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ENGLISH RELIGIOUS SLANG
IN SEARCH OF LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

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Abstract

The research is concerned with English religious slang, i.e. substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary which is employed by persons identifying themselves as believers with reference to their religious affiliation. The historical precursor of religious slang studies was the empirical evidence collected by W. Tyndale, J.C. Hotten, J. Redding Ware, and E. Partridge in the 16th-20th centuries. As the core notion of this article, religious slang is differentiated from similar linguistic phenomena, namely general religious vocabulary and religion-related slang. The elaboration of a typology of religious slang allows for delimiting its three major types: Christian slang, Judaist slang, and Muslim slang. Christian slang is by far best represented, which is due to the worldwide spread of Christianity, the multiplicity of its denominations, and the longevity of the proselytizing tradition. Christian slang discloses 10 linguistic trends reflecting the on-going process of neologization of the English religious vocabulary, characterized by the emergence and synthesis of new notions, analogical and humorous word-formation, semantic change, and wordplay. Judaist slang contains a much more limited amount of empirical evidence, which has to do with its marked fixation on tradition, both linguistically and culturally, and manifests itself within two trends. Muslim slang is least represented among the three types, which results from the intrinsic conservatism of Islam.

Keywords: religious, religion-related, Christian, Judaist, Muslim

1. Introduction

Religious is arguably the oldest discourse, with texts written thousands of years ago still being regularly addressed and novel interpretations proposed. Yet, language perpetually evolves, and so do diverse discourses. This evolution invariably leads to the synthesis of new linguistic phenomena which have yet to be investigated on both theoretical and empirical planes. It is at the intersection of disciplines that the bulk of like innovations emerge. And such is the case of religious slang, a relatively recent phenomenon which has not been approached

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theoretically so far, presumably in view of its extreme marginality, since the informality inherent in slang runs counter to the institutionalized nature of religion. However, the present study argues that religious slang not only represents a fully-fledged component of religious discourse but also is identifiable even in the utterly conservative religions such as Islam. Furthermore, the on-going emergence of neologisms in this field may attest to the fact that modern society, despite its focus shift from ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse/homogeneous communities to culturally diverse/ homogeneous entities prioritizing cultures, subcultures, and contra-cultures [1], leaves space for confessionalism too.

This investigation pursues the following objectives:

1) delimiting religious slang as a separate component of religious discourse;
2) differentiating religious slang from similar linguistic phenomena, i.e. general religious vocabulary and religion-related slang;
3) elaborating a typology of religious slang;
4) tracking the linguistic trends characteristic of each type of religious slang.

The methodology underlying the present research is based on such methods of language studies as structural (derivational and componential analyses), semantic (definitional and denotational analyses), and, to a much lesser extent, cognitive as well as comparative-historical.

2. A case study of religious slang - historical preconditions and theoretical evidence

The earliest attempts at identifying what would be later referred to as religious slang date back to 1528 [2], with W. Tyndale being the pioneer of collecting phrases of ecclesiastical origin, which he uses as the illustration of the allegorical approach to Scripture exegesis (alongside the literal one), as in "If the porridge be burned too, or the meat over roasted, we say, the bishop hath put his foot in the pot, or the bishop hath played the cook, because the bishops burn whom they lust, and whomsoever displeaseth them. He is a pontifical fellow, that is, proud and stately. He is popish, that is, superstitious and faithless. […] And of her that answereth her husband six words for one, we say, She is a sister of the charter-house […]. And of him that will not be saved by Christ's merits, but by the works of his own imagination, we say it is a holy workman." [3] It is noteworthy that W. Tyndale treats allegory here as "strange speaking, or borrowed speech" [3, p. 339]. Nonetheless, his definition of borrowing differs from the one linguistically acceptable nowadays, rather correlating with what is known at present as semantic change, or, more specifically, metaphorical transfer of meaning: "we borrow words and sentences of one thing, and apply them unto another, and give them new significations" [3]. The closest contemporary term partially converging with Tyndale's understanding of ***borrowing*** would be ***internal borrowing***, which is defined as the ability of a language to employ some of its patterns in changing its other patterns [4] or to use its own resources in creating new words [5]. Internal borrowing results from

the migration of language means from one sphere of language use into another [6]. The latter understanding neatly correlates with W. Tyndale's, who illustrates the migration of shepherd's jargon into spoken language in the following way: "As when we say of a wanton child, this sheep hath magots in its tail, he must be anointed with birchen salve; which speech I borrow of the shepherds" [3, p. 339].

However, religious slang was first linguistically addressed (although more empirically rather than theoretically) and, arguably, termed that way by J.C. Hotten [7], who, while substantiating the idea concerning the ubiquity of slang, remarked that "even the pulpit itself is no longer free from its intrusion" [7, p. 49]. Besides, the Victorian era was marked by abundance of religious denominations, whose language and ideas were in constant competition for their parishioners' minds [8]. J.C. Hotten provides conclusive examples of slang items resulting from:

1) semantic change, e.g. *to be owned* '(of a preacher) to have made many converts' [7, p. 50]; *dark* '(used by Recordites) not impregnated with Recordite principles' [7, p. 50]; *gracious* 'nice' [7, p. 50]; *seals* 'converts of a preacher' [7, p. 50];
2) paraphrasing, e.g. *the Broad and Shallow* 'the Broad Church' [7, p. 51]; *the High and Dry* 'the High Church' [7, p. 51]; *the Low and Slow* 'the Low Church' [7, p. 51].

