few personal conclusions regarding the importance of linguistic resources and linguistic choices which are mainly affected by the way language, although defined by rules, is by no means static; it evolves over time.

**Key-words:** *register, religious register, linguistics, Bible, Buddha.*

## Introduction

According to Morărașu (2014), register "is a variety associated with a particular situation of use including particularly communicative purposes". Broadly speaking, the register cannot be defined without mentioning the level of formality of the code, the language that is determined by the context in which the text, written or spoken, is produced.

> In 2009, Biber and Conrad made the distinction between the three major components which should be taken into consideration when describing register: the situational context, the linguistic features and the functional relationship between these components. (cited in Morărașu, 2014)

Samarin underlined the importance of the way one uses language and the main factors which determine one's linguistic choices:

> A religious language is the product of the intersection of language variables of different sorts within this one domain of human experience. It is this localization of ways of using language in a given sphere of social action that attracts sociolinguistic attention. The motives for linguistic choices stem from such factors as place, time, topic of discourse, participants, etc. (Samarin, 1987)

These particular factors are taken into consideration in our study that dwells on the comparative analysis of two written texts belonging to religious register.

In terms of language register, scholars refer to its tone, more specifically how formal or informal, this is. The piety and reverence which are common to religious texts require a formal register. Religious language is used nowadays in different contexts: in sermons (public or private), prayers (individual or collective) petitions, thanks, confessions, sacred writings and devotional literature, as well. The object of our comparative analysis consists of two fragments taken from two sacred texts, therefore belonging to religious register: a biblical one, taken from *King James Version of the Bible* and an excerpt from *The Gospel of Buddha*.

The main purpose of this study is to provide a pertinent analysis of the linguistic features encountered in the chosen fragments, without insisting on the message itself but rather on the lexical choices of the authors. Our analysis is built on Biber and Conrad's Framework for Situational Analysis, as presented by Morăraşu (2014). Therefore, we start by mentioning the situational context, the participants and the relationship between them (interactiveness, shared knowledge and social roles). We also dwell on the channel and the production circumstances, the setting and the communicative purpose in both texts under discussion, elements that cannot be ignored.

Broadly speaking, the message of both religious texts is a teaching one, the Christian text focusing on the absolute power of God and His endless greatness, and the Buddhist text providing a more pragmatic vision of life in a set of term definitions. The religious register is an easily recognizable and distinctive formal register whose features can be easily identified both in oral and in written texts.

## 1. The Object of the Study

The two fragments under discussion belong to the religious register, using formal language to deliver the message to the target readers that are meant to be people of all ages and all social categories.

The texts under investigation are written in different periods of time. Moreover, as language is not a static phenomenon, there are various aspects, which differentiate them, many of which will be presented in this study. They are both formal religious texts, taken from sacred texts, belonging to two different religious cults. *The Bible* is used in Christianity, Judaism, Samaritanism, and many other religions, being more widely spread than Buddhist teachings and this might be the reason for which/why *The King James Bible* is considered a universally familiar pattern of what "religious speech" should sound like in English. The model would be followed by virtually every alternative gospel and new prophetic revelation over the centuries to come.

## 2. The Situational Context

According to Morăraşu (2014: 24), before analysing the situational characteristics of a text variety, the identification of the variety to be investigated implies recognising the level of generality and culturally specific elements of the register under discussion.

Buddhism and Christianism are two religions, which, despite important differences such as the fact that Christianism is a monotheist religion while Buddhism is rather a nontheist religion, share some beliefs and teachings. Our purpose is to analyse the way these beliefs and teachings are delivered in a written form to the reader; therefore, we will focus on the code (the language) and the way both authors used it to deliver the message.

In 1604, England's King James I gave official permission for a new translation of the Bible with the aim of settling some disputatious religious differences in his kingdom—and solidifying his own power. Forty-seven translators and scholars produced the *King James Bible*, which was first published in 1611 and used the 39 books of the Old Testament. The project dates back to 1604, when King James I decided, a new version could help consolidate his political power and the Anglican Church (Bălinişteanu-Furdu, 2021: 129).

The first text under discussion is part of *King James Version, John 11,* the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John in the *New Testament of the Christian Bible*. It records the raising of Lazarus from the dead, a miracle of Jesus Christ and subsequent development of the plot against Jesus. The fragment chosen presents a conversation between Jesus and Martha, Lazarus' sister about life and resurrection and about God's infinite love and power. The second text is a fragment from *The Gospel of Buddha*, compiled from ancient records by Carus (1915: 169). The teachings of Buddhism, the words of the Buddha and the basis for the teachings of the monks, can be found in the sacred texts that are known as the Tripitaka. The second text is part of the chapter *The Teacher* and is called *The Buddha replies to the Deva* (annexe 2).

