PALGRAVE STUDIES IN CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

RELIGIOUS TRANSACTIONS IN COLONIAL SOUTH INDIA

Language, Translation, and the Making of Protestant Identity

Hephzibah Israel

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RELIGIOUS TRANSACTIONS IN COLONIAL SOUTH INDIA

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First published in 2011 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978–0–230–10562–1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Israel, Hephzibah, 1971–
Religious transactions in colonial south India : language, translation, and the making of Protestant identity / Hephzibah Israel.
p. cm.—(Palgrave studies in cultural and intellectual history)
ISBN 978–0–230–10562–1 (hardback)
1. Bible Tamil—Versions. 2. Tamil language—Style. 3. Bible—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 4. Bible—Translating. 5. Protestantism—India, South—History. 6. Identification (Religion) I. Title.

BS315.T39I87 2011
220.5′9481109—dc22 2011011019

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: August 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

For Hannah Kripa and AJ

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is the outcome of research for a PhD degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, funded by the Felix Trust.

However, the issues addressed in the book were of personal interest and relevance long before they translated into academic questions for postgraduate research. Growing up in Delhi, questions of identity, based on religion and language, were posed in a variety of ways—at school, at university, at church, and in social interactions. Some were based on rather crude assumptions regarding Christians in India: "How come you speak Tamil, I thought your mother-tongue would be English?" Or, "I didn't know 'South Indians' could be Christians!" Others were more nuanced, interested in my point of view and whether *I* felt any irreconcilable contradictions between being "Indian," "Christian," and "Tamil." There was also the mismatch between being labeled "Madrasi" rather derogatorily on Delhi streets and being told by my father at home that Tamil was the "sweetest" language in the world. Having the combination "Hephzibah" *and* "Israel" for a name has not exactly helped matters either! From academic conferences, to social meetings or hospital appointments in India and the UK, my name has attracted attention: I have either been told that it is a pretty "Indian" name and asked what it means in "Indian" or whether I was ethnically Jewish but just looked "Indian" or how I came to have such an "un-Indian" name. Nonetheless, these questions have initiated interesting conversations on nationality, ethnicity, and religious and language affiliations with strangers, bypassing boring preliminaries! When I *have been* recognized by fellow Protestant Tamils, the lengthy cross-examinations that inevitably followed—of my family, their *ūr* (town), the Protestant denomination of each, the specific church they attend, and rather more cautiously their caste backgrounds, that is, my entire genealogy compressed into a sort of catechism—have left me exasperated and somewhat ambivalent regarding the issue of "belonging."

However, I am also grateful for this "double jeopardy," since these questions made me self-conscious about the politics of self-representation at a very early age, from hearing my parents' answers to formulating my own versions, according to context, audience, and expediency. Not fitting readily into any one box has contributed to the richness of lived experience in Delhi: it not only gave me a different perspective on the supposed "North-South divide" but also on the way Christians from different parts of India are typecast in the same mold. Equally, I value the many occasions of shared humor at the absurdity of living with stereotypes with a mixed group of friends. This book is an attempt to engage with a few of the historical reasons behind perceived notions of belonging and otherness and has grown out of my interest in exploring incongruities in identity-construction.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge at this point several individuals who have played a significant role in extending my intellectual and academic interest in the issues that concern this book. I remember well the excitement of first debating issues of identity politics as an undergraduate at Miranda House, University of Delhi, and reflecting further on these as both personal and academic issues, and I thank the English faculty at Miranda House who made the study of literature more relevant and challenging by linking it to such important everyday issues. I thank members of the Department of English, University of Delhi (of whom several are now retired) for their support and friendship, especially Professor Harish Trivedi for first introducing me to translation studies and the "politics" of postcolonial translating. I thank my supervisor Dr. Stuart Blackburn who was then at SOAS; and owe special gratitude to Rupert Snell for his warm support and encouragement through the "PhD years" and after.

The arguments in this book have been presented at conferences and talks to audiences in Bonn, Cambridge, Cardiff, Delhi, Edinburgh, London, Manchester, Newcastle, and Oxford. My thanks to all those who offered insightful questions and comments, especially Theo Hermans, Julius Lipner, Richard Fox Young, Chad Bauman, Crispin Bates, and Muzaffar Alam. Many colleagues have commented on either the entire draft of this book or on individual chapters as they developed through conference presentations and publications as articles. I thank David Washbrook, R. S. Sugirtharajah, and anonymous readers for their reviews. I thank Mona Baker and Michael Bergunder for their patience in reading drafts of the entire manuscript, and for their comments and suggestions for further reading. I am grateful to Sharada Nair (LSR) and Prathama Banerjee in Delhi who have read versions of each chapter as I edited them over the past year and at short notice provided insightful comments over email, skype, and late-night telephone calls. Special thanks go to Javed Majeed for his encouragement and support, and perceptive reading of draft chapters as the series editor.

Research for this book was funded by several funding bodies who supported different stages of the research—the Felix Trust, Charles Wallace India Trust, Harold Wingate Foundation. The Junior Research Fellowship from the Fritz-Thyssen Foundation, Halle, allowed me to travel to Germany to research eighteenth-century primary sources and the SOAS Fieldwork Research Grant to travel to India for fieldwork. My thanks to their trustees.

Research for the book was facilitated by the assistance of staff at libraries and other institutions in India, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In Bangalore, the United Theological College Library and Archives and the Bible Society of India; in Madras, the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Centre, the Madras Christian College Archive, the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Roja Muthiah Research Library, the Bible Society, Madras. In Germany, the Archive der Franskeschen Stiftungen, Halle, and the Leipzig Lutheran Evangelical Mission Library, Leipzig; and in the United Kingdom, the Bible Society Archives at the Cambridge University Library, the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, the India Institute Library, University of Oxford, the Asia, Pacific and African Collections of the British Library, and the library and archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies. I thank the Bible Society for permission to use material from their archives, the Bible Society Library, Cambridge University Library. And last, I thank Barbara Frey Näf, curator of the Collection of Historical Photographs, Mission 21, Basel, for facilitating the use of the cover photograph and granting necessary permissions speedily.

Some of the material from the chapters have been published as journal articles or book essays. I thank St Jerome for permission to republish in chapter one material from "Translating the Bible in Nineteenth-Century India: Protestant Missionary Translation and the Standard Tamil Version," in *Translating Others*, ed. Theo Hermans, St. Jerome, Manchester, 2006: 441–59. Material in chapter two appeared in an earlier form in "'Words…borrow'd from Our Books': Translating Scripture, Language Use and Protestant Tamil Identity in Post/colonial South India" in a special issue on "Religion and Postcolonialism," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial*

Studies, spring 2008, and I thank the journal editors for permission to use this. I thank Wiley-Blackwell for permission to use material from “Cutchery Tamil versus Pure Tamil: Contesting Language Use in the Translated Bible in the Early Nineteenth-century Protestant Tamil Community,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, in chapter three. I am grateful to the editorial team at Palgrave Macmillan, who guided the book through the process of review and acceptance, and whose care and attention saw it to a swift completion.

At Lady Shri Ram College (LSR, University of Delhi), my students and colleagues contributed to my growth and understanding in several ways. My students, challenging, critical, but always compellingly enthusiastic in discussions both within and outside the classroom, helped me to grow as a teacher. My colleagues—Nivedita Menon, Sumangala Damodaran, Anuja Agrawal, Rachna Johri, Pooja Satyogi, and Krishna Menon—all from fields other than English literary studies gave an excellent interdisciplinary perspective on issues I was grappling with in teaching and researching literature. Importantly, they also taught me the importance of timely political action over abstract reasoning. I am grateful for their support, humor, and warmth of friendship, which have continued despite many of us having left LSR in recent years.

I am grateful to all those I interviewed at different points of this research in and outside Tamilnad. Many were busy church ministers but took time out to answer my questions. Of these, I especially thank Reverends Premraj and Deborah Mathurandagam and Reverends Nancy and Isaac Singaram for taking a personal interest in my research and ensuring that I had access to members of their congregation. I also thank the faculty at the Tamil Theological Seminary for welcoming me and introducing me to their alternative, socially conscious theological and intellectual engagements. The faculty at Sarah Tucker College, Palayamcottah, were willing to share personal and intellectual dilemmas that faced them, for which I am grateful. And I thank Professor Nirmal Selvemony at Madras Christian College, conversations with whom first stimulated my curiosity regarding the many versions of the Tamil Bible.

Over the years, many friends and family have been the source of stimulating conversations, warmth, inspiration, comfort, and hospitality: Arul and Daya Durai, Babu James, Bikram Phookun, Debjani Sengupta, Gurpreet Ahluwalia, Harikrishnan Menon, Harriet Milazzo, James Dharmaraj (I wish he were here to read the book), Jayanti Durai, Julia Griffin, Kathryn Peake, Lila Marilla Paul, Meenu Chopra, Mridula Nath Chakraborty, Mukul Chaturvedi, Preet Sihota, Rajdeep Sandhu, Sam Patterson, Sharada Sugirtharajah, Smita Mitra, Someshwar Sati, Udaya Kumar, Ujwala Cherian, and many more that I have not named here. Most of all they have encouraged me to do the best I can.

This book would not have been possible without the help of family. I am grateful to several aunts, uncles, and cousins who put up with me during my fieldwork in South India and provided sumptuous meals at the end of tiring days of travel and research. They also introduced me to several church congregations and work colleagues in Christian educational institutions in Tamilnad whom I could interview. I am now grateful to my father for his insistence that I learn Tamil—as a child I did not appreciate the many holiday hours spent on Tamil schoolbooks! I also value his critical questioning of almost all Christian denominations and churches in India, which ensured that I did not accept the exclusive claims made by any one of them at face value. My mother who has always been a source of encouragement and support, on the other hand, taught me the importance of faith without remaining narrowly confined to one denomination. I am grateful to my parents-in-law for their support and my two brothers-in-law for practical help. I am especially thankful to my brother-in-law Peter Jordan for the many hours he has generously spent babysitting my daughter in the past couple of years and also for his many offers of help, from cooking meals when my husband and I were both studying full time in 2003 and I was in the final stages of writing my dissertation, to seeing us through our several house moves, with pep talks on the importance of "relaxing" when energies were flagging. Finally, I could not have completed this book without the support—intellectual, critical, emotional—of my husband, Andrew, who has lived with the pain of writing this twice over, first as a PhD dissertation and then as a book. To my four-year-old Hannah: I apologize for the many times I have had to say "no" to playtime with her and thank for the generous offers of sharpened pencils from her attractive collection (on which I always have an eye), "for writing your book, Mummy!"