Furthermore, J.C. Hotten is among the first linguists to shed light on the phonetic aspects of slang speech, noting the irreverent and desecrating pronunciation of the theonyms *God* (as /gɔːd/ or /gəʊd/ instead of /gɒd/ [7, p. 51]) and *Lord* (as /ləʊ(ə)d/ instead of /lɔːd/ [7, p. 51]) by younger preachers.

J.C. Hotten's other merit is that he was the first to delimit the vocabulary "used by the mob towards the Church" [7, p. 52], which he labelled as "illiberal and satirically vulgar", although treating it as part of religious slang, e.g. *choker, cushion-thumper, dominie, earwig, gospel-grinder,* or *gray-coat parson* for "a clergyman" [7, p. 52]; *one in ten* or *padre* for "a clergyman who is a lessee of the great tithes" [7, p. 52]; *rook, spouter, whitechoker, warming-pan rector* for "a clergyman who holds the living pro tempore" [7, p. 52]; *pygostole* or *M.B. coat* for "a Tractarian clergyman's outer garment" [7, p. 52]; *the cloth* for "a clergyman's profession" [7, p. 52]; *tub-thumping* for "a clergyman's practice" [7, p. 52]; *pantiler, psalm-smiter,* or *swaddler* for "a clergyman belonging to the Dissenting body" [7, p. 52]; *schism shop* for "a chapel" [7, p. 52]; *brisket-beater* for "a Roman Catholic" [7, p. 52].

Many more examples of religious slang are provided by J. Redding Ware, a dramatist and a collector of slang, in his 'Passing English of the Victorian era: A dictionary of heterodox English, slang, and phrase' [9], which features names of **religious affiliates and non-affiliates**, e.g. *C.C.* "a Catholic curate" [9, p. 191], *circuit rider* "a peripatetic preacher" [9, p. 78], *Elijah Two* "a false prophet" [9, p. 123], *gugusse* "an effeminate youth who frequents the private company of priests" [9, p. 148], *P.P.* "a parish priest" [9, p. 191], *rice(-)Christians* "natives in rice-bearing countries, who accept the missionaries

in order to gain rice or food; now used generally of people who make of religion a business" [9, p. 209], *rit* "a ritualistic clergyman" [9, p. 209], *snide and shine* "general description of the common Jews of the East of London by their Christian brethren" [9, p. 228]; **religious buildings**, e.g. *amen corner / Theatre Royal amen* "a church" [9, p. 7, 243], *the Go-between* "St. Alban's Church, Holborn" [9, p. 143], *Phil and Jim / Fillin Jim* "Church of S. Philip and S. James" [9, p. 195], *shool* "a church or a chapel" [9, p. 222]; **religious practices**, e.g. *groping for Jesus* "a public prayer" [9, p. 148], *knee-drill* "hypocritical praying" [9, p. 163], *kosher* "pure – undefiled (used by the Jews in reference to eatables, and especially alcoholic drinks at certain feasts of the year, especially Passover and Pentecost)" [9, p. 164], *trifer / trifa / triper* "unclean, unholy (used by the Jews in reference to eatables, namely pork and shell-fish)" [9, p. 164, 249, 250], *use* "function" [9, p. 256]; **religious conditions**, e.g. *no church* "the religious condition of the utterly outcast" [9, p. 182].

Furthermore, J. Redding Ware's dictionary includes numerous examples of general slang deriving from ecclesiastical terms, for instance, *as lame as St. Giles Cripplegate* "very lame – applied to a badly-told untruth" [9, p. 165]; *church-bell* "a talkative woman" [9, p. 77]; *churched* "married" [9, p. 77]; *Church parade* "the display of dress after morning church" [9, p. 77]; *church-piece* "a threepenny piece" [9, p. 77]; *churchyard cough* "a fatal cold" [9, p. 77]; *Gospel according to St. Jeames* "snobbery, abject devotion to persons of position" [9, p. 145]; *the gospel of gloom* "a satirical description of aestheticism which tended to doleful colours, gloomy houses, sad limp dresses, and solemn, earnest behaviour" [9, p. 145]; *the gospel of the tub* "the mania for the use of cold water" [9, p. 145]; *Kemble pipe* "the last pipe of the evening" [9, p. 162]; *maw-sang* "blood (a corrupted oath – probably from the French *mort saint*, i.e. *holy death*)" [9, p. 174]; *porky* "a Jew" [9, p. 199]; *what's the hullaballoo?* "what's the riot / noise / contention?" [9, p. 262].

Yet, the use of ecclesiastical terms is not confined to general slang, enriching, although to a lesser extent, special slangs, namely:

1) thieves' slang, e.g. *to christen a jack* "to replace the name on a stolen watch by another, to defeat detection" [9, p. 74], *to church a Jack* "to remove the works of a watch from its case, and put them in another, of course with the view of destroying the identity of the article" [9, p. 77];
2) army slang, e.g. *Christ-killer* "a Jew" [9, p. 74];
3) beggars' slang, e.g. *all my eye and Betty Martin* "an expression of disbelief (from the corrupt form of the opening of the prayer to St. Martin, the patron saint of beggars 'O, mihi, beate Martine')" [9, p. 5];
4) doctors' slang, e.g. *the ritualistic knee* "a medical condition caused by severe untrained momentary kneeling – when passing the altar, etc." [9, p. 209];
5) sports slang, e.g. *Prayer-book* "Ruff's 'Guide to the Turf'" [9, p. 200];
6) university slang, e.g. *freshers and toshers* "a combined term of contempt in Oxford, referring to freshmen and men who have no sympathy with the Church" [9, p. 137].