## 3. The Participants. The Relation among the Participants

In terms of participation, both religious texts under discussion present the same characteristics: no interactiveness, as there is no direct participation in the interaction on the part of the readers across time, while the identification of the addressor, in both texts, is not an easy task.

Trying to identify the author(s) of *The King James Bible* is an impossible mission as one cannot credit one single person with doing that. It was a team of scholars doing the hard and tedious work of translating texts into English from Hebrew and Aramaic (Bălinişteanu-Furdu, 2021:129). Even though *The King James Bible* bears his name, it is more a result of this Bible translation being commissioned under his watch, not because he wrote or translated it himself. Therefore, in the first text, the addressor (the author) may be considered unidentified. Alternatively, we can say, at least, that there is no single author. Richard Bancroft, the archbishop of Canterbury — was notable for having the role

of overseeing the project, something akin to a modern editor of a collection of short stories.

The same thing can be noticed when it comes to the addressor in the second text. Carus mentions several scholars who have gathered Buddha's teachings in a written and later printed form such as: Beal, Bigandet, Bühler, Burnouf, Childers, Alexander Csoma, etc. Therefore, the social background of the addressor, in both cases, is obvious, at least in terms of education and profession. We are talking about various scholars of the time, but we cannot mention the age or any other social characteristics, as the contribution of each scholar already mentioned is not precisely known. The addressees, in both texts, are un-enumerated. Both the Christian text and the Buddhist teachings are addressed to whoever wants to become enlightened and defeat death, get to heaven or find the absolute happiness, nirvana (in the Buddhist fragment); therefore, the social roles of the addressees are variable.

Both *The King James Bible* and the Buddha's teachings can be read and understood by people of different ages, religions, nationalities, gender, etc., although the fragment from Buddha's teachings uses a more accessible and updated language in order to deliver the message. As both texts are in written form, there is no personal relation and no direct interaction between the participants.

### 4. The Code and the Channel

In terms of the code employed in the selected excerpts, an important aspect worth mentioning is the fact that both texts are practically translations from another language. The original Buddhist teachings were written in Sanskrit while the Christian Bible was translated from Hebrew and Greek. The texts under discussion belong to more authors, scholars producing language in a written mode for a large number of readers scattered across various places and times. The texts are written in formal religious register that is characteristic for sacred texts and prayers. An important aspect which should be taken into consideration, and which makes the distinction between the two excerpts is the fact that the language employed in the biblical fragment uses many archaic structures. The translators have chosen to use archaic words, forms of verbs, word order, etc. in order to elevate the formality of the text and to provide authenticity and trustworthiness. The biblical language is formalized and ritualistic speech. Scholars defined it as *frozen register*, also coined as *static register*. Because of the custom rules and etiquette, static speech never changes over time or hardly ever changes. Though using archaic language can make the text less accessible to the readers, the *Bible*'s translators chose to keep using it on the one hand because the Christian religion is a very widely spread one and, on the one other hand, because technology can provide more accessible and more comprehensible versions of the Christian *Bible* for those who find difficulty in reading such texts as the one in Annexe 1 or even provide explanation for the archaic form of certain lexical items. The excerpt from the Buddhist Teachings is written in a *more contemporary* English being accessible and comprehensive for any English speaker of any age, from all over the world.

In terms of channel, both texts are published written texts belonging to the religious register; therefore, they are permanent and not interactive. In both cases, we are talking about an un-enumerated set of addressees of all ages, professions, religions, etc. The authors (the addressors) had as much time as needed to revise the material until conveying the intended meaning. It took years to get to the final versions of both texts under discussion that we can read today. Therefore, there is no time and place shared by the participants.

In both texts, the addressors are situated on a superior position and represent an authoritarian voice for the addressees. In the given texts, this position influences both the content of the message and the channel as well as the language that is used. All these elements are intertwined and interconnected, bearing distinctive purposes: to gain the readers' trust and to convince them of the righteousness and truthfulness of the message delivered, in the Christian fragment, and to establish a strict set of rules and to clearly define certain concepts, in the Buddhist teachings excerpt.

## 5. The Setting.  Communicative Purposes

The purpose of a text written in religious register is usually to persuade, sometimes to inform and command, depending on the context in which it is used. The first fragment under discussion, as all the fragments from the Christian *Bible*, has the purpose of convincing the addressees of God's power and love.

> *Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*
> *Believest thou this?* (Carus, 1915: 169)

Unlike the fragment from *King James Bible* whose aim is to demonstrate Jesus as the source of eternal life, the Buddhist Teachings look like a glossary of terms, what nowadays can be found on almost each website as FAQ (Frequently asked questions). Buddha, the enlightened one, answers the questions of the Deva, thus defining some key concepts in life that people should use or follow as guidelines. The text abounds in such definitions:

> *Ignorance causes the ruin of the world. Envy and selfishness break off friendships. Hatred is the most violent fever, and the Buddha is the best physician.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

Therefore, both texts under discussion have a teaching role and a persuasive purpose, a common feature of texts belonging to the religious register regardless of the religion they belong to.