Note on Transliteration

Tamil terms are transliterated according to the system employed by the *Tamil Lexicon*, University of Madras, 1982. Sanskrit terms follow the conventional system of Sanskrit transliteration. Wherever Sanskrit forms of terms are more commonly known than the Tamil ones, I have used the former: for example, Śaiva/Śaivite rather than the Tamil Caiva/Caivite. I use modern spelling for place names without diacritics (e.g., Tancavur not Tañcāvūr) to make it easier on the eye but retain nineteenth-century spelling when quoting from primary sources (therefore, Tanjore). Tamil titles are given with diacritics but in cases where the original manuscript or printed text also gives the Tamil title in roman, I have retained the system of transliteration used in the original without diacritics.

Introduction

The Tamil word for translation is *moḻipeyarppu*. It is a combination of two terms, *moḻi* (language) and *peyarppu* (to remove). It is the second term "peyarppu" that interests me with its emphasis on aspects of the translation process that are not fully conveyed by the English term "translation." Derived from Latin (*translatio*), "to translate" in English implies to "carry across" or transfer from one language to another. The Tamil verb "*peyar*" instead conveys: to dislocate, to uproot, or to unseat with force. So in effect the term *moḻipeyarppu* stresses the *displacement* or dismantling of meaning rather than the conveyance of meaning from one semantic site to another, drawing attention to the violence underlying the act of translation. This Tamil term serves as a reminder that translation is not a straightforward task that allows texts to travel with ease across diverse borders, but that it involves a certain degree of force, a powerful tearing out or uprooting of texts from one language to begin life anew in another. This is by no means an attempt to denigrate translations or to claim that translation is always ever ineffective or impossible, but rather to call attention to the task of translation as a complex, multifaceted procedure involving a number of conflicting processes.

It is this challenging nature of translation that I want to use as a prism with which to refract the history of the Bible in India in order to disentangle the several strands of its translation history. This will allow us to scrutinize the relationship between textual translation across languages and the translation of sacred concepts and values across religious boundaries. My intention is to examine the translated Bible as a cultural object, a product of the intellectual and cultural encounter between Europe and South Asia, in order to understand the formation of Christian identities in India. In particular, I will examine the various processes involved in the translation of the Bible into Tamil, a major South Asian language, and the plural discourses that construct Protestant Tamil identities. Investigating the material and cultural histories of the translated Bible in South India, and the historical specificities within which Protestant translation practices evolved, will enable us to examine its formation as "scripture", and its language as normative source of authority for the Protestant Tamil community. Importantly, we will address vital questions for the understanding of religious identities by analyzing language use and acts of translation as significant filters through which Protestant Christians interacted with and differentiated from other religious communities in South India.

This aspect of Protestant Christianity in India, that is, the translation history of the Bible in Indian languages linked to intellectual and social relations of power, has had little scholarly attention so far. Although postcolonial studies has engaged with diverse questions of race, class, gender, nationalisms, history, languages, and sexualities, it has not adequately explored the significance of religion in the construction of identities in colonial and postcolonial contexts. In their second edition of *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (2006: 8), Ashcroft et al. note that "analyses of the sacred have been one of the most neglected, and may be one of the most rapidly expanding areas of post-colonial study." Their challenge that the sacred remains in the field of postcolonial studies "in most need of critical and scholarly attention" draws attention to the paucity in postcolonialism's theorization of the category "religion" and its deployment in colonial encounters. Similarly, while religious studies has on the one hand focused on Christianity as an Anglo-American religion, and on the other, concentrated its study of non-Western societies on Christianity's perceived religious Others (Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism), the histories of Christianity in non-Western societies, which have distinct identities and traditions, have not been studied much from the point of view of the role language registers, literary genres, or the politics of translation have played in reorganizing existing systems of religious or philosophical knowledge. There is a considerable body of scholarship on Christianity, Protestant missions, religious conversion, and interreligious "dialogue" in India. However, few of these examine Protestant Christianity in South India or the issue of conversion and caste conflicts within the Protestant community by taking into account the discursive significance of language politics and translation processes. Instead, those scholars who do discuss Bible translation seem to assume that Christianity can always translate itself completely and without difficulty from one culture to another; and more specifically, the Bible successfully translates into all the languages of the world invariably resulting in "renewing" (Smalley 1991: 244), "reawakening" (Frykenberg 1999), and "unifying" (Stine 1990) diverse cultures across languages.

The Bible after Babel: Translation, Mission, and Resistance

The Bible did not first arrive in India as a result of modern Western European agencies. The presence of the Syriac Bible among Christian communities in the southwestern state of Kerala since at least the third or fourth century C.E.[1] is ample proof of the Bible's historic presence in India and its links with Eastern Christianity. It held rich religious and cultural significance especially for the Syrian Orthodox community in Kerala much before Early Modern European missionaries "introduced" the Bible from the sixteenth century onward to other parts of India—to Goa, to the courts of Akbar (1542–1605),[2] and to the fishing communities on the Tamil coast. However, there is a perceptible shift in the more recent history of the Bible in India. Until the early eighteenth century, translations of only parts of the Bible were available, usually in manuscript and mainly for the ruling class or social elites. But this changed with the Protestant missionary project to print translations of the entire Bible and distribute it as widely as possible among *all* social classes in India. The fact that the Bible was from then available not only in the classical languages of Latin and Persian or even Portuguese or Syriac, little known to most Indians, but also in everyday Indian languages had significant repercussions. Available simultaneously in several Indian languages within approximately a hundred years (in Tamil from the early eighteenth century but in at least six languages from the 1820s onward) the translated Bible was influential in introducing diverse changes—in language, literary, and religious cultures.[3] Moreover, its wider dissemination, which coincided with the introduction of a range of material and intellectual tools such as the printing press and the printed book, and new modes of studying languages, literatures, and for that matter religion itself, meant that the Bible's social and intellectual presence in India from the eighteenth century was different in degree and extent.

Since its emergence as a wide and growing "discipline" from the late 1980s and 1990s translation studies has increasingly foregrounded the politics of power in all processes of translation. Scholars have drawn our attention to the historical, social, and material factors that control the transfer of contingent, multiple meanings from one language and culture to another, and the conditions under which translations are produced and read. Gideon Toury (1995) and Theo Hermans (1999a,b) have pointed out the importance of linguistic and nonlinguistic norms that govern the production and reception of translations. The "cultural turn" within translation studies (Bassnett-McGuire and Lefevere 1990) has focused specifically on the impact of translations in the ideological traffic between language cultures.[4] Translation, for these critics, is not ideologically neutral or transparent but is circumscribed and regulated by various forces at a given historical moment: Mona Baker (2007), for instance, has used narrative theory to analyze the permutations of the relation between translation, power and conflict. As a result, critical attention on what continue to be key translation aspects—equivalence, translatability, and evaluation—has noticeably shifted in emphasis.

To summarize considerably, the notion of equivalence itself becomes an ideological construct (Hermans 1999: 58); ideas of translatability are defined by cultural contexts; and evaluation is seen as a historical, political process (Bassnett-McGuire 1980) in which new questions arise, such as who is in a position of power to evaluate and for whom the evaluation is done. Translation, in these critical reappraisals, is a central site that reveals power hierarchies between cultures and languages, complicit with the processes that control and manipulate paradigms of knowledge between cultures. Importantly, these approaches also give readers of translations a far more active role to play: the reader's expectations put pressure on the translator's task; the reader may submit to the authority of the text or radically appropriate, manipulate, or reinterpret the text strategically. Lawrence Venuti (1992, 1998) has argued that either way translations can have serious cultural and political effects on their readers, and by positioning readers ideologically, play a part in forming cultural identities. Moreover, as Tabouret-Keller (1997) argues, when they are understood as important factors in group identification, language (and translation) also signal difference and acquire a boundary-marking function.

Furthermore, Hermans's (1999) suggestion that even the history of a society's attitudes to translation is an indicator of its beliefs regarding language, identity, and otherness is an important one. For instance, unlike Western conceptualizations of translation, in

Indian-language literary practices, translation did not demand fidelity to the original, but was understood as re-creation—"in changed form" (*rupantar*), or that which is repeated by way of explanation or that which "followed after" the original (*anuvad*) (Mukherjee 1981: 80). It is in the context of Bible translation that the notion of a translation's faithfulness to its original was introduced to Indian-language literary practices. Such shifts in perception of what entails translation for a society can function as entry points to a study of the dominant discourses of language, literary aesthetics, and, in this case, of "religion" that operate within that society. Moreover, studying the history of the changing reception of translated texts can serve as a means for studying the history of ideas of difference particular to that culture. Analyzing the complex interplay of the translated Bible and the context in which these translations transpired opens up the translation history of the Tamil Bible for scrutiny of the competing interests of language, religion, and social positioning in constructing Protestant Tamil identities in colonial and postcolonial South India.

Since the Bible has almost always been read in translation, Bible translation has contributed substantially to Western theories of translation from the beginning (Bassnett-McGuire 1980; Robinson 1997b). However, until recently, the history of the Bible translated outside of Europe and North America has not formed a large part of the theoretical formulations of translation studies but has featured largely as straightforward accounts of the many languages the Bible has been translated into. An exception is Nida's (1964; Nida and Taber 1969) influential theorizing on methods of Bible translation in the twentieth century. He famously identified "formal" and "dynamic" as the two main types of equivalence, but argued in favor of "dynamic equivalence translations" where identifying and transferring the "kernels" of meaning in each sentence took precedence over repeating the formal structures of the original. For him it is "dynamic" (later known as "functional") equivalence that effectively translates biblical meaning across languages. However, in doing so, Nida echoes the fundamental concerns of nineteenth-century missionary translators, arguably in more sophisticated terms: but like his predecessors he does not adequately address the politics of defining, locating, or constructing "equivalence" or questions such as how one is to evaluate which version is more "functional" than others.