Another researcher into religious slang, E. Partridge, was the first to approach religious slang in retrospect, giving credit to W. Tyndale's, J.C. Hotten's, and J. Redding Ware's contributions to the issue, alongside compiling a mini-glossary of religious slang items, consolidating the empirical evidence collected by the three researchers and, thus, embracing three different epochs. Of the utmost interest is E. Partridge's selection of the slang vocabulary previously recorded by J. Redding Ware and featuring names of **religious affiliates and non-affiliates**, e.g. *extreme Rockite* "one who believes in the Rock newspaper, and preaches on its basis" [2, p. 198], *Massites* "members of the Anglican Church who believe in transubstantiation" [2, p. 198], *merely moral man* "a man who is moral without expressed Christian belief" [2, p. 198], *Taits* "moderate clergymen" [2, p. 198]; **ecclesiastical fashion trends**, e.g. *Anglican inch* "the short square whisker which is so much affected by the Broad Church party" [2, p. 197], *St. Alban's clean shave* "appearance of the ritualistic or high church clergymen's face" [2, p. 198]; **religious buildings**, e.g. *candle-shop* "a Roman Catholic chapel, or a Ritualistic church" [2, p. 197], *Workus* "a Methodist chapel" [2, p. 198]; **religious denominations**, e.g. *dolly worship* "the Roman Catholic religion" [2, p. 197]; **religious trends**, e.g. *the Three B's* "bright, brief, and brotherly – the modern protest against the sleepy nature of a majority of the 19th century church services" [2, p. 198].

All in all, the empirical evidence collected by W. Tyndale, J.C. Hotten, J. Redding Ware, and E. Partridge constitutes a solid basis for further theoretical insight into religious slang and its types.

Prior to answering the question what religious slang constitutes per se, it is of the utmost importance in the present study to specify what ***slang*** is taken to mean as well as to differentiate it from similar linguistic phenomena, namely ***general religious vocabulary*** and ***religion-related slang***.

The penetration of elements of slang as a non-literary microsystem into the literary standard results from the centripetal functional mobility of the vocabulary, which is directed from the periphery of the speech macrosystem towards its core [10]. The term ***slang*** has substantially evolved throughout its history. In the mid-eighteenth century, slang designated "the special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character, the thieves' cant or patter of the early centuries" [11]. Its present-day metalanguage correlate would be ***argot***, or ***cant***, identified first and foremost as ***secret language***. In the late eighteenth century, "the meaning of slang broadened to include the special vocabulary or phraseology of a particular calling or profession" [11], i.e. it extended to denoting ***professional language***, which approximates it to the contemporary understanding of ***jargon***. Finally, in the early nineteenth century, "the term slang came to be applied much more generally to any language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some new special sense" [11]. In order to sociolinguistically gradate these three historical stages as described, a ***chronohierarchy of slang meaning evolution*** is proposed: **1) cryptolect → 2) (cryptolect +) professiolect → 3) (cryptolect +**

professiolect +) lect. Therefore, modern English slang is seen as a substandard (in terms of its normativity), familiar / colloquial (in terms of its stylistic value), and informal (in terms of its register) lect [12].

Notwithstanding the fact that slang is conventionally divided into ***general*** and ***special*** depending on the restrictedness / non-restrictedness of its use to a specific social group, there exists no such phenomenon as ***general religious slang***. Several reasons account for this. Firstly, since the number of substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary items which can be treated as religion-related is small, the lack of empirical evidence makes the elaboration of a highly abstract multi-tier classification of religious slangs academically irrelevant. Secondly, the semantic heterogeneity of religious slang items neatly correlates with the existing classifications of world religions (cf. Christianity – Islam – Judaism and Christian slang – Muslim slang – Judaist slang), whilst any massive transition of terms from one religion to another would likely disrupt the traditions which are inherent to and dearly held by every major religion as its foundation and stronghold. Thirdly, religious slang occupies a peripheral position in religious vocabulary, since informality runs counter to the institutionalized and formalized nature of religion itself. However, any potential lexical interchange between religions, no matter how petty, would start with their central, or core notions.

Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to distinguish only ***general religious vocabulary***, which would include lexical items such as *belief*, *ethics*, *moral*, *practice*, *prophecy*, *ritual*, *spirituality*, etc. However, general religious vocabulary does not result from borrowing of concepts by one religion from another, but rather reflects a post factum attempt to scientifically identify the common features which are to a greater or lesser extent applicable to all religions. Furthermore, general religious vocabulary is by default not slangy, i.e. substandard, familiar, and informal. It is equally noteworthy that none of the examples of the general religious vocabulary above have their equivalents in slang.