## 6. Linguistic features
### 6.1. Vocabulary Features

Language evolves in time and the two selected fragments come to enhance this idea. In the biblical fragment, the reader can encounter archaic words, such pronouns as *thou, thee, thy* which nowadays are no longer in use:

*[...] whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

The Buddhist Teachings text uses more contemporary English, the archaic forms mentioned above being replaced by the form of the pronouns commonly used nowadays English. Thus, *thou*, employed in the biblical fragment is *you,* in the Buddhist text, *thee* becomes *to you; thy* is replaced by *your*, the forms commonly used nowadays. Therefore, the message delivered by the second text is more accessible to the contemporary reader. The moment in time when the two texts were published or translated is a key element in this regard and helps us make the connection between the context, and the code each author chose. *The Holy Bible, King James' Version* was published in 1611 while the Buddhist teachings compiled by Carus were published in 1915.

Other aspects enhancing the same idea are the use of old spelling and pronunciation that can be easily identified in the fragment from the *Bible*. The archaic form of verbs in the present tense simple, 3rd person singular is frequently used. For instance: *Believeth, saith, liveth, callth*, used instead of *believes, says, lives,* and *calls*, or *art* instead of *are.* Therefore, the ending for the 3rd person singular, in the present tense simple, *-s* or *-es* used to be *-th,* as follows:

> *26 And whosoever **liveth** and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*
> *27 She **saith** unto him, Yea, Lord [...]* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28).

The use of the religious jargon is a common feature of both texts under investigation. In the biblical fragment, many words belonging to the religious jargon can be identified. Many nouns and verbs, such are: *resurrection, life, death, rise, believe*, that are commonly used in Christian texts can also be found in the chosen fragment. The Buddhist text also contains words belonging to the religious jargon such as: *pray, immortality, heaven, bliss*. The religious language used in the biblical fragment has an emotive function and reveals its function to communicate feelings of wonder and mystery, of love and confidence, while the use of archaism evokes tradition, rituals and ancient roots, adorning the text and elevating it in a timelessness dimension. The power of language in religious texts helps the reader cope with the complex and engaging human experience.

### 6.2. The Use of Figures of Speech

The figures of speech are usually used in religious texts to make the message of a text more accessible to the reader or more impactful, taking into consideration the fact that all religious texts are addressed to different categories of people and are meant to have a teaching role. Such figures of speech as the antithesis are frequently employed by the authors to emphasize a very common dichotomy on which not only religion but also ethics, philosophy and psychology are based: good-evil. While in the Biblical text the main antithesis is *life-death*, in the Buddhist one, many examples of antithesis can be found: *attractive-disgusting,*

*friendship-selfishness, hatred-gratitude*, etc. This dualistic antagonistic dimension of life depicted by the Buddhist text is very relevant and impactful as the whole fragment seems a glossary of terms, a list of opposites, for instance: *Good is attractive; evil is disgusting.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

Regarding the use of comparisons, in the Buddhist fragment, this figure of speech is employed to build the chromatic image of innocence: *garments were white like snow* (Carus, 195: 169). White is frequently employed in Christian texts as well, symbolising purity and innocence. Virgin Mary, for instance, is always pictured wearing white clothes.

The biblical text uses a simple, accessible language although it abounds in archaic forms of pronouns and verbs, while in the fragment taken from the Buddhist teachings the metaphors are frequently used. Buddha's definition of each concept is practically a metaphor suggesting the most striking characteristic of the issue under discussion. For instance:

> *A word spoken in wrath is the sharpest sword;*
> *covetousness is the deadliest poison;*
> *passion is the fiercest fire;*
> *ignorance is the darkest night. or*
> *Evil thought is the most dangerous thief;*
> *wisdom is the best weapon...*
> *virtue is the most precious treasure.*
> *...immortality is its securest treasure-trove, etc.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

### 6.3. Content Word Classes

Language is a dynamic field. New content words are ceaselessly added to the English language while old content words constantly simply fade away in time, as they are no longer used. Although the biblical fragment is practically a translation of the original text, it uses old forms of words that are no longer used nowadays. These specific words are part of the Christian history and can be identified in other Christian teachings and documents, besides the *Bible*. Christian jargon is part of the history and evolution of the Christian faith, which is preserved by church leaders and its members and language is an important tool, a link between people, bringing them together, feeling free to express their beliefs.