Since the 1990s, there have been valuable efforts to situate Bible translations in non-Western cultures within converging social, religious, and political interests, such as Janice Wickeri's (1995) study of the Chinese "Union Version" of the Bible published in 1919 and Derek Peterson's (1999) examination of the link between Bible translation and dictionary writing in Gikuyu. Similarly, Vicente Rafael's (1998) examination of the relationship between translation and conversion in the colonial encounter between Spanish Catholic mission and the Tagalogs in the Philippines from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries was a welcome intervention in the long tradition of studying Bible translation as an apolitical task. But the paucity of research in this area is very obvious and I hope that the present book will stimulate further research on the politics of Bible translation beyond the formal, grammatical, or theological aspects to which it has hitherto been largely confined.

I use key theoretical and methodological interventions from translation studies as outlined earlier to study how Protestant Christianity translated the Bible and, in effect, itself for the South Asian context. My analysis is structured by several questions: What do translations reveal about the relationship between the religious cultures in South India, between the language culture of Tamil and that of other languages it comes in contact with, and between the several strands of European and Tamil intellectual cultures? What is the position of the translators in the source and receiving cultures? What were the evolving cultural expectations within which translations were produced and what impact did a specific translation have on its "source" and "receiving" cultures? Finally, what constitutes "sacred" languages within specific religious traditions and how do conceptions of the sacred, travel across religions through translated texts and linguistic terms?

In examining the relationship between processes of translation and sacred texts, it is pertinent to keep in mind that a range of social practices work toward legitimizing sacred texts as "sacred." However, for these texts to function as fully authoritative sacred texts, some social practices, such as those that legitimize specific linguistic terms as more sacred than others in a particular language culture, need to remain invisible. Instead, the process of translation renders these very practices highly visible. For instance, translation projects disturb the established status of sacred linguistic terms by making apparent the multiple hermeneutical processes that construct the sacred in a language. Thus, by bringing up for discussion the sacred quality of source language terms or, the target language's "worthiness" as the carrier of a sacred text, the act of translation intervenes in the way communities of speakers have hitherto related to languages. Moreover, questions of translatability appear with greater force in translations of sacred texts: that is, apart from the content of the original, is the sacralized authority ascribed to certain terms in the source language transferable to "equivalent" terms in the target language? Conversely, are these terms "sacred" only in the context of particular religious systems or can an extractable sacred value be detached from terms, and transported from one religious system to another? Such questions heighten the strained relationship between sacred authority, linguistic terms of exchange, and translation, where the nature of this relationship itself shifts depending on who claims which language to be sacred and which discursive strategies are mobilized to do so at particular historical moments. Importantly, as my examination in the following chapters demonstrates, the authority of the translated Bible is often maintained by both translators and their readers by a continual repositioning of themselves with respect to changing sacred values attached to linguistic terms. Consequently, I give importance to the function of paratextual documents (translator's prefaces, introductions, debates on the nature of translation available in the public sphere, reviews from translators and readers) that attempt to regulate responses to translations and participate in the construction of social realities and identities.

Critical attention on investigating the boundaries of and between religions (Hinnells 2010) is therefore particularly relevant to our study of the transport of sacrality across language and religious traditions. Recent studies of religions have reevaluated a range of issues from what is "scripture" (Levering 1989; Smith 1971, 1993) to the social significance of ritual and devotional languages and practices. It is important to state at the outset that since Asad's (1993) demonstration that any definition of "religion" is itself the "historical product of discursive processes," it is no longer possible to refer to religion as an apolitical, essential category. However, the concept of religion as a means of social categorization is particularly valuable since it allows the questioning of assumptions "that such group labels as 'Hindu,' 'Christian,' or 'Muslim' can be accepted at face value as simple referents to existing social groups," but instead helps in viewing them as "performative or transformative categories used for specific purposes, as labels capable even of bringing into being groups to which they claim only to refer" (Green and Searle-Chatterjee 2008: 2).

Importantly, interrogating the power attributed to sacred languages and texts allows me to view "religious identity" not so much as *reflecting* a shared history and religious code based on a single authoritative sacred text that provides stable, continuous frames of reference and meaning, but as "the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*... [where] there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'" (Hall 1990: 226; emphasis in the original). With this in view, I aim to explore how different sections of Protestant Tamils have identified with several religious or linguistic traditions and have then claimed to "belong" to the community envisioned by each.

Since I situate the translation history of the Bible and articulations of Protestant identities in a wider South Indian colonial context, my use of the category "colonial" needs some explanation. Colonialism has been variously characterized as "a historical moment," as "the settling of communities from one country in another," as "conquest and direct control of other people's land" (Williams and Chrisman 1994), and as "an economic and political structure of cross-cultural domination." Colonialism is neither monolithic, unchanging or identical in different parts of the world or at different moments in its history. It is also understood as a discursive formation that reveals the violence of colonial representations as Said (1978) first formulated it. By the first set of definitions above, the arrival of Protestant missionaries in South India would not be considered strictly "colonial" as they did not engage in direct conquest or control of Tamil economic or political structures, and their pre-nineteenth-century presence would be characterized as "pre-colonial." However, if colonialism is also understood as a discursive formation that involved "representing" the other as "Other," then the various missionary projects would fall within its rubric. Pointing out that official or individual inscriptions (both literal and metaphorical) began long before intervention in "any proper colonialist sense" through occupation and control of territories, Childs and Williams (1997: 4) argue that this potentially pushes postcolonialism (and by implication colonialism) back several years or even centuries before military or political incursions. In this sense, the term "colonial" may justifiably be used to refer to the work of Western Christian missionaries before the high period of British colonialism (in terms of administrative and economic control or military conquests) in nineteenth-century India. Discursive constructions and representations of religions and languages of the Indian subcontinent are two of the earliest examples of cultural inscriptions offered by Europeans. Besides travelers and traders, Christian missionaries were the largest group to begin the systematic writing of the religions and languages they encountered, which, whether they intended it or not, did contribute to the ideology of British (and European) imperialism.

Although mission and imperial interests did not always coincide, the translation activities of missionaries helped to build a corpus of knowledge regarding all aspects of Indian culture that *both* could draw on and use for their respective goals. Who was translating for whom and for what purpose is thus a question that needs to be investigated repeatedly at every point in this complex history of translations in order to identify to what extent collective objectives were envisaged and where mission and imperial paths diverged significantly. Besides missionary and colonial translations, the translation activities of Orientalist scholars[5] formed a third important discourse on Indian religions and cultures, at times at significant variance with the other two. Despite the lack of common purpose, shared methods of interpretation, shared attitudes to languages and how they relate, and shared techniques of translation meant that they had some bearing on each other's activities and on their understanding of Indian societies and cultures. Nevertheless, it is also important at all times to keep in mind the differences in outlook and purpose among missionaries and between missionaries and those who were not and take the fluctuating nature of relations between the projects of European mission and empire into account in our discussions.

Postcolonial theorists have engaged with the political implications of the way languages and translations function in colonial situations (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Devy 1999; Niranjana 1992; Robinson 1997a; Thiong'o 1986). Turning their attention to the role of translation as a strategy of decolonization in postcolonial societies, some[6] have retrieved indigenous translation practices and investigated whether translation has been used as a strategy for stating cultural difference or whether it has been deployed as a mode of resistance. Of these, the works of Rafael (1988) and Niranjana (1992) are particularly relevant to the issues I examine. They argue for the ability of the colonized to deconstruct and appropriate translated texts as part of a strategy of resistance, thereby destabilizing colonial power structures. Rafael (1988) suggests that the presence of untranslated Latin and Castilian Catholic terms in Tagalog translations opened a space for resistance: "The missionaries meant these words to ensure the orthodoxy of conversion texts in the native language; to the Tagalogs, however, they meant other things" that the original speakers had not intended or foreseen, "repeatedly marking the difference between their language and interests and those of the Spaniards" (117, 211). Likewise, Niranjana (1992) sees the instability of source texts and contradictions in translation as opportunities for resistance as much for postcolonial subjects as postcolonial critics: "By reading against the grain of colonial historiography, the translator/historian discovers areas of contradiction and silent resistance that, being made legible, can be deployed against hegemonic images of the colonized" (75–6).

Nevertheless, Niranjana's and Rafael's very useful studies can be developed further. Societies under colonial domination have not always offered resistance in a homogenous fashion for collective agenda. Some hegemonic translations may have enjoyed the support of elite sections within colonial societies at certain points but may have been targets of resistance to others. As we will see in the reception of the Tamil Bible, particular translations enjoyed immense support because these offered suitable means for maintaining or contesting social hierarchies within Tamil society, thus challenging the customary binaries of European missionary versus Protestant convert and, more importantly, that of acquiescent "victim" versus proactive "resistor." Indeed, compliance or resistance to translation strategies were often the result of a combination of external *and* internal factors, and as much of "precolonial" as "colonial" causes.

In this context, the existing scholarship on Bible translation and mission in non-Western cultures is somewhat worrying. Several studies on translation and mission in the colonial context seek to prove the universally positive and enabling effects of Bible translation on receiving cultures. For instance, Lamin Sanneh (1989), Philip Stine (1990), and William Smalley (1991) seem to believe that it is possible for Christianity to translate itself completely and without difficulty from one culture to another. Further, they insist that though mission and colonialism often played on the same economic and political stage as colonialism (Smalley 1991: xii), Western mission, unlike Western colonialism, did not destroy indigenous cultures. Refuting critical readings that view "mission as destructive of indigenous originality"

(Sanneh 1989: 4), they argue that mission and Bible translation were important contributors to the renewal of indigenous cultures and put "local language and the relevant parts of local culture... on a par with the missionary language and culture..." (Smalley 1991: 244). The implied power hierarchy in this comment speaks for itself. Further, they argue that Bible translation brings a universal text to a local language and culture and unites the local culture with a diverse body of believers all over the world. In short, the Bible was translated, always successfully, into local cultures, which radically "renewed" indigenous languages and cultures, and where the translated Bible was essentially an egalitarian and unifying force (Stine 1990). Despite radical challenges offered to such narratives in recent scholarship [a good example from within biblical studies being works by Sugirtharajah (2001, 2002, 2005)], Sanneh (2009) continues to point out the transformative power of Bible translation in India and elsewhere in similar terms in his second edition of *Translating the Message*.