It may follow from the above that any substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary item concerning religion is to be treated as religious slang. However, since general religious slang is non-existent, as has been established in the present research, it implies that every religion-related vocabulary item is part of a certain special slang which per se is restricted to a particular group of believers (Christians, Judaists, Muslims, etc.). In the meanwhile, a considerable layer of slang vocabulary designates religious affiliates or their practices as perceived by outsiders, i.e. either those who do not practise the religion referred to or those who are complete non-believers. Such words and phrases would not be used in religious discourse in view of their inappropriateness or even offensiveness. Nonetheless, the notions they express do concern religion in the broad sense of the latter term. Such is the case of diverse religious slurs, as, for instance, *bead counter* [13], *bead jiggler* [13], *bead rattler* [13], *bender* [13, p. 47-48], *Bible-basher* [13, p. 51], *Bible-beater* [14], *Bible bunny* [13, p. 51], *Bible-thumper* [13, p. 51], *born-again* [13, p. 83], *carrot eater* [13, p. 120], *carrot snapper* [13, p.

120], *cat-lick(er)* [13, p. 123], *christer* [13, p. 140], *creeping Jesus* [13, p. 172], *fish-eater* [13, p. 253], *Jeezo-groveler* [13, p. 364], *Jello-Eater* [15], *Jesus freak* [13, p. 366], *Kafflik* [13, p. 377], *mackerel-snapper* [13, p. 414], and *yockele* [13, p. 714], all denoting Christians; *Abe / Abie* [13, p. 1], *bagel (face)* [13, p. 27], *beard* [13, p. 41], *brew* [13, p. 90], *Broadway Arab* [13, p. 92], *Canadian* [13, p. 115], *Christ-killer* [13, p. 140], *clipped dick* [13, p. 147], *eskimo* [13, p. 237], *fast-talking Charlie* [13, p. 245], *Hebe / Heeb* [13, p. 328], *hooknose* [13, p. 341], *Hymie* [13, p. 350], *Ikey (Mo)* [13, p. 353], *Izzy* [13, p. 358], *Jewboy* [13, p. 366], *kike* [13, p. 381], *mocky / mockie* [13, p. 435], *pork-dodger* [13, p. 510], *Red Sea pedestrian* [13, p. 535], *schnoink* [13, p. 560], *sheeny* [13, p. 571], *Stamford Hill cowboy* [13, p. 616], *three-balls* [13, p. 648], *Yid* [13, p. 714], *yiddel / yiddle* [13, p. 714], and *zip top* [13, p. 718], designating Jews; *Balija* [16], *Mohammedan* [17], *Osama* [18], *Koran-thumper* [19], *Pomak* [20], *rag head* [13, p. 528], *Saracen* [21], and *towel(-)head* [13, p. 662], referring to Muslims.

Another important source of religion-related (but not religious) informal vocabulary is Cockney rhyming slang, which is formed by means of the substitution of the signifier of the original item with the randomly rhyming signifier of the resulting item on condition that the signified remains unchanged. It is in this way that ***Jew*** becomes *buckle my shoe* [13, p. 97], *fifteen and two / fifteen-two* [13, p. 249], *five by / to two* [13, p. 253, 254], *four by two* [13, p. 266], *half past two* [13, p. 317], *kangaroo* [13, p. 377], *Luby Lou* [13, p. 411], *pot of glue* [13, p. 512], *pull through* [13, p. 518], *racketty coo* [13, p. 527], or *tea for two* [13, p. 642]; ***Yid*** is turned into *dustbin lid* [13, p. 227], *four / front wheel skid* [13, p. 266, 272], *God forbid* [13, p. 294], *saucepan lid* [13, p. 558], *slippery Sid* [13, p. 592], *teapot lid* [13, p. 642], or *tin lid* [13, p. 653]; ***church*** is altered to *chicken perch* [13, p. 133], *lean and lurch* [13, p. 396], or *seek and search* [13, p. 566]; ***priest*** is replaced with *bag of yeast* [13, p. 28] or *dirty beast* [13, p. 203]; the slangy ***Tim*** and ***pape*** designating a Roman Catholic in Scottish English are changed respectively to *Jungle Jim* [13, p. 376] and *wine grape* [13, p. 702]; ***chapel*** is transformed into *pineapple* [13, p. 497]; the slangy ***Hun*** denoting a Protestant in Scottish English acquires the alternative name *cream bun* [13, p. 171].

Therefore, it is suggested that ***religious slang***, i.e. substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary which is employed by persons identifying themselves as believers with reference to their religious affiliation, be differentiated from ***religion-related slang***, i.e. any substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary concerning religion and enclosing religious slang as its major constituent.

3. Results and discussion

Religious slang is nowadays non-homogeneous and serves as an umbrella term embracing in the present study three major subtypes, namely Christian slang, Muslim slang, and Jewish slang. Among these, Christian slang is by far best represented, which is due not only to the global spread of Christianity but

also to the existence of its multiple denominations resulting from attempts at responding more adequately to the challenges of contemporary society.

3.1. Christian slang

Christian slang is defined in the present study as substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary which is employed by persons identifying themselves as Christians with reference to their religious affiliation.