According to Mair (1994), Buddhism was born in India and its earliest scriptures were written in Pali. Later, the texts were written in Prakrit, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese, Korean, Sogdian, Khotanese, Uyghur, Khitan, Thai, Cambodian, Mongolian, Manchu, and numerous other languages. An important figure for the linguistic richness of Buddhologists is represented by Antonino Forte (1940–2006).

This short introduction regarding the way the two selected fragments came into being is inherent to our study as they enhance the idea that language is a vivid structure, and it provides a diachronic view on the religious jargon employed in the texts.

Regarding the lexical choices, the authors (or translators) of both texts use nouns belonging to the religious jargon: *brother, day, resurrection, life*, in the first text and *bliss, immortality, life, heaven*, in the second text, as well as many nouns expressing feelings and emotions such as: *covetousness, wisdom, wrath, pain, enjoyment, gratitude, patience, etc.*

Both texts employ not only nouns but also verbs belonging to the religious register, among which *rise, die, live* together with verbs of cognition *believe* and *know* meant to persuade the reader in the Christian text, while in the Buddhist text, which is structured as a glossary of terms, the verb *to be* in the present tense simple is frequently used in order to define such concepts as: *the deadliest poison, the most dangerous thief, the most precious treasure, the most tormenting pain, the most violent fever, the best weapon, the fiercest fire, etc.*

The modal verbs used in both texts are very relevant as they are meant to express conviction and certainty; in the biblical fragment, for instance, the modal verb *shall* (not frequently employed nowadays): *Thy brother shall rise again.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28) and to express ability or lack of ability: *Can* and *be able to*, in the Buddhist Teachings fragment: *What is it fire can neither burn, nor moisture corrode, nor wind crush down, but is able to reform the whole world?* (Carus, 1915: 169)

The two texts are meant to be clear and easily understood by the target reader; therefore, the authors do not use many adverbs, as the message delivered does not need any adornments. S*ecretly* - in the first text and *suddenly* - in the second text, both adverbs of manner, are the only adverbs used by the authors.

Regarding the use of pronouns, we have already mentioned the archaic forms of the pronouns used in the Christian text and we can also mention the use of relative pronouns *whosoever* and *whatsoever* that are used in order to suggest God's infinite power and love. *Whosoever* and *whatsoever*, together with the adverb *even now* are meant to intensify the power of the message and make it more credible and more impactful.

> *22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*
> *26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*
> (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

In the Buddhist Teachings excerpt, the pronouns frequently emplyed are *I and he, together* with the relative pronoun *who*, used generically. These pronouns are also used to provide a definition or to enumerate the characteristics of someone making his way towards enlightenment.

> *He is the greatest gainer who gives to others and he loses most who greedily receives without gratitude.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

## 6.4. Discourse Markers. Vocatives and Attention Getters
According to Brinton, discourse markers are:

> [...] phonologically "short" items that preferentially occur in sentence-initial position. They are syntactically independent elements that are loosely attached to (parenthetical to) their host clause and often constitute a separate intonation unit and as such have scope over global units of discourse (beyond the level of the clause). (Brinton, 2010:385)

The use of discourse markers in a text is essential. They are frequently employed in both spoken and written texts and their role is to bind together the ideas in a text. Discourse markers bring coherence and contribute to the construction of the text being used not only

> [...] to initiate discourse, including claiming the attention of the hearer or reader, and to close discourse but also to mark a boundary in discourse, that is, to indicate a new topic a partial shift in topic or to adopt either new information or old information. (Brinton, 2010: 35)

On the other hand, over-using discourse markers in a text can make the text sound artificial and unnatural.

In religious texts, discourse markers are rarely employed. One of the possible explanations for such issue could be the lack of translation equivalent, taking into consideration the fact that the original texts from which we have excerpted the fragments under discussion were not originally written in English. It is easily noticeable that discourse markers can simply be absent because they are simply unnecessary. In the Buddhist teachings fragment, for instance, such words are not useful; they do not add meaning and do not contribute to the comprehension of the text as it is very well structured: the Deva asks questions and the Blessed One provides answers. Nevertheless, our observations are based on translations provided by scholars and revised many times before getting to the form we are analysing in the present study.

The vocative case is used for direct address. Although the fragment from the Buddhist teachings is practically a dialogue between the Blessed One and the Deva, no vocatives can be identified in the chosen fragment. In the biblical fragment, on the other hand, only one vocative can be identified when Martha, Lazarus' sister, addresses directly to Christ confirming her faith and love for the Son of God:

> *Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

In the second fragment, the Deva speaks directly to the Blessed One, without using any attention getters or vocatives. Her questions flow naturally; she even

asks more than one question at once and waits for the blessed One to provide answers.