Such readings that compare the nature of Bible translation activities and its appearance in multiple languages to the miracle of Pentecost obfuscate the complex dynamics involved here. They do not engage with the reality that languages have historically not been treated as equal and that some few continue to enjoy international clout over others. They also refuse to take into account the asymmetries that lie behind all acts of translation and that *all* efforts to bridge those asymmetries involve the politics of agency and choice, as if translating *scripture* somehow elevates the activity above the murky waters of cultural hegemonies where differences may be established and preserved through translation. Like them, I do not subscribe to the notion that all aspects of Christian mission were always "destructive of indigenous cultures" but neither do I agree with their celebratory conclusion that the mission of translation was entirely positive and advantageous to target cultures or that the missionary enterprise can be entirely disassociated from the history of colonialism.

With these considerations informing my analyses, I aim to study Protestant translations of the Bible in South India within converging religious, cultural, and intellectual concerns of three different periods—the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. I realize this focus on Bible translation may appear to contribute further to the scholarly bias that has viewed non-Western Christianity through textually oriented lenses based on belief and doctrine rather than practice (Raj and Dempsey 2002). However, rather than move away from textual focus, my aim is to study precisely how the Bible has been constructed as "scripture" for Tamils; how translation processes by challenging the power ascribed to textual traditions make visible the nontextual discourses that seek to construct religious power; and finally, examine how Protestant Tamils challenge or appropriate particular translations by mobilizing "popular" forms of Christian devotion and practices. In fact, analyses of language use provide that vital link between textual practice and popular, lived Christianity. Importantly, this also helps me to draw into the equation the politics of caste as one such powerful discourse that, in the Tamil context, repeatedly constructs and deploys notions of "good" language, casting it (if I may pun) as a decisive factor in establishing the superior merits of particular caste and religious affiliations.

In order to examine these claims on behalf of or against particular textual versions as closely as possible, I have included both archival sources from previous centuries and responses from fieldwork interviews I conducted in South India. I interviewed both translators participating in the twenty-year translation project of the *Tiruviviliyam*[7] and Protestant Tamil clergy and lay who regularly use one or more of the Tamil Bible translations available. Interviews of translators included editors working in the Translations Department of the Bible Society of India (BSI). Since this was an interdenominational translation, the interviewees included Anglican, Lutheran, and Catholic Tamils. Almost all the members of the team claimed to support the use of *taṉittamiḻ* (pure Tamil) in the Tamil Bible and that the change was necessary if Protestant and Catholic Tamils were to communicate with relevance in the present Tamil society. They also commented on the symbolic function of the popular Tamil Bible version, and how it related to issues of culture and identity for the Protestant Tamil community. However, these interviews were not conducted as an attempt to arrive at translators' "intentions" in order to evaluate choice of terminology as good or bad or the general effectiveness of the translation project. Instead, the purpose was to analyze the claims offered by translators and in what ways these differed from the claims presented by their readers.

I also interviewed Protestant Tamil readers of the Tamil Bible in Chennai, Madurai, Palayamcottai, Tiruchirapalli, and Tancavur. I chose to focus on these five representative locations either because they were centers of Bible translation from the mid-eighteenth century onward and had an established history of Christian missions, or they have had a high concentration of Christians of various denominations in the twentieth century and were places where both translators and readers of the Tamil Bible shared multiple religious and cultural spaces. Among the clergy, I interviewed bishops of the Church of South India and the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church based in these cities, especially with regard to policy decisions on which translation of the Bible would be officially adopted for use by their respective denominations and dioceses. I also interviewed clergy in charge of individual churches in the cities and surrounding villages who offered information on the reaction of their congregations to the introduction of the *Tiruviviliyam*, the elements of Tamil culture in church ritual practices, and the ways in which Protestant Tamils expressed or defined their identity through language use in devotional practices. An important aspect of these interviews was that most of the clergy interviewed differentiated between urban and rural congregations in the areas mentioned above. I also interviewed theologians teaching at Protestant and Catholic seminaries, such as Tamil Theological Seminary, Madurai; the United Theological College, Bangalore; and St. Paul's Seminary, Bangalore. Particularly useful were interviews of the teachers and students of the Tamil Theological Seminary with its radical experiments in expressing Protestant theology and its emphasis on the significance of Tamil folk culture for the Protestant Tamil church. Protestant Tamils teaching Tamil literature in Madras Christian College, Tambaram, and Sarah Tucker College for Women in Palayamcottai were best able to point out anomalies in the language use of the Protestant Tamil community. The last group of persons interviewed was lay members of the Protestant and Catholic Church in Tamilnadu of different categories: male and female, urban and rural, new converts and those who were third- or fourth-generation Christians.

Religions in Tamil Society

Conscious that "any understanding of the multiple senses of self one finds in South Asia must take into consideration the sacred others with whom those selves ritually interact" (Cort 1998: 9), I take into account the perceived religious "others" for Protestant Tamils. Protestant Tamil identity is a constantly shifting category that is modified by ongoing encounters between themselves and those from other religious traditions (such as Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, Jain, and

Catholic) that share the same cultural and political space. One such prominent "sacred other" for Protestant Tamils has been what came to be known in the nineteenth century as "Hinduism" and in the discussion that follows, the terms "Hindu" and "Hinduism" are used as broad referents for a diverse set of religious beliefs and practices that are now loosely recognized as part of "Hindu" traditions. There has been much recent scholarship on colonial conceptualization of "Hinduism." Several scholars have pointed out that the term "Hindu" had shifting implications in European discourses—from referring in a geographical sense to those who lived beyond the River Indus to those who practiced particular forms of religion. Questions ranging from whether Hinduism is a religion at all (Balagangadhara 1994), to how it came to be constructed as "religion," and further to how useful the term Hinduism is given its polysemic connotations have become a part of the modern academic discourse of the study of Hinduism. Of these, the most relevant and useful for my discussions have been Will Sweetman's (2003) analysis of early seventeenth-century Jesuit and early eighteenth-century Pietist constructions of "Hinduism"; Sharada Sugirtharajah's (2003) study of European Orientalist and missionary constructions of Hinduism showing how it was homogenized "to fit the varied hermeneutical and ideological positions of both Western and Indian interpreters"; and Geoffrey Oddie's (2006) examination of nineteenth-century British Protestant missionary constructions of Hinduism.

Were constructions of "Hinduism" by Protestant missionary translators, especially for the purposes of Bible translation, homogenized, and static or dynamic and progressively more open to diversity? Sweetman (2003) has argued that pre-nineteenth-century European representations of Hinduism were more nuanced and wide-ranging, recognizing the plurality of religious traditions within the single general category of Hinduism. Oddie (2006) contends that despite this early understanding of Hinduism as not monolithic, missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century tended to homogenize Hinduism as a pan-Indian religion and only in the second half did some missionaries recognize a greater diversity in Hinduism regionally and that lower-caste expressions of devotion were very different from Brahmanical Hinduism. However, critical for our discussions on missionary attitudes to language and translation is his conclusion that notwithstanding this, nineteenth-century missionaries continued to defer to the conventional, dominant paradigm of a unitary

Hinduism equated with "Brahmanism" for much of the century. As my discussion in the following chapters will show although missionaries regularly disagreed with each others' proposed strategies for translating the Bible and willingly engaged with nuanced differences in Tamil semantics, their discussion was framed by a more dominant discourse that persistently homogenized Hinduism in referring to "the Hindu mind," "the Hindu shastras," or simply "the Hindu." My analysis of the missionary discourse on Bible translation confirms Oddie's estimation that despite being aware of specific differences between Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical traditions in South India, and between Tamil Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism,[8] missionaries posited a unified category "Hindu" against that of "Christian" or "Protestant" for translational purposes.

Thus, far from the conservative to liberal trajectory that some scholars have seen in Protestant missionary attitudes to Hinduism, I would argue that it is difficult to trace such a wholesale, consistent shift in outlook. Disputes over language and translation were as divisive among Protestant missionaries as among Protestant Tamils and in every decade spanning the colonial period, there were conservative *and* liberal missionaries working in the same mission field; moreover, missionaries who may have been liberal in their general approach to Hinduism could still be conservative in their approach to the appropriate use of Tamil or vice versa. It is this tension between conservative and liberal attitudes to "Hinduism" that keeps the conversation on translation going strong well into the twentieth century.

I therefore retain the use of the general category "Hinduism" but where relevant take into account specific forms, such as Tamil Śaivism, that have a significant bearing on Tamil Bible translations. Of the several strands of South Indian Hinduism in Tamil-speaking areas, Tamil Śaivism's engagement with Protestant Christianity has been most robust and self-conscious. From the first half of the nineteenth century through to the twentieth, we see a gradual build-up of religious polemical literature between the two, comprising religious tracts, pamphlets, satirical poetry, translations, journalism, and public lectures, mobilized by each in both Jaffna (in modern Sri Lanka) and South India. However, this must be viewed within the context of a long history of representations of Tamil Śaivism as an essentially "Tamil" religion, offered most forcefully at points when a threat was perceived from "rival religions," whether concerted medieval efforts to overwhelm Buddhist and Jain influences, or nineteenth-century efforts to define itself against Brahmanical Hinduism on the one hand and Christianity on the other.

Tamil Buddhism (*pauttam*) and Jainism (*camaṇam*) have been minority (in terms of quantifiable statistical entities) religious traditions that have nevertheless played a significant role in Tamil literary and religious polemics with Tamil Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism.[9] The different strategies that the two sects adopted in their interaction with Tamil Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism provide excellent counterpoints to Protestant Christian interface: the Jains chose a conscious ambiguity in their ritual that evidently compensated in part for the xenophobia that they provoked, but the Buddhists chose either confrontation or integration, which made them less successful (Schalk and Veluppillai 2002: 22). It is useful to situate Protestant Tamil translations and literary practice in the context of this long history of interchange and competition between different religious and philosophical persuasions. Scholars working on Buddhist and Jain religious traditions in Tamil have shown how religious rivalry between the various Hindu and non-Hindu sects were often expressed through their use of the Tamil language and literary traditions.