The largest updatable online resource of Christian slang is 'Dictionary of Christianese' [T. Stewart, *Dictionary of Christianese*, 2011-2018, https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/], featuring not only the definitions, etymology, and examples of use of the vocabulary posted but also offering the alphabetical and thematic listings of the words and phrases in question. The subjects mentioned in the thematic listing include: *Bible*; *Charismatic Movement*; *Christian Music*; *Church and Church Services*; *Denominations*; *Evangelism*; *God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit*; *Greek and Hebrew Words*; *Historical*; *Kinds of Christians*; *Language*; *Love, Marriage, Dating, Singleness*; *Minimally Active Christians*; *Missions, Missionaries*; *Parachurches and Parachurch Activities*; *'Pastor-ese'*; *Piety*; *Pop Culture*; *Prayer*; *Puns*; *Sins and Evil*; *Social Media*; *Spiritual Disciplines*; *Spiritual Warfare*; *Theology*; *The Will of God, God's Guidance, Discernment*; *Women*; *Youth* [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/]. Albeit the classification is designed so as to tangibly facilitate the detection of semantically related slang items, its vulnerable spot is the mixing of diverse criteria applied at the same taxonomic level, which leads to overlapping notions, such as *Kinds of Christians* vs *Minimally Active Christians* vs *Women* vs *Youth*, or *Bible* vs *God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit*.

An extensive linguistic analysis of the empirical data collected in 'Dictionary of Christianese' [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/] allows for delimiting **the 10 linguistic trends of contemporary Christian slang**.

3.1.1. Euphemization affecting vocabulary capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles

Euphemization affecting vocabulary capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles is perfectly obvious in the substitution of the once-popular phrase *the Third World* referring to the developing nations of the world seen as a target of missionary work with the paraphrases *the Two-Thirds World*, *the Three-Fourths World*, or *the Majority World* [https://www.dictionaryof christianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/]. Similarly, the phrase *the Resistant Belt* [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/] designating the area from the west coast of Africa to the eastern tip of southeast Asia, which is alleged to contain 60 of the least evangelized countries of the world, has been superseded by the recent coinage *the 10/40 Window*

[https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/], which is more geographically accurate as denoting the latitude (between 10 and 40 degrees north) of the area in question and does not in any way encroach upon the non-Christian inhabitants' dignity, with non-acceptance (the underlying cognitive metaphor being RESISTANCE IS PROTEST) reversed to acceptance (the underlying cognitive metaphor being WINDOW IS OPPORTUNITY).

A specific instance of euphemization is acronymization of phrases capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles. Such is the case of the acronyms *EBH* (standing for *emotional black hole*) as well as *VDP* (standing for *very draining person*), and, to a lesser extent, *ECR* (standing for *extra care required*) along with *EGR* (standing for *extra grace required*), all denoting a person in church whose on-going spiritual and emotional needs frustrate the efforts of others to interact with or minister to that person [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/].

3.1.2. Amelioration of vocabulary denoting Christians whose practices reveal spiritual maturity and readiness to be used of God

A representative example of amelioration of vocabulary denoting Christians whose practices reveal spiritual maturity and readiness to be used of God is the word *armor-bearer*, which originally designated a male attendant bearing the armour or arms of a warrior or knight. Subsequently, the compound developed the secondary, metaphorical, meaning "a personal assistant or aide to a pastor, evangelist, or other Church leader" [https://www.dictionaryof christianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/]. It is noteworthy that amelioration in this case does not result from the word merely losing its negative or neutral evaluative connotation for the benefit of acquiring a new one, neutral or positive respectively, since, seemingly, both meanings appear perfectly neutral. It is not the person denoted but the domain of usage that determines amelioration. The primary meaning of *armor-bearer* designates an assistant, thus being devoid of any positive or negative connotations whatsoever. What accounts for the emergence of a positive evaluative connotation in the secondary meaning is the transition from designating a person whose religious affiliation is unstated to denoting a practising Christian who, in addition to all, strives to be of use to his Church. It follows from the above that evaluative connotation should not be treated as a universally applicable invariable, since its negative / neutral / positive nature equally depends on the domain of its usage.

3.1.3. Pejoration of vocabulary denoting Christians whose practices reveal spiritual immaturity or hypocrisy

Pejoration of vocabulary denoting Christians whose practices reveal spiritual immaturity or hypocrisy is well illustrated by the verb *to farewell* "to publicly declare that someone no longer adheres to Orthodox Christian doctrine / is no longer part of the Church or of the Evangelical community"

[https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/], which has acquired a negative evaluative connotation, being now associated with an apostate. Similarly, *evangelistic* and *ministerial*, contained in the neologisms *evangelastic* "exaggerated for the purpose of making a statistic or an incident seem greater or more impressive than it really was; characterized by a 'stretching' of the truth" and *ministerially speaking* "a verbal cue that indicates that numbers being reported with regard to attendance counts at church services or evangelistic events are probably exaggerated to some degree" [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/], are also devoid of their original semantic neutrality, with the idea of conscientious service being supplanted in both cases by that of intentional deception. The attribution of negative evaluative connotations is also commonplace amongst new phrases, as is the case of those designating Christians who have wandered from the path of righteousness (or have yet to reach it), for instance, the now synonymous *curry-and-rice Christian*, *famine Christian*, and *loaf-and-fish disciple* [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/], all referring to people who pretend to convert to Christianity in order to obtain food or other benefits from the missionaries.