### 6.5. Derived Words

A derived word is a word built using a root word and the addition of suffixes or prefixes. In the fragments under discussion, we can identify nominalizations (both nominalized verbs and nominalized adjectives). Despite the archaic language used in the biblical fragment, the excerpt is written in an accessible language and the only derived word that could be identified was the nominalized verb *to resurrect* – derived nominal: *resurrection*, repeated twice and used metaphorically by Christ in his dialogue with Martha, Lazarus' sister.

The adjective *immortal*, nominalized as *immortality*, can be identified in the Buddhist fragment. It derives from the Latin root word *mort* symbolizing death, while the verb *to deliver* nominalized as *deliverance* is employed by the Blessed One to describe *the height of Bliss*.

### 6.6. Verb Features
### 6.6.1. Semantic classes of Verbs

As in any other written text, verbs have a crucial role in both fragments under discussion. Among the most important semantic classes of verb that can be identified in our texts are communication verbs such as: *to say, to ask, to reply, to answer*:

> *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.*
> *Martha saith unto him[...]* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

> *The deva asked questions which the Blessed One answered. The deva said: [...]* (Carus, 1915: 169)

Verbs of cognition, such as *to know* and *to believe*, can be identified only in the first text sample while in the second one, Buddha uses the verb *to be* as a mark of his knowledge and certainty as all his answers are clear definitions of terms.

> *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*

> *Good is attractive; evil is disgusting... the Buddha is the best physician*
> *Evil thought is the most dangerous thief*
> *Virtue is the most precious treasure.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

### 6.6.2. Verb Valencies

When referring to the importance of verbs in the given texts one should also take into consideration verb valencies. Valency is a term that derives from the field of chemistry where

[...] the valency of a chemical element is its capacity for combining with a fixed number of atoms of another element—for example, hydrogen can bond with only one other element and is called monovalent. (Glossary of Linguistic Terms – online version)

In linguistics, the term refers to *the capacity of a verb to take a specific number and type of arguments (noun phrase positions)* as it is explained in the Glossary of Linguistic Terms.

The verbs of cognition from our fragments, previously mentioned, are transitive verbs in both texts: *to know, to believe* and *to ask, to give*, in the first text, while in the second text there are few transitive verbs such as *to ask, to answer and to destroy.*

> *The deva asked questions which the Blessed One answered. The deva said: [...]*

We have also identified two intransitive verbs:

> *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*
> *[...] a celestial deva came to him in the shape of a Brahman[...]* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

### 6.6.3. Verb Tenses

We have already mentioned the fact that the verb *to be* is excessively used in the Buddhist text in order to define all the concepts the Deva asks the Blessed One about. An important aspect is the fact that this verb is used in the present tense simple to reflect a general truth, building solid affirmations that cannot be doubted/ are not questionable.

> *I am the resurrection and the life.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

> *He is the greatest gainer who gives to others, and he loses most who greedily receives without gratitude.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

Additionally, both authors employ the past tense in order to narrate past events:

> *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying [...]* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

> *[...]he bowed down before him in reverence and disappeared suddenly from the presence of the Buddha.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

In the biblical fragment, there is also a verb used in the future tense; the author uses the archaic *wilt* instead of *will* to express future action referring to what Martha could ask from Lord and emphasizing God's endless power and love for men.

> *[...]whatsoever thou wilt ask of God.... God will give it thee.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

We should pay particular attention to the use of *shall* in the biblical fragment, as it is used both with the inversion of the subject in a sentence introduced by the adverb, *yet,* and with the personal pronoun, *he,* 3rd person singular. *Shall* is generally used instead of *will* in the 1st person singular and plural, with *I* and *we*, in formal contexts to express predictions, intentions and decisions. *Shall* is not employed anymore as commonly as *will,* that tends to replace it in spoken language. The author also uses *shall* to express certainty, to reassure Martha of the truthfulness of his words:

> *23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.*

> *24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

*Shall* is also used in the biblical fragment with the inversion of the subject elevating the ceremonial tone and elegance of the text, reminding us that we are in front of a formal text.

> *25 he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

## 6.7. Adverbial Phrases and Clauses

Both adverbial phrases and adverbial clauses are groups of words playing the role of an adverb; the difference between the two categories of word groups being the fact that an adverbial clause contains a subject and a verb behaving as an adverb and modifying the main clause. Adverbial phrases or clauses can express how, where, when, why the action is done but it can also introduce possible outcomes, comparisons or contrasts.

The most interesting case in the fragments studied is the use of the adverb *pray,* in the Buddhist text, the only archaic word which could be identified in the chosen fragment. In archaic formal language, *pray* is used as a preface to polite requests or instructions, replaced nowadays by *please*:

> *Now I have only one doubt to be solved; pray, clear it away!* (Carus, 1915: 169)

We have also identified adverbial phrases of manner: *secretly,* in the first text, and suddenly, *greedily,* in the second text.