Anne Monius's (2001: 60) work on Buddhist literary texts calls attention to the several striking connections in the early medieval Tamil textual corpus "between literature, specific poetic literary expression, and…religious expression." Equally important to the present work, she argues that the translation of Buddhist traditions from translocal languages such as Sanskrit and Pali into the "local or regional" Tamil was a means by which the Tamil Buddhist community was able to create a space for itself in the multilingual and multireligious Tamil society, and could imagine "a new sort of Buddhist identity and community" (133). Likewise, the scholarship of Leslie Orr, James Ryan, and Richard Davis (in Cort 1998) on the Tamil Jain community and identity has highlighted the importance of viewing Tamil Jainism as part of "a shared religious culture where divine figures, literary tropes, and ritual forms could all be reincorporated, reformulated, and resituated for polemical purposes" in order to define Tamil Jain identity (Davis in Cort 1998: 218). Similarly, Indira Peterson's (1989, 1994) work on Tamil Śaivism's response to the two heterodox religions, its project of fashioning a Śaiva identity as the authentic representative of a Tamil culture and its redefinition of the concepts of Sanskrit, Tamil, and the Veda to aid the Śaivites in their project of excluding Jains from Tamil culture (Peterson 1998) also draws attention to the self-conscious use of the Tamil language as a specific marker of religious identity before the arrival of Protestant Christianity.

Besides these faiths, Islam is the other important religious presence in Tamil society. Islam arrived in the Tamil areas as a result of southern India's maritime trading networks with Arab traders and navigators settling along the Coromandel coast as early as the eighth and ninth century CE. Bayly (1989: 74–5) argues that the Sufis (Muslim mystical adepts) provided a focus for the transmission of Islamic ideas and teachings in South India: with its relative freedom from prescriptive or doctrinal formalities and focus on personal devotion and the charismatic power of the *pir* or saint, the Sufi tradition "provided a natural bridge between Muslim worship and the beliefs of non-Muslim groups in many different regions of Asia…" Bayly further points out that there are features of Tamil religion that have made it particularly easy for devotees to bridge the gap between the South Indian devotional traditions (Śaivite, Vaiṣṇavite, and the Tamil goddess tradition) and the South Indian Muslim cult saint (116). Unfortunately, however, sufficient material is not available from the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries on either the translation of the Qur'an into Tamil or the response of Muslim Tamils to the translated Bible for any in-depth comparison of language use and translation issues between Protestant and Muslim groups in colonial Tamil society. We do have very limited evidence that the Qur'an in English translation (George Sale, New Edition 1801) was not welcomed by Muslim Tamils in Ceylon. An objection published in a nineteenth-century Jaffna Protestant journal, while claiming that "there is no reason whatever to believe that the Koran translated by Mr. Sale is the true one," accuses Protestants of publishing translations of the Qur'an as a way of "enticing" both Śaivites and Muslims with "crafty and deceitful words" (Malimia 1843, III (10): 113–14).

Last, but notably, Catholics in the Tamil-speaking areas have figured prominently as one of the arch rivals of Protestant Christianity. Both Protestant missionaries and Protestant converts, catechists, and laity have repeatedly criticized, abused, or complained against the strategies of the Catholics. Highly self-conscious in their dealings with Catholics, early eighteenth-century Protestants borrowed some elements such as religious expressions and terminology but condemned nearly all other Catholic features as not much better than Hindu practices.[10] The rivalry between the Catholic Constantin Beschi and the Protestant Pietist Ziegenbalg[11] over the use of Tamil language has been commented on repeatedly and is a well-known anecdote among Tamil Christian communities. My discussions in the chapters that follow will take up specific cases of rivalry between the two groups when relevant to issues of language and translation. However, suffice it to say here that the "Protestant" identity that developed among Tamils defined itself as much against Catholic mission and Tamils as any other religious group in South India: while Protestant missionaries disputed the finer points of theology and mission and advertised conversion from "popery" with as much triumph as the conversion of a Tamil Brahmin, Protestant Tamils repeatedly engaged in anti-Catholic rhetoric as a sign of Protestant superiority and solidarity.[12] Ultimately, Catholic refusal to disseminate a translated Bible was deemed as a concrete sign of the false nature of their religious system and contrasted with Protestant goodwill to all.[13]

One final word regarding my use of the category "Protestant" in the book is critical. The term "Protestant" for all non-Orthodox and non-Catholic Christians in India is a very broad category that may appear to homogenize as much as the term "Hindu." I recognize the danger of using a category that apparently encompasses a wide cross-section of Christian denominations all found in Tamil-speaking South India: Anglicans, Lutherans (and Pietists), Methodists, Presbyterians, and from the mid-twentieth century, Pentecostals. So, it would be worthwhile at this point to address some of the questions pertinent to the usefulness of this term in view of the many particularities that it appears to conceal. Frykenberg (2008: xi) in a recent history of Christianity in India has contended that the use of the term "Protestant" is Anglo-centric and Eurocentric and entirely inappropriate in the Indian context: "Against whom were non-Catholic Indian Christians 'protesting'?" he asks. My answer to this question lies in the use of the term in India by missionaries[14] as well as Indians. Although the various denominations differentiated among themselves in situations of intrareligious disagreements, in the polemical context of *inter*religious arguments, non-Catholic and non-Orthodox Christians used the broader term "Protestant" to refer to themselves.[15] This is, in fact, most apparent in anti-Catholic expressions where it was necessary to show a united front. For instance, in most articles or letters to the editor published by the *Morning Star*,[16] correspondents attacking Catholic practices sign themselves simply as "A Protestant."[17] Statements such as "We have among our readers heathens, Mohammedans, Roman Catholics and Protestants, . . . "[18]

in the journal indicate clearly that the term "Protestant" was very much in use in the nineteenth century to imply a distinct, corporate identity. The term "Protestant" was regularly used in titles of tracts published for distribution among non-Protestants[19]; and while "Protestant" and "Christian" were often used interchangeably, the Catholics almost invariably fell outside this twinned category. So, although they were no longer "protesting" against the Roman Catholic Church in the same way as European Protestantism, the term's continued use in India is neither Eurocentric nor irrelevant as Frykenberg claims: both missionaries as well as non-Catholic Indian Christians, by adopting the term "Protestant" to describe themselves in religious polemics, have helped to construct a notion of a syndicated Protestantism and identified themselves with it.

During much of the nineteenth century, despite rivalries and disagreements, the different missionary societies did pool resources and collaborate on certain tasks, showing a definite sense of belonging to a "Protestant" presence as opposed to Catholic missions. Among their congregations, it is not unusual to find that most "Protestant" Tamil families comprise members from a few different denominational backgrounds, all considering themselves broadly "Protestant." I therefore use the term "Protestant" as a corporate identifying category but where relevant, foreground denominational distinctions and rivalries in my discussion. Finally, and most importantly, I view "Protestant" identity among Tamils as provisional and multiple, continually shaped by changes in religious, linguistic, and social dynamics in Tamil society. This also allows me to examine how Protestant Tamil identity is fractured along lines of caste, where those belonging to specific caste groups have claimed the right to represent a united "Protestant" identity for all.

Tamil: History, Politics, and Identity

The book focuses on Tamil translations in the South Indian context for several reasons. Tamil is both the first Indian language and the first non-European language in print, with Catholic literature printed first in 1577 and Protestant literature in 1713. This pre-nineteenth-century print history in Tamil has not been explored sufficiently by scholars of South Asian languages or print who (see e.g. Ghosh 2006: 3, 73) often see the arrival of the printing press in Bengal in 1800 as the significant beginning of print history in India. Further, Tamil has a special place in the history of Protestant literature in India since a lively debate on Protestant terminology in Tamil begins from 1706 onward, a hundred years before efforts at translating Protestant literature into any other Indian language began. Thus, a comparative study over three centuries is possible only in the Tamil language as no other Indian language has had this long continuous history of Protestant translations. Moreover, among the various language cultures in India, Tamil claims one of the longest literary traditions among the world's living languages and a long and sophisticated history as a *literary* language within India. Further, with religious literature dating back to the first century CE, devotional poetry has been used as a powerful instrument with which to express religious identity throughout a protracted history of rivalry between religious sects. It is also the only Indian language that has claimed classical status on par with Sanskrit, a claim that was articulated with much force after the work of several colonial administrators, Protestant missionaries and Tamil scholars in the nineteenth century on Tamil and comparative linguistics. As linguists, several Protestant missionaries contested the theory held until then that Tamil derived largely from Sanskrit and were able, as a result, to present a distinct racial, cultural, and religious origin for the Tamils as separate from those of "Aryan" descent in north India. Importantly, certain categories of meaning within the missionary discourse on Tamil culture and society were appropriated and mobilized by emerging powerful religious groups (such as Śaivites) within the Tamil community in the late nineteenth century to invent a Tamil identity based on an immediate bond between religion and language use. Thus, the study, translation, and writings of Protestant missionaries provided an immediate context for the way Tamil intellectual history developed to conceptualize the Tamil language in the twentieth century. In this scenario, the development of a new Protestant register in Tamil religious discourse and the way this has functioned to construct religious identity is a unique aspect of Christianity's history in India.

Tamil has been influenced by a number of linguistic and literary practices over the centuries, of which its relationship with Sanskrit has been the most significant. Despite this long history, it is the development of a set of ideas regarding the Tamil language from the mid-nineteenth century that acquired primacy in definitions of Tamil identity from then on. This set of ideas depended to some extent on the early work of Catholic and Protestant missionaries on Tamil language and literature.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century missionaries working in the Tamil-speaking areas compiled dictionaries, wrote grammars, gathered manuscripts, collected proverbs and folk songs, and translated into and out of Tamil. Missionary translations, which were word-for-word renderings in Tamil from other language texts, differed significantly from the long history of "translations," that is, rewritings in Tamil from other Indian languages. Although the primary intent behind the missionaries' attempts to learn, analyze, and write in Tamil was to use it as a medium for proselytizing their faith, the ramifications of their study of Tamil have been broader. Similarly, with the introduction of the printing press initially to further missionary activity, Tamil texts, which had hitherto survived as palm-leaf manuscripts, began to appear in print, initiating its own chain of developments. The visible effects of this missionary interest have been written about on several occasions (Blackburn 2003; Dirks 1996; Jesudasan and Jesudasan 1961; Meenakshisundaram 1974; Rajarigam 1958).