3.1.4. Polysemantization of vocabulary capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles

Polysemantization of vocabulary capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles is found chiefly in phrases whose primary meanings with negative connotations have developed secondary meanings bearing positive connotations. For instance, initially *a rice Christian* referred to a person who pretended to convert to Christianity in order to obtain food, clothing, money, housing, education, or some other benefit from the missionaries. As a result, *a rice Christian* was seen as a hypocrite driven by mercenary motives. At present, however, *a rice Christian* also applies to a genuine Christian convert in a part of the world where rice happens to be a staple food [https://www.dictionaryof christianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/], with rice now being metonymically associated with the location where a person lives. Likewise, the expression *the frozen chosen* originally designated Christians in mainline denominations (namely, Presbyterians, Episcopalians) whose church services and styles of worship were more formal and orderly than the services of other denominations such as Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and charismatics. Semantically, the component *frozen* alluded to the lack of resilience and over-complication of the practices rather than a mere commitment to the tradition. Subsequently, *the frozen chosen* has developed the new meaning "Christians in colder parts of the world, like the northern United States" [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese. com/list-of-words-by-subject/], with *frozen* now being used in its direct, if hyperbolized, meaning which is evaluatively neutral.

3.1.5. Emergence of new vocabulary items reflecting the on-going synthesis of new concepts in Christians' religious lives

Emergence of new vocabulary items generally reflects the ongoing synthesis of new concepts in Christians' religious lives, as exemplified by the neologisms *Saturday-night special* "a sermon written or prepared on Saturday night and then preached at church the following morning" and *Saturday-night syndrome* "the anxiety experienced by a preacher who starts writing or preparing a sermon on the Saturday night before it will be preached at church" [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/] both referring to clergymen's routine. When boys fraternize with girls at a church event such as a retreat or camp-out, which in itself is commonly frowned upon, they may be said to be *purpling / making purple*. Many Christians have one specific Bible verse that is believed to be particularly representative or predictive of their life, which is known as their *life verse* [https://www.dictionaryof christianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/].

3.1.6. Integration of religion into other aspects of Christians' everyday life, namely social networking and ecology

Integration of religion into other aspects of Christians' everyday life affects diverse areas including social networking and ecology. As for social networking, the omnipresence of IT has contributed to the coinage of a string of semantic correlates denoting the novel forms of religious abstinence, namely *media fast* "a fast, usually for a set period of time such as Lent, from the use of popular media and culture such as television, movies, video games, the Internet, music, magazines, and newspapers", *digital fast* "a fast, usually for a set period of time such as Lent, from various kinds of digital technology such as television, computers, music players, and the Internet", *electronic fast* "a fast, usually for a set period of time such as Lent, from the use of electronics such as television, computers, video games, and music players", *Facebook fast* "a fast, usually for a set period of time such as Lent, from the use of Facebook and possibly other social websites", and *technology fast* "a fast, usually for a set period of time such as Lent, from the use of modern technology such as television, computers, video games, music players, and possibly even modern appliances" [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/]. As environmental consciousness is on the increase these days, especially among more religious people [22], some Christians attempt to alter their lifestyle by reducing their carbon footprint and go on a *carbon fast* [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/].

3.1.7. Extensive use of analogical word-formation

Extensive use of analogical word-formation frequently accompanies the synthesis of new concepts. Analogy constitutes "the word-formation process

whereby a new word is coined that is either based on a precise actual model word, or obtained after a set of concrete prototype words which share the same formation (i.e. series) or some of their bases / stems (i.e. word family)" [23]. Such is the case of phrasal verbs formed on the model of *warmed up*, with the first meaningful lexical component designating the action leading to spiritual drive and *up* referring to a person's readiness and/or empowerment to cope with day-to-day routine, for instance, *blessed up* "being in a state of spiritual empowerment after having been blessed"; *confessed up* "being in a state of spiritual empowerment because all of one's sins have been confessed to God"; *fasted up* "being in a state of spiritual empowerment after recently fasting or because one has a regular habit of fasting"; *paid up* "being current on one's tithes to the church; being free of financial debt and therefore able to more easily make significant changes in one's life"; *praised up / worshiped up* "being in a state of spiritual empowerment after recently praising and worshiping God or because one has a regular habit of praising and worshiping God"; *prayed up* "being in a state of spiritual empowerment after recently praying or because one has a regular habit of praying"; *worded up* "being in a state of spiritual empowerment after recently reading or studying the Bible or because one has a regular habit of reading and studying the Bible" [https://www.dictionaryof christianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/].

3.1.8. Ample use of religious terms as constituents of Christian slang neologisms

Ample use of religious terms as constituents of Christian slang neologisms is best seen in words formed by means of blending, for instance, *anabapterian* "a Christian who identifies with aspects of the anabaptist tradition and Presbyterianism" from *anabaptist* and *Presbyterian*; *anabapticostal* "a Christian who identifies with aspects of the anabaptist tradition and Pentecostalism" from *anabaptist* and *Pentecostal*; *anabaptismatic* "a Christian who identifies with aspects of the anabaptist tradition and the charismatic movement" from *anabaptist* and *charismatic*; *evana* "a community of conservative anabaptists that began forming in 2014 as a reaction to what was perceived as increasing liberalism in the Mennonite Church USA denomination" [https://www. dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/] from *evangelical* and *anabaptist*. All the above coinages express compound notions reflecting abundance of emerging mixed denominations in the contemporary Christian world.

Religious terms may equally become part of recently coined phrases. Such is the case of the now common item *the Bible belt*, which gave life to such expressions as *the buckle of the Bible belt*, designating the cities in the southern and south-eastern United States where conservative, fundamentalist Christian religion holds a particularly privileged place in culture, economy, and politics, as well as *a hole in the Bible belt* [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-

of-words-by-subject/], which, by contrast, denotes any of the cities in the same region where the religious influence is asserted to be less strong.