> *[...]when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary her sister secretly.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

> *[...]and disappeared suddenly from the presence of the Buddha.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

In the biblical fragment, we have identified an adverbial phrase of time: *even now,* used for emphasis*,* and an adverbial clause of time, as well. *Even now* is used by the Son of God as an intensifier to describe God's willingness and mightiness to give the one who believes in Him whatever he may ask from Him.

> *I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*
> *[...]when she had so said, she went her way [...]* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

### 6.8. Noun Phrases and Clauses

Regarding the semantic category of nouns, in both texts, one can identify animate nouns such as *Son, brother* and proper nouns such as *Jesus, Martha, God, Christ, Master, Mary* in the first fragment. In the second fragment, the main animate nouns are *the Deva, the Buddha* (here used as a common noun, meaning the teacher, the enlightened one, the blessed one, although it is written with capital letters). There are also abstract nouns: *life, world* and process nouns such as *resurrection* in the biblical fragment.

Analysing the nominal pre-modifiers in the given texts, one can notice the fact that while in the first text, there is only one attributive adjective - *the last day*, the second text abounds in such nominal pre-modifiers. Almost each noun is proceeded by an adjective or a pre-modifier: *bad conscience, good deed, tormenting pain, violent fever, etc.* The Deva's questions are all following the same pattern: Wh- question word, more precisely, interrogative pronouns such as *what, who, which*, followed by the present simple of the verb *to be*, a nominal pre-modifier and the noun itself.

> *What is the most violent fever? Who is the best physician?* (Carus, 1915: 169)

### 6.9. Complement Clauses

A complement clause is a subordinate clause that serves to complete the meaning of a noun, adjective or verb. It is usually introduced by a complementizer like *that* or *whether*. In texts belonging to religious register, this type of subordinate clauses is very frequently used, regardless of the period of time when the text was written. In the texts under discussion, complement clauses together with verbs of cognition such as *know* and *believe* can be easily identified. The

verbs of cognition are used to underline the truthfulness of the message, on the one hand, *I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28) and to declare absolute faith in the Son of God, on the other hand.

> *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

*To know* and *to believe,* together with other categories of verbs such as *to bow (down in reverence)* are considered to be two items of register peculiar to religious register.

### 6.10. Relative Clauses

The relative clauses are generally used to bring important or relevant information to the context (definite relative clauses) and to bring additional or extra information to the context (non-definite relative clauses). The latter ones are considered of less importance by grammarians but, as we will notice in the biblical fragment under discussion, the information brought by the non-definite relative clauses can also help to build the message meant to be delivered through relevant details.

Relative clauses introduced by *that* and by *which* are present in the biblical fragment:

> *[...]he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

This relative clause is meant to emphasize the idea that the only one who will find eternal life is the one who has faith. It is used to depict a feeling of exclusiveness empowered by the concessive subordinate *though he were dead.* Therefore, these structures are meant to underline the fact that not even death can prevent God from giving his believers eternal life. By using the relative subordinate and the concessive one, the author succeeded in rendering the Christian message in a concise but very precise manner.

There is another example of relative clause in the biblical fragment, a non-definite relative clause, introduced by *which*

> *[...]the Son of God, which should come into the world*. (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

In this case, the addresser brings additional information having the main goal of reassuring his addressees that the Lord Christ will come back on Earth from the Heavenly Kingdom, among his believers.

In the Buddhist Teachings, there are two non-definite relative clauses whose importance, at a first glance, is not as relevant to the context as the ones from the Christian fragment. They rather have a descriptive role yet; the extra information they bring about the celestial deva's appearance in the form of a Brahman, in front

of the Buddha, depict the chromatic picture of innocence (here associated with the lack of knowledge, as the Deva seems to know very little about life and comes to the Blessed One in search for answers to her existential questions) built with the use of such adjectives as *bright, white* and the noun *snow*.

> *[...] whose countenance was bright and whose garments were white like snow.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

## 7. Main Clauses

The main clauses play a significant part in the fragments under discussion. They are employed to build clear messages describing general truths, in the fragment from the Buddhist Teaching, and to declare faith and love for Christ, the Son of God, in the biblical fragment.

> *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

> *Hatred is the most violent fever, and the Buddha is the best physician.* (Carus, 1915: 169)

In the biblical text, the only interrogative main clause which can be identified draws our attention as it is built using the archaic form of the interrogative (built without the auxiliary verb *to do*) and the archaic form of the verb *believe*.