With increasing numbers of printing presses in the Madras Presidency, Tamils such as C. W. Damodaran Pillai (1832–1901) and U. V. Swaminatha Iyer (1855–1942) were keen on "discovering" Tamil "classics" that had been ignored for centuries, printing "authentic" editions of literary texts, dating texts, identifying a single or primary author, building a literary history and finally, cataloguing printed texts. With printed Tamil texts much more accessible to a larger Tamil audience in the nineteenth century, the cumulative effect of these developments was that the attitudes of Tamils to Tamil literary texts, Tamil language, and the Tamil past began to transform concurrently. Although Tamil had already been an "object of knowledge" to Tamil pundits in previous centuries, the effect of the entry of print on Tamil literary culture is, in Blackburn's (2003) analysis, one that led to a fundamental shift in the way Tamils viewed their language. That is, there was a process of objectification of language, where Tamil was perceived "as a thing to be measured, known and used" (27). Since the Tamil Bible appeared in print from the beginning, its history is tied in with this widening material and cultural production in Tamil. The shifts in attitude to Tamil derived greater strength and focus later in the century when the comparative study of South Indian languages by European missionary and colonial scholars provided the Tamil language (along with Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam[20]) with a distinct genealogy from what Orientialist scholars had termed the "Indo-Aryan" family of languages.

The role of colonial scholarship is linked to this history of missionary engagement with the construction of a particular genealogy for the Tamil language. Trautmann (2006, 2009) has pointed out that an early significant location for the systematic study of Tamil was the College of Fort St. George in Madras where colonial administrative and educational energies drew a number of Tamil pundits together. As he and others in his edited volume point out, the college attracted high-caste non-Brahmin scholars who focused on the study of languages (mainly Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit), collected and edited Tamil texts for printing, and trained British civil servants in the languages of the Madras Presidency. It was in this context that Francis Whyte Ellis (1777–1819) offered the first "proof" in 1816 (attached as a "Note to the Introduction" of A. D. Campbell's Telugu grammar) that the Dravidian languages were historically related and not derived from the Sanskrit as had been proposed by the Calcutta Orientalists (Trautmann 2009: 4). The next significant moment in this history was when the missionary Robert Caldwell (1814–91) published his philological study, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* in 1856 in which he offered "scientific" grounds on which a separate lineage for Tamil and the other three "Dravidian" languages could be claimed. Importantly, he was also able to present an argument in favor of a distinct racial, cultural, and religious origin for the Tamils as separate from those of "Aryan" descent in north India. Equally relevant to our present study was his linking of language use and religion,[21] which allowed him to construct a religious tradition that was intrinsic to the Tamils.

Caldwell's study becomes a "key moment" in the evolution of a Tamil nationalist ideology because he "constructed, with the aid of the modern disciplines of philology, archaeology, and history, a genealogy for Dravidian languages, culture, and people marked by their opposition to their Aryan/Brahman counterparts" (Ravindiran 2000: 53). Although Johann Fabricius (1711–91), the German Pietist missionary in Madras, was the first to distinguish with an asterisk Tamil words with Sanskrit roots in his dictionary (1779), Ellis and Caldwell's publications fueled the idea that it was possible to retrieve a "pure" Tamil vocabulary from the mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit that was then prevalent, which would express what was essentially "Tamil". Incidentally, one of the earliest instances of expurgating Sanskrit from Tamil use occurs in the mid-nineteenth-century missionary context when two separate translation committees produced draft revisions of the Tamil Bible: the missionaries aligned with the Jaffna Auxiliary Bible Society and the Madras Auxiliary Bible Society each accused the other of producing imperfect translations on the ground that they contained too many Sanskrit terms.[22]

Caldwell's scholarship was later appropriated by non-Brahmin Vellalas for a revival of Tamil Śaivism. From the late nineteenth century, a reworked Śaivism began to be reclaimed as the most ancient and authentic religion of the Tamils predating Sanskritic Hinduism associated with the "Aryan" north (Ramaswamy 1997: 25–9; Ravindiran 2000: 61–78). Developing in part as a non-Brahmin movement against Sanskritic Hinduism and in part in response to Christian proselytizing, the Śaivite tradition was presented as the repository and guardian of the Tamil language: Śaivite worship, it was claimed, was conducted in Tamil, using pure Tamil rituals based on Śaivite scriptures. Among others, G. U. Pope (1820–1908), a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), contributed to this elevation of the Śaivite tradition through his translation of *Tiruvācakam*, a key Śaiva text, enhancing arguments in favor of the antiquity and sophistication of Tamil culture by placing the Śaiva Siddhanta religious system as "the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect" (Irschick 1969: 280). Although Śaiva texts had been recited as part of temple rituals from medieval times in parallel with the Sanskrit vedas, their intellectual adoption as the only authentic "scriptural" tradition for Tamils went with a simultaneous rejection of Sanskrit and vedantic texts. P. Sundaram Pillai (1855–97) in 1891, for instance, published an article in *The Madras Christian College Magazine* (1891) in which he presented the close connection between Tamil Śaivism and a Tamil identity independent of Sanskritic Hinduism where "the Tamil Saivas have their own system of sacred literature, compiled and arranged so as to match the Vedas, Puranas, and Sastras in Sanscrit" (343). This refashioned Tamil identity as essentially "Śaivite," expressing a uniquely Tamil sense of culture and identity in opposition to Sanskritic Hinduism, continued however to have an uneasy relationship with Christianity, since on the one hand, there was widespread acknowledgment of the "contribution" of missionary scholarship to the Tamil (read, Śaivite) cause but on the other, Śaivite self-conceptualization continued to posit itself against a Christian "other."

Significantly, however, elite Śaivite intellectuals were not the only appropriators of newly "discovered" Tamil texts. Radical intellectuals of a rising Dravidian Movement in the early decades of the twentieth century were keen to invoke "the pristine character" of older Tamil Caṅkam[23] texts, to construct what Venkatachalapathy (2006) calls a modern, secular canon of Tamil literature. In its initial phase the Dravidian Movement (organized as the Self-Respect Movement) was a social movement that offered a critique of religion and caste in Tamil society. Emphasizing the character of Caṅkam literature as free from both Śaiva mythology and caste divisions, the Dravidian Movement in his view posited a "secular vision of ancient society" with which they attacked several types of present social inequalities, including those perpetuated by the high-caste Śaivite revival. This also opened up Tamil intellectual and cultural histories to other faiths, and as Venkatachalapathy has argued, Tamil Jain texts "came to be appropriated as a classic text of Tamil nationalism" and "as Tamil identity politics progressed it was easier to incorporate Christianity and Islam within Tamil literary tradition" (109). Thus, in the 1930s and 1940s, there was an intellectual battle between the non-Brahmanism of the Śaivites and that of the Dravidian ideologues, which had a direct impact on the discursive conceptualization of "Tamil identities" for Protestants in the twentieth century in terms of race, religion, and language.

Gaining momentum, Tamil non-Brahmanists of the Self-Respect Movement organized themselves into a political movement in parallel with (and in opposition to) nationalist politics in the Madras Presidency. Their aspirations were consolidated through the political manifestations of the Justice Party (1916–17), later the Dravida Kazhagam (1944) ,and finally, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or DMK (1949). Concern over Tamil language and literature was politicized further through the Pure Tamil Movement (*taṉittamiḻ iyakkam*), which from the 1930s sought to "cleanse" Tamil of "foreign" (especially Sanskrit) influences. Arooran (1980) points to factors such as the publication of the Tamil Lexicon in 1936, the introduction of Tamil in university courses, and the demand for a Tamil university in the first three decades of the twentieth century that kept interest in the Tamil language alive in the Tamil public sphere. The Pure Tamil Movement received an added boost after the DMK came to power in 1967, when it began an official program of creating pedagogical and administrative terminologies in a Sanskrit-free Tamil. The movement, however, had its internal inconsistencies and failings because, as Ramaswamy (1997: 154) points out, it aimed to transform Tamil speakers into "subjects" of a particular kind of Tamil— *ta̲ṉittamiḻ*—as the only right and possible form of Tamil: "The *taṉittamiḻ* project is thus concerned not merely with cleansing the language but also with singularizing and homogenizing the subjectivity of its speakers, for ultimately, it is only the speaker of pure Tamil who is worthy of being called a Tamilian."

Post-1970s, the movement has lost much of its vigor and support though individual adherents still promote the use of "pure" Tamil in everyday use enthusiastically. However, the social and political mobilization of a "pure" register of Tamil and attitudes to it continue to be a vital issue in the Tamil imagination, and as we will see, prove to be a divisive factor in twentieth-century translations of the Tamil Bible. The way Tamil has come to be perceived and employed by Tamils from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries has had a direct bearing on the history of the Tamil Bible in the corresponding years. In chapter three, I will examine in more detail the points at which the ideological construction of a Tamil identity by the Pure Tamil Movement and the aspirations of the Protestant Tamil community intersect and diverge. That most Protestant Tamils in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reject *taṉittamiḻ* in the Bible as an unnecessary politicization of scriptural and devotional language registers is an important indicator of how the relationship between the sacred and the political continue to be viewed in terms of language use in the Tamil context.

The Bible in Tamil Translation: A Brief History

It is useful to locate the translation history of the Tamil Bible in the different political and social contexts within which each version was produced and, for purposes of convenience, I view this history in terms of three main phases of key Protestant translations of the Bible. From the first phase, that is, the eighteenth century, I will refer to two main German Lutheran missionary translations: Ziegenbalg's New Testament (1714–15) and Fabricius's Version (1772–98). From the second phase, which was that of the British and Foreign Bible Society's translation committees of the nineteenth century, I will consider two published translations: Rhenius's New Testament (1833) and the *Union Version* (1871). The third phase, which I see coinciding with the rise of Dravidian Tamil consciousness in the twentieth century, resulted in two major translations both of which I will take into account: *Revised Version* (1956) and *Tiruviviliyam* or Common Language Translation (1995). I give a short account at this point to help our examination of how and why the agendas of the translation projects differ in the chapters that follow.