3.1.9. Coinage of new vocabulary items possessing no denotata and used for humorous purposes alone

Coinage of new vocabulary items possessing no denotata and used for humorous purposes is best exemplified by the citation of the fictitious books of the Bible, for instance *Assumptions*, *Capitulations*, *Fleshalonians*, *Frustrations*, *Hesitations*, *Hezekiah*, *Opinions*, *Ruminations*, etc. [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/list-of-words-by-subject/]. With the exception of *Frustrations*, *Hesitations*, and *Opinions*, all these names sound learned and are thus capable of bringing a certain amount of formality to the speech act in which they are used. It is noteworthy that the Biblical fictonyms above are aimed solely at enlivening the conversation, with no sacrilege intended. The list also features two previously non-existent words, *Fleshalonians* and *Hezekiah*, presenting a pun on *Thessalonians*, *Ezekiel*, and *Jeremiah*.

3.1.10. Backronymization affecting existing Christian acronyms

Backronymization constitutes a process in which an acronym is assigned an alternative expansion, with the original referent being left unchanged but evaluatively reinterpreted. In Christian slang, backronymization affects the initialisms denoting different Bible translations. Opposing the institutionalized nature of Christian discourse, religious slang switches its re-verbalization of the world from CONFLICT-STATE (since protesting is intrinsically characteristic of slang) to CONFLICT-ACTION [24]. Therefore, ***the NIV* (*New International Version*)** becomes *the Nearly Infallible Version / the Nearly Inspired Version / Necessary in Vineyard / the Never Inaccurate Version / Never Intentionally Verified / the New Improved Version / the New Incorrect Version / the New International Perversion / the Now Indispensable Version*. ***The NASB* (*New American Standard Bible*)** is nicknamed *the New Age Standard Bible / the New American Slandered Version / the New Apostate Standard Bible / No-one Accepts (this) Standard Bible / the North American (Southern-Californian) Bible / Not Always the Same Before / Not a Saving Bible / Not a Solid Bible*. ***The ESV (English Standard Version)*** is given the alternative expansions *the Ecumenical Standard Version / the Elected/Saved Version / the Elect Standard Version / the Eliminated Scriptures Version / the Error-Saturated Version / the Essentially Similar Version / the Evangelical Superior Version*. ***The RSV* (*Revised Standard Version*)** is altered to *the Rather Special Version / the Really Silly Version / the Removed Sacred Virgin / the Reprobate Standard Version / The Retro-Sounding Version / the Reversed Standard Version / the Reviled Standard Version*. ***The KJV* (*King James Version*)** is changed to *the Killer Jesus Version / the King Junk Version*. ***The NEB* (*the New English Bible*)** is reinterpreted as *the Near Enough Bible / Not Exactly Bible* [https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/

list-of-words-by-subject/]. The satirical effect (generated by the passage from CONFLICT-STATE to CONFLICT-ACTION) in the above examples is produced by highlighting the hyperbolized characteristics which are attributed, albeit subjectively and / or stereotypically, to the different versions: biased approach, break with the theological tradition, excessive adaptability to social changes, inaccurate and / or misleading translation, incompleteness, insufficient revision, obsolescence, undue simplicity, and uselessness.

3.2. Judaist slang

Judaist slang is defined in the present study as substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary which is employed by persons identifying themselves as Judaists with reference to their religious affiliation.

The number of the vocabulary items identified in the present study as Judaist slang is limited and includes names of **religious affiliates**, e.g. *aished* "newly religious as a result of involvement with the outreach movement Aish" [S. Green, *Do You Speak J-Slang – Jewish Chronicle*, 2006, http://myisraeliguide.com/antithesismc/do-you-speak-j-slang-jewish-chronicle-3/], *dos* "an Orthodox Jew" [25], *MOT* (*member of the tribe*) "a Jewish person identified as such by another Jewish person" [13, p. 441], *shoms* "refusing to make physical contact with a member of the opposite sex", *shoms by decision* "refusing to make physical contact with a member of the opposite sex out of religious conviction or principle", *shoms by default* "refusing to make physical contact with a member of the opposite sex because no-one is attracted to them", *shtarker* "an intensely religious person" [http://myisraeliguide.com/antithesismc/do-you-speak-j-slang-jewish-chronicle-3/], *schainer yid / shayner Yid* "an honest and absolutely trustworthy Jewish man" [13, p. 560]; **religious beliefs**, e.g. *canary* "an expression said to ward off the evil eye or bad luck in general; the verbal equivalent of knocking on wood" [26], *lamed-vovnik* 'in Jewish legend, a hidden saint" [13, p. 391]; **religious and religion-related practices**, e.g. *to flip out* "to become religious", *to fry out* "to become very unreligious" [http://myisraeliguide.com/antithesismc/do-you-speak-j-slang-jewish-chronicle-3/], *matzo(h) ball* "a Jewish dance or party held at Christmas" [13, p. 423]; **religious locations**, e.g. *base* "a religious study hall" [http://myisraeliguide.com/antithesismc/do-you-speak-j-slang-jewish-chronicle-3/].

An in-depth analysis of the above vocabulary allows for the delimitation of **two linguistic trends of Judaist slang**:

1) **preponderance of roots of Hebrew and Yiddish origin**;
2) **designation of exclusively Jewish beliefs and lifestyles**.