> *Believest thou this?* (King James Version of the Bible, John 11: 22-28)

The Buddhist text is built on such main clauses as it is meant to provide vital information for those trying to find the path to enlightenment. The text abounds in such main clauses as all the deva's questions are main interrogative clauses:

> *What is attractive?*
> *What is disgusting?*
> *What is the most horrible pain?*
> *What is the greatest enjoyment?"*
> *What is the most horrible pain?*
> *What causes ruin in the world?*
> *What breaks off friendships?*
> *What is the most violent fever?* (Carus, 1915: 169)

## 8. Other Linguistic Features

The most important and striking characteristic which can be identified in the fragment from the Buddhist teachings is the fact that each answer the Buddha gives to the Deva's questions contains an adjective in the superlative degree. We use the superlative form of an adjective to show something has a quality to the greatest or least degree. Most of the adjectives used by the Deva in his questions

are either in the positive or in the superlative degree. The Blessed One uses the same adjectives from the questions the Deva asked in order to emphasize the accuracy and to enhance the validity of his answers.

> *What is attractive? What is disgusting? What is the most horrible pain? What is the greatest enjoyment?* (Carus, 1915: 169)

These adjectives enhance the graduality in the message the Buddha delivers as it is easily noticeable that the Deva first uses two adjectives in the positive degree, *attractive* and *disgusting*, and then two adjectives in the superlative degree, *the most horrible pain* and *the greatest enjoyment*, both pairs of adjectives being antonyms in the given context. The definitions provided by the Buddha remind Christian readers of the 10 Commandments of Christianity that provide a set of biblical principles or instructions on how to lead a life according to the norms of ethics and spirituality, honouring God and bringing abundance to their lives. The Buddhist fragment also provides a set of concepts, which people should follow in order to become enlightened as the Blessed One. The same urging tone found in the *Ten Commandments* is present in Buddha's teachings, to prove the righteousness and the undeniability of his words. In order to set boundaries and to define limits, the Blessed One uses such words as *the sharpest (sword), the deadliest (poison), the most dangerous (thief), the most precious (treasure), the most tormenting (pain), the most violent (fever), the best (weapon, physician), the fiercest (fire), the darkest (night), the greatest (benefit), the securest (treasure)* (Carus, 1915: 169)

On the one hand, these adjectives are deliberately employed in the superlative degree to suggest the indisputable character of the message, bearing an intensifier role in the text. On the other hand, there is another aspect that should be taken into consideration: the adjectives used by the Buddha are antonyms. Such dichotomies are the pairs of antonyms*: the securest-the most dangerous, the best-the most violent*, etc. The author(s) chose this contrastive manner of building the message with the aim of rendering it more impactful.

The Blessed One delivers an absolute truth which is not debatable, and the Deva finds answers in his wise words and accepts his message without questioning or doubting them. The Blessed One is capable of clearing Deva's doubts, in fact, by the end of the fragment; she even admits that he successfully did that: *Now I have only one doubt to be solved; pray, clear it away* (Carus, 1915: 169) implying that he cleared away all his doubts as there was only one left. Buddha's absolute power is suggested by the words he chose in his discourse and that is why the Deva bowed down before him in reverence at the end of the dialogue.

Another aspect that drew our attention is the use of the word *treasure-trove* in the Buddhist fragment, a term deriving from the Anglo-French *tresor trouvé* which means *found treasure.* The author uses it to describe people chasing the dream of immortality, which is the mind's *treasure-trove,* metaphorically translated as the most valuable thing. Buddhist philosophy centres on the power of the mind enhancing the idea that our habits and our conceptions can both

imprison us and liberate us. Therefore, the Blessed One did not choose the word *treasure-trove* randomly. Immortality is a found treasure for the mind in Buddhism. What is really interesting is the fact that the same word, treasure-trove, reminds Christian readers of the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, from the *Gospel of Matthew* which Jesus Christ tells his disciples and the crowd around them. Jesus compares the treasure to the Kingdom of Heaven as it is of a greater value than any earthly belongings or wealth. He compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure found hidden in a field. The man who finds the treasure does not simply take it. Instead, he leaves it there, sells everything he has, and buys the field so that he might get the treasure it contains.

> *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* (The Parable of the Hidden Treasure)

### 9. Non-linguistic features

A very important aspect regarding non-linguistic features in the religious texts under discussion is the use of capital letters. Both fragments use capital letters when referring to a respected or venerated person: *God, Lord, The Son of God, God, Master, Thy brother* and *Buddha, Blessed One*, in the fragment from the Buddhist teachings.

In the Christian fragment, the capital letters are used to show respect and reverence for God or Jesus while the adepts of Buddhism do not believe in any kind of deity or God, although there are supernatural figures who can help people on their path towards enlightenment. The name *Buddha* or *The Blessed One*, written in the text using capital letters, is employed with the meaning of teacher, the enlightened one, the blessed one and gives the title of the chapter itself from which the fragment is taken.