Before I review the history of Protestant translations, a brief look at Catholic translations before the eighteenth century will be instructive. Of the Catholic missionaries who arrived in Tamil-speaking South India, Henrique Henriquez (1520–1600), Roberto de Nobili (d. 1656), and Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi (1680–1747) are the most important for the history of Tamil language and print.[24] Henriques printed several Tamil books between 1556 and 1581 at the Jesuit printing presses in Goa, while Nobili and Beschi established an extensive Catholic mission in Tamilnadu and took keen interest in learning and writing in Tamil. Although they did not translate the Bible into Tamil, these three Jesuit missionaries composed original religious texts in Tamil and built up a body of religious terms that proved useful for the early Protestants who arrived in the eighteenth century. The first Tamil catechism was printed in Lisbon in Roman character in 1554 (Blackburn 2003: 32) and Henriquez printed the first book in Tamil, titled *Doctrina Christam* or *Tāmpirāṉ Valakkam* ("Worship of the Lord"), in 1577. The one extant copy of the second edition of the translation (1578), printed at Quilon, is sixteen pages long and its title page refers to Tamil as the "Malabar" language. The *Doctrina Christam* comprised, besides the catechism, the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments in brief, the Lord's Prayer, and prayers from the Roman Catholic liturgy all in Tamil translation.

Although the Jesuit missionaries did not translate the Bible into Tamil until much later (the first Catholic Tamil translation of the New Testament was printed in Pondicherry in 1857 and the Old Testament in 1904) because of doctrinal conviction that scripture should either be read in the original languages or in the translation approved of (the Vulgate) by the Vatican, they did translate a significant body of other Catholic texts into Tamil. Works composed or translated into Tamil by Catholic missionaries introduced important changes to Tamil literary culture. Blackburn (2003: 39) points out that the translations of Henriquez signaled these texts as translations, linked to another culture: "As translations, using interlingual titles, displaying Christian imagery, highlighting new words with diamond marks, and written in an unparalleled prose of advocacy using the conversational idiom, these books mark the beginning of a new literary culture in Tamil." These translations also contained a higher number of terms transliterated from the Latin and Portuguese. In contrast, the body of Catholic texts produced later by Nobili and Beschi borrowed Sanskrit terminology from the existing corpus of Tamil scriptures and adapted Tamil literary forms to convey the Catholic message. Their use of the Tamil language is of great importance to the formation of a Catholic, and later, Protestant vocabulary in Tamil as their writings provided a collection of Tamil terms with Christian connotations on which Protestant missionaries could base early Protestant translations and writings. However, such early appropriations of Catholic vocabulary were qualified in Protestant usage from the mid-eighteenth century onward.

Protestants missionaries arrived in India in the early eighteenth century after Sriman Ragunatha Nayak, king of Tancavur, signed a treaty with the Danish captain Ovi Gjedde in November 1620 and Tranquebar was created as a Danish trading center for the Danish East India Company. Until the seventeenth century, Tranquebar (or Tarankampāṭi in Tamil) was frequented by Arab traders and later the Portuguese; from 1620 it functioned mainly as a Danish trading center until the beginning of the eighteenth century when the first Lutheran missionaries arrived to establish the Danish Mission there. In 1705, the Danish king Frederick IV appointed two Germans, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1675–1752), as missionaries at the suggestion of August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) in Halle to represent the Danish Missionary Society. With the arrival of Ziegenbalg and Plütschau in Tranquebar in 1706, the first Protestant mission station was established in South India albeit with some initial hostility between the company's officials and the missionaries (Lehmann 1956). The two missionaries focused on translating the Bible into Tamil almost from the very beginning. Although Philip Baldeus, a Dutch missionary in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) between 1656 and 1665, made the first Protestant attempt at translating the Bible into Tamil,[25] Ziegenbalg and Plütschau had no access to these efforts and depended more on Catholic sources in South India. German missionaries who followed often worked to redress this initial reliance on Catholic vocabulary and, instead, tried to establish a distinct Lutheran tradition for Tamil Protestantism.

The arrival in 1712 of the printing press sent by the SPCK gave much impetus to the work of translation at Tranquebar. However, the earliest books printed with this press were not in Tamil but in Portuguese:

these were Luther's Small Catechism, a hymnbook, a report of the Tranquebar schools, and a history of the Passion. They were later sent Tamil fonts along with the Apostle's Creed printed in Tamil from Halle, with which the first Tamil hymnbook was printed in 1713. A further advantage was the Danish king's permission: "we herewith send you a most gracious privilege allowing you to print without supervision from the censor" (Fenger 1863: 90). However, interestingly, a letter from the SPCK to the Tranquebar missionaries dated December 1714 cautions them against getting too involved with the task of translation and printing: "We do not doubt that your work has been made much easier to you by the printing-press which you are now arranging; but take care that you are not inconsiderably led into so much translating and printing that you do not find sufficient time for constant intercourse with the heathen" (93). This early warning points to a certain degree of ambivalence in Protestant attitudes to the role of translation and print in mission. Although missionaries and Evangelicals in Europe were enthusiastic about printing and distributing copies of the catechism, sermons, and parts of the Bible, there were others who doubted the advantages of print over verbal preaching.[26] The fear was that the printed text on its own encouraged individual scriptural interpretations unmonitored by missionaries that could be contrary to the official, missionary line taken. This difference of opinion regarding the merit of Protestant texts in print continued right through the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth. Nevertheless, interest in translating and printing Bibles continued unabated in South India and Ziegenbalg's Tamil translation of the New Testament was first printed in two parts, in 1714 and 1715.

Among the many missionaries who followed Ziegenbalg, Johann Philipp Fabricius (1711–91) who arrived in Tranquebar in 1740 after also having studied theology at Halle was the next significant translator of the New and Old Testaments into Tamil. He moved to Madras in 1742, then a territory of the English. His missionary and translation activities were conducted under constant political unrest however. When the French invaded the Coromandel in 1746, for instance, the house in which he lived was pulled down and he had to move between Madras and Cuddalore several times while the English and French fought over possession of Madras. Fabricius's translation of the New Testament was published in 1772 and he also translated the Old Testament from 1756. There is some uncertainty whether Fabricius translated or revised the entire Old Testament since some books were printed only in 1798 after his death; but Germann (1865) has offered evidence to argue that the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments, were indeed fresh translations by Fabricius. This translation came to be known in Lutheran and wider Protestant Tamil circles as the "Fabricius Version" and I will examine conflicting attitudes to it later.

These German missionaries, sent to South India from Halle, were deeply influenced by the Pietist movement that rose as a challenge to Lutheran orthodoxy in Reformation Germany. Deriving from the larger German Pietist movement for the religious and moral reformation of Lutheran orthodoxy, Halle Pietism put a high value on inward and affective Christianity, with devotional aspects of religious life of prime importance to both the individual and church (Stoeffler 1973). Halle Pietism grew in significance under the leadership of August Francke whose work already involved making the Bible available to Germans in a language and at a price accessible to them. Further, Francke's interest in reform resulted in a concern for world mission, an idea relatively new to Protestant churches both in Germany and in other parts of Europe at the time. He used his contacts in Europe and succeeded in linking Halle, Copenhagen, and London in a joint missionary venture to South India. The Pietist ethos of Ziegenbalg and Fabricius, which underlay the translations of the Bible and Lutheran liturgical texts into Tamil, meant that apart from showing early interest in the translation and printing of the Bible and hymns, they were also quick to start schools where Tamil children were taught using Pietist principles of training and reform that were grounded in Francke's brand of Pietism at Halle.

The history of Bible translations and printing entered its second phase in Tamil with the entry into India of the British and Foreign Bible Society (hereafter BFBS) in 1811. The institution of the BFBS coincided with the ascendancy of the English East India Company in South India: Danish commercial interest in the area had been diminished by the French and the English; the French were defeated by the English in 1760 and, following the Mysore Wars (1767–99), the Carnatic was annexed in 1801 by the English. From 1813, the British Parliament allowed the Anglican hierarchy to be established in India and several British mission societies were established in South India: of these, the SPG established in 1825, Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1814, the London Missionary Society in 1805, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1816 were the most prominent in South India. This meant that the task of translating the Bible into Tamil passed from German Pietists into the hands of British Anglican missionaries, although there were exceptions such as Charles T. E. Rhenius (1790–1837) who as a Lutheran Pietist worked for the CMS in Madras for six years after his arrival in India in 1814.[27] Most Anglican missionaries did not undertake to translate as individuals, but were appointed by the BFBS to serve several translation projects.

The two nineteenth-century Tamil versions I have selected for study are Rhenius's revision of the New Testament (1833) (revised along with a revision committee) and the *Union Version* (1871) translated by a Revision Committee chaired by Henry Bower, both undertaken under the authority of the BFBS. The BFBS gave Rhenius the task of revising Fabricius's version but although he first began to translate the Old Testament, he finished revising the New Testament first. The BFBS brought out Rhenius's final translation of the New Testament in parts, that is, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in 1825 and 1827 and the entire New Testament in 1833. In 1840, the Bible Society published its first edition of the whole Bible in Tamil, comprising the Old Testament in Fabricius's translation and the New Testament by Rhenius.

Later in the nineteenth century, Henry Bower and a revision committee were appointed by BFBS to revise the two existing translations in use: Fabricius's and Rhenius's. Bower commenced revision in early 1858 and the *Union Version*, nearly twenty years in preparation,[28] was finally published in 1871. Apart from this translation project, there were two other nineteenth-century attempts to revise the Tamil Bible: one was a Protestant and the other a Catholic effort (1857). The Protestant revision, which came to be known as the "Tentative Version" (1850), was headed by P. Percival in Jaffna who was famously helped by the well-known Jaffna Śaivite Arumuka Pillai (also known as Navalar).[29] But this revision was rejected by most missionaries in South India who claimed that it used Tamil "peculiar" to Jaffna and unfamiliar to Tamils in South India. Tamil Lutherans meanwhile rejected the Tentative and *Union Version* and continued to use Fabricius's version.

In the third phase of this history, the greater participation of Protestant Tamils in the translation process becomes more visible. Concrete evidence of Protestant Tamil reaction to revisions and translations has survived from this period. Responses to questionnaires, resolutions taken by some dioceses, petitions signed by groups, and individual reactions now find a place in BFBS files.[30] L. P. Larsen and G. S. Doraiswamy, along with a Consultative Committee, were selected to revise the *Union Version* in 1924. Appointed after considerable debate about the ratio of European to Indian revisers, Doraiswamy was the first Protestant Tamil to jointly lead a translation committee.