Preponderance of roots of Hebrew origin manifests itself in:

a) borrowed morphemes, e.g. the root-morpheme *aish-* in *aished* from the Hebrew *התורה אש Esh HaTorah* 'Fire of the Torah';
b) fully borrowed words, e.g. *dos* from the Hebrew *דוס משׁ dos shem* '(derog.) religious Jew'; *shtarker* from the Yiddish *שטאַרקער shtarker* 'strong person'; *lamed-vovnik* from the Yiddish *למד־וואָוניק lamed-vovnik* 'one of the Thirty-

Six Good Men';

c) corrupt borrowed words, e.g. *shom-* in *shoms* from the Hebrew *שומר shomer* 'keeper'; phonetic calques *canary* from the Yiddish *קיין עין־הרע keyn eynhore* 'no evil eye' and *base* from the Yiddish *בית מדרש beyt medresh* 'house of Midrash';
d) borrowed words as phrase constituents, e.g. *matzo* in *matzo(h) ball* from the Hebrew *מצה matzah* 'matzo';
e) fully borrowed phrases, e.g. *schainer yid / shayner Yid* from the Yiddish *שיינער sheyner yid* 'a nice Jew'.

Designation of exclusively Jewish beliefs and lifestyles is evident in every single Judaist slang item collected in this research. It is either observance or non-observance of Judaist practices that underlies the semantics of this group of the slang vocabulary. Notably, Judaist slang does not contain any words or phrases which may be perceived as somewhat critical of the religious tradition and thus possibly desecrate it, whereas in Christian slang such vocabulary is occasionally used (for instance, in the case of the pejoratives as well as in the names of the Bible translation versions discussed earlier). Besides, Judaism does not impose or advocate proselytizing, which is, in its turn, rather typical of Christianity. Therefore, Christian slang tends to construe the world in terms of its Christianization potential, whilst Judaist slang does not.

3.3. Muslim slang

Muslim slang is defined in the present study as substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary which is employed by persons identifying themselves as Muslims with reference to their religious affiliation. It rightly follows from this definition that no slang words used by outsiders, i.e. those who do not practice Islam, and intended for describing Muslims, e.g., *BMW* "from a British Indian (Hindu) perspective, a person who is categorised as black, Muslim or white" [13, p. 72] or *rag head* "(offensive) a native of Muslim countries" [13, p. 528], can be treated as Muslim slang. Nor does Muslim slang include the originally Islamic terms that have developed 'non-Islamic' meanings in other special slangs, the most telling example being American school slang featuring words like *fundamentalist / Taliban* "given as a nickname to any eccentric or unconventional student, especially one of Arab ethnicity" [13, p. 639] or *jihad* "enforcement of school discipline" [13, p. 367]. Therefore, only as few as three vocabulary items represent English Muslim slang in the present research: *hijabi* denoting a Muslim woman who wears a hijab or head scarf [27, 28]; *kaffir* signifying in Trinidadian and Tobagonian social regiolect any person who does not accept Islam [13, p. 377]; *permissible [for a punishment]* describing a person who is permitted to be punished for physically or verbally abusing Muslims and/or their Scriptures [29].

It is noteworthy that Muslim slang is not an exclusive prerogative of the English language. Its examples are equally found in Afrikaans, e.g. *lamming it uit met my brasse* translated loosely as "hanging out with my brothers" [30]; Indonesian, e.g. *Batak* used by Indonesian Muslims to refer to a person who eats pork [31], etc. Undoubtedly, non-English religious slang deserves special attention; however, it falls beyond the scope of the present research and is not, therefore, to be addressed in this paper.

4. Conclusions

In summary, religious slang is defined as substandard, familiar, and informal vocabulary which is employed by persons identifying themselves as believers with reference to their religious affiliation. Religious slang differs from general religious vocabulary in its substandardness, familiarity, and informality, as well as from religion-related slang, which embraces any vocabulary concerning religion, irrespective of who, in which context, and with what purpose uses it.

The proposed typology of religious slang neatly correlates with the globally recognized typology of world religions and incorporates Christian, Judaist, and Muslim slangs.

Christian slang discloses 10 linguistic trends: 1) euphemization affecting vocabulary capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles; 2) amelioration of vocabulary denoting Christians whose practices reveal spiritual maturity and readiness to be used of God; 3) pejoration of vocabulary denoting Christians whose practices reveal spiritual immaturity or hypocrisy; 4) polysemantization of vocabulary capable of offending the persons denoted or their lifestyles; 5) emergence of new vocabulary items reflecting the ongoing synthesis of new concepts in Christians' religious lives; 6) integration of religion into other aspects of Christians' everyday life, namely social networking and ecology; 7) extensive use of analogical word-formation; 8) ample use of religious terms as constituents of Christian slang neologisms; 9) coinage of new vocabulary items possessing no denotata and used for humorous purposes alone; 10) backronymization affecting existing Christian acronyms. Judaist slang reveals two linguistic trends: 1) preponderance of roots of Hebrew and Yiddish origin; 2) designation of exclusively Jewish beliefs and lifestyles. Muslim slang features a fairly limited amount of the empirical material, which, as of now, denies the possibility of making any language-oriented generalizations whatsoever.

Since the present research addresses only three types of slang based on the empirical evidence from as few as one language, it is equally important to investigate instances of religious slang use within other religious discourses in English as well as in other languages. Discovering slang as well as other sociolects and / or lects in their interaction with religious discourse will contribute to the synthesis of a novel branch of theolinguistics – sociotheolinguistics.

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