Another non-linguistic feature that can be identified only in the Biblical text is the use of numbers for verse and chapters, a non-linguistic feature that can be identified in the Christian fragment. *John 11:22 (*11- the chapter*;* 22: the number situated in front of each verse). This manner of numbering the chapters and the verses was added to the initial biblical text many years after it was written. This system was devised by Archbishop Stephen who inserted the numbers to a Latin translation of the Bible. The numbers were meant to keep one sentence per verse, and they are nothing but someone's interpretation of where sentences start and end as the Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, and the original text had no punctuation. The current system of verse numbers in the New Testament was devised by Robert Stephens in 1551. The current system of verse numbers in the Old Testament was devised by Joseph Athias in 1661.[26]

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[26] Jacobson, R.A., Why Are There Chapter and Verse Numbers in the Bible?, available at https://enterthebible.org/bible-reading-tip-why-are-there-chapter-and-verse-numbers#:~:text=The%20chapter%20and%20verse%20numbers,it%20easy%20to%20find%20stuff.&text=Think%20of%20a%20favorite%20Bible,psalms%20are%20laments%20and%20thanksgivings.

**10. Limitations and Boundaries of the Study**

Our comparative analysis enhances Morărașu's conclusion regarding over-generalisation when trying to identify general linguistic features of selected registers. Small-scale analyses are more relevant (2014: 31) and this is the strength and the weakness of our study at the same time. It represents its strength, due to its relevance and the pertinence of its conclusions, a small-scale one, nevertheless, and its weakness, because of the impossibility of drawing a general conclusion, which is available in all or in most religious register texts.

**Conclusions and Further Thoughts**

Language has been one of the main means to portray a religion across time. In addition, other means such as religious customs, symbols and songs/hymns have been used. Nevertheless, for a religion to survive among the coming generations it has to be communicated, and this is where language plays its role. The two fragments have been translated from other languages and many scholars have brought their contribution to their final version. Our study supports the idea that, in religious written texts, the linguistic resources are very well chosen, and the translators' role is essential in such cases as each of the scholars who have brought their contribution to the final version of these texts, has left his own personal mark on the text.

To conclude, the given excerpts both belong to the religious registers although they were written in different periods of time. They are very similar in terms of the participants and the relationship between them, but extremely different in terms of channel and mode, language use and flexibility of approach. The selected texts are short fragments from the original texts and other perspectives and other methodological tools can be employed to reach reliable conclusions.

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**ANNEXES**
**Annexe 1**
**Text 1-King James Version of the Bible-John 11:22-28**

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

**Annexe 2**
**Text 2- The Buddha Replies to the Deva-The Teacher**

On a certain day when the Blessed One dwelt at Jetavana, the garden of Anathapindika, a celestial deva came to him in the shape of a Brahman whose countenance was bright and whose garments were white like snow. The deva asked questions which the Blessed One answered. The deva said: "What is the sharpest sword? What is the deadliest poison? What is the fiercest fire? What is the darkest night?" The Blessed One replied: "A word spoken in wrath is the sharpest sword; covetousness is the deadliest poison; passion is the fiercest fire; ignorance is the darkest night."

The deva said: "Who gains the greatest benefit? Who loses most? Which armor is invulnerable? What is the best weapon?" The Blessed One replied: "He is the greatest gainer who gives to others, and he loses most who greedily receives without gratitude. Patience is an invulnerable armor; wisdom is the best weapon."

The deva said: "Who is the most dangerous thief? What is the most precious treasure? Who is most successful in taking away by violence not only on earth, but also in heaven? What is the securest treasure-trove?" The Blessed One replied: "Evil thought is the most dangerous thief; virtue is the most precious treasure. The

mind takes possession of everything not only on earth, but also in heaven, and immortality is its securest treasure-trove."

The deva said: "What is attractive? What is disgusting? What is the most horrible pain? What is the greatest enjoyment?" The Blessed One replied: "Good is attractive; evil is disgusting. A bad conscience is the most tormenting pain; deliverance is the height of bliss."

The deva asked: "What causes ruin in the world? What breaks off friendships? What is the most violent fever? Who is the best physician?" The Blessed One replied: "Ignorance causes the ruin of the world. Envy and selfishness break off friendships. Hatred is the most violent fever, and the Buddha is the best physician."The deva then asked and said: "Now I have only one doubt to be solved; pray, clear it away: What is it fire can neither burn, nor moisture corrode, nor wind crush down, but is able to reform the whole world?" The Blessed One replied: "Blessing! Neither fire, nor moisture, nor wind can destroy the blessing of a good deed, and blessings reform the whole world." The deva, having heard the words of the Blessed One, was full of exceeding joy. Clasping his hands, he bowed down before him in reverence and disappeared suddenly from the presence of the Buddha.