The chief revisers of the Revision Committee prepared a revision of the Gospel of Matthew, which was circulated for comment in 1925. Despite growing sentiment against this project, the first edition of the Revised New Testament of five thousand copies was published in 1928 (Organe, Letter to Kilgour, BFBS Tamil File 4, August 23, 1928). Targeted for release in 1940, the revision and final publication of the entire version took much longer. In June 1939, a further revision began under C. H. Monahan, a Methodist missionary from Northern Ireland (Letter from Hooper to E. W. Smith, BFBS Tamil File 6, July 10, 1939). The aim of this revision was evidently to make the Bible easy to read for every one, by following Larsen's translation but retaining the idioms of the *Union Version*. In 1942, the Revised New Testament was completed and on sale. Monahan's Committee completed the revision of the rest in 1947 and the whole Revised Bible was published in 1949 (Letter, BFBS Tamil File 6, October 4, 1951).[31] Monahan's version was further revised and edited under the leadership of the Lutheran Carl Diehl and the New Testament was brought out in 1954. Finally, the Old Testament of 1949 and the New Testament of 1954 were brought out together as the *Revised Version* in 1956 (*Historical Catalogues* 1977).

The last translation that I will consider is the *Tiruviviliyam* or the Common Language Bible, 1995. Unlike the *Union* and *Revised Versions*, both of which began as revision projects developing later into new translations, the *Tiruviviliyam* was begun as a fresh translation project. After the unenthusiastic feedback on the *Revised Version* from the Protestant Tamil community, and in response to changing language and ecumenical movements, the BSI[32] decided to start an entirely new translation of the Bible in Tamil. The two primary principles governing this project were that it should be an "interconfessional" and a "common language" translation. "Interconfessional" refers to the ecumenical coming together of all Christian denominations, both Protestant and Catholic, extant in the Tamil areas for the first time in the history of the Tamil Bible. This translation project was also considerably influenced by the "Pure Tamil Movement," claiming to use a level of Tamil that would be "common" to all who had access to secondary education in Tamilnadu. Unfortunately, there was no adequate critical assessment of the success of Pure Tamil terminology in the public and political spheres of Tamil society when the translation committee took this decision, an issue that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

Father Michael Irudayam and Reverend D. Jones Muthunayagam were appointed coordinators of this Bible Society translation project in 1978. In total, there were four panels working on different parts of the Bible with more than twenty translators each. All thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were published as a trial edition in 1992. The complete *Tiruviviliyam* was finally published in 1995 after much opposition and controversy from large sections of the Protestant Tamil community. In fact, the project was nearly stalled when after strong opposition the BSI refused to take the risk of publishing it. However, its parent Union Bible Societies[33] in the United Kingdom had to step in and publish the translation with the support of the Catholic organization, the Tamil Nadu Biblical Catechetical Liturgical Council (TNBCLC). After the first edition, the Catholic press has continued to print the *Tiruviviliyam* with the Apocryphal books attached while the BSI prints limited editions without the Apocrypha.

This history, pieced together as it is from records left by the different translators, cannot include much information on the quantity and nature of readership because of the paucity of records; however, translators' comments indicate a shifting awareness of their audience. In the eighteenth century, the intended audience of the Tamil Bible was largely potential converts but from the nineteenth century, the translated Bible became more a commodity of and for a "Protestant Tamil" community, a community that was increasingly self-conscious about its status in Tamil religious culture and which began linking its identity with the translated Bible and its use of Tamil.

Outline of the Book

I have given this brief chronological history of the Tamil Bible here because the chapters in this volume do not progress in linear fashion from one Tamil version to the next from the early eighteenth century onward. Instead, the book organizes its analyses around three key conflicts of interest over the issue of Bible translation that have defined the social and cultural history of the Bible in Tamil translation: first, language, that is, disputes over the appropriateness of key religious terms; second, disputes over versions, where certain versions were assigned authority and symbolic value above others by the community; and third, contests over genre, in disagreements over the use of suitable devotional genres. These three conflicts (from a wider range of discursive differences) serve here as useful points of entry to analyze the discursive sites that construct Protestant Tamil identity.

Chapter one introduces the reader to the main debates on Bible translation in colonial India. It analyses the several attitudes to scripture in the nineteenth century and examines the wide debate on the methods and principles of translating the Bible that took place across the major Indian languages. This comparative analysis across several Indian languages puts the Tamil case in context. It also examines institutional pressures (especially that of the BFBS) within which Bible translators worked. Chapter two examines the arguments and controversy over the use of religious terms. It focuses on key terms that functioned in overlapping religious spheres (Protestant and non-Protestant) in order to study the multiple and contradictory claims on Tamil language for the purposes of Bible translation. The chapter analyses how when Protestant Tamil translations drew on corresponding Tamil sacred terms instead of inventing a new vocabulary, immense pressure was put on the Tamil language to signal differences in religious doctrines and practices.

In chapter three, I examine how and why two particular versions of the Tamil Bible were ascribed symbolic status, and came to be understood as *the* only Protestant scriptures that could adequately represent the identity and status of the community at particular historical junctures. The first instance is from the early nineteenth century when Protestant Tamils of the high Vellala caste opposed the revision of Fabricius' Version of 1772. The second case examined is that of the *Union Version* (1871), which, in the twentieth century, has come to function as a symbol of Protestant identity among some powerful groups in the community. Using a combination of unpublished (and little-known) archival material in India and the United Kingdom and fieldwork interviews in South India, this chapter analyzes the factor of caste politics and the reasons why particular registers of language are viewed by some sections of the community as forms of symbolic capital that help to mark their identity as distinct from other religious groups.

I investigate genre as the third conflict of interest in chapter four by analyzing alternative translation strategies adopted by Protestant Tamils from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The chapter examines poetic translations of the Bible by Protestant and non-Protestant Tamils as well as the devotional poetry of nineteenth-century Protestant poets, such as Vedanayaka Sastri (1774–1864), who in combining bhakti poetic genres with Protestant concepts, using Tamil performance modes and musical instruments to showcase the Protestant faith, declare that they share in the religious ordering of the Tamil world. The chapter demonstrates that the choice of devotional genre is not just a matter of literary aesthetics but that it also plays a crucial role in the reorganization of knowledge systems.

Finally, the aim of the book is not to focus on either the intentions of the translator or even how meaning is constructed within the text but to shift the examination of the translated Bible beyond the margins of its pages to its material and historical contexts to map the changing contours of its meaning as it travels from one set of readers to another. Equally important to the book is the attempt to investigate the many new religious and cultural subjectivities that grew as readers accepted, rejected, appropriated, or borrowed each translation to suit their own purposes.

1

The Terms of the Debate: Translating the Bible in Nineteenth-century India

The Bible was among a range of texts that was translated for the very first time either into or out of Indian languages. As one among a large "field," so to speak, of different types of translated texts—legal, literary, or sacred—the Bible's translation history in Indian languages was shaped by wider translation practices and resultant changes in the modes of knowledge production and consumption. Although the nature and function of these other translation endeavors may have differed in each case, they influenced the ways in which Protestant missionaries conceived Bible translation and presented it in the Indian context. I believe that this broadening of the focus to situate the translated Bible in a comparative framework that comprises translated texts from various domains is essential in order not to limit the analyses of Bible translation in India to an examination of sacred terms or as an example of "dialogue" between religions as it has often been done in the past.[1]

Translation was a key mode of interpretation as much for European mission as for European imperial purposes or Orientalist scholarship on India. Translation was an important context within and for which common evaluative tools were utilized by these several key players. Common evaluative tools meant the employment of shared frameworks of interpretation by which religious beliefs, customs, or morals of a people as well as their languages could be assessed and explained in relation to each other.[2] This resulted in the construction of a hierarchy of languages, religions, and ultimately of the perceived civilizational worth of the various social groups in the subcontinent. In a speech delivered on April 28, 1875, at the Annual Meeting for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, Robert Caldwell (1814–91), a missionary in South India from 1837 and famous for his work on comparative philology, for instance, related his analysis of the differences in Indian "vernaculars" to the "many differences in complexion and type of feature, and also many differences in culture and mental and moral characteristics" (1875: 9).[3] Significantly, some of these interpretative and translational strategies were later altered in response to perceived shifts in this "civilization" hierarchy.

To a large extent, Protestant missionary conception of Bible translation in India was built on an accretion of such missionary (and wider European[4]) "knowledges" of what were considered overlapping cultural elements of the subcontinent. What developed into specifically Protestant issues of language, translation, and conversion were thus influenced by attitudes to the languages, customs, manners, religions, social structures, and even the perceived "moral state" of the target audiences that Protestant translators shared with translators of other texts. Although the Bible was only one of several philosophical, scientific, and literary texts that were translated by Europeans into Indian languages for their supposed civilizing effect, the project of translating the Bible for non-Western audiences conceived of the translated Bible as a primary civilizing tool to "save" and to "improve" the "native" at all levels of this hierarchy.[5] Thus, identifying these common strategies shared by various types of translators helps us appreciate that translation decisions were not always concerned with immediate linguistic commensurability but with a range of extra-linguistic factors conceived discursively across several domains and perceived as pertinent to the "success" of the translated Bible. Conversely, the success of each Bible version was measured by its effect on the receiving audience, that is, by the number of resulting conversions to Protestant Christianity.

Significantly shaped by the wider networks of discursive "knowledge" regarding the Indian subcontinent, Protestant debates on languages, sacred terminologies, and translation were rooted in the understanding that the spread of Protestant Christianity in India, as elsewhere outside Europe, depended to a great extent on the excellence of the vernacular translations of the Bible ("Bible Revision with Special Reference to Tamil, A Symposium," 456). While only a few missionaries were involved in the actual process of translating the Bible into the several Indian languages in the nineteenth century, others who were using the translated Bible in what was called the "mission field" were drawn into the debate, evaluated the translated Bibles and contributed to building a collective notion of how Bible translation should proceed in India. This wider debate included comments and observations from some members of the Indian clergy.[6] A dominant feature of this debate was how the Bible was to be presented as "scripture"[7]; this meant there was interest among both missionaries and Indians in the nature and function of existing scriptures in India and how they compared with the Bible. Often, the "success" of a particular Bible translation was evaluated in terms of the extent to which it was able to function as "scripture" in the face of competing multiple scriptures in a given language. As we will see, amid broad consensus on the nature and purpose of Bible translation, there were frequent contradictions, disagreements, and criticisms that challenged the dominant narrative on Bible translation in India, as a largely united and successful project. Analyzing the history of nineteenth-century translation practices and efforts at creating a Protestant register in all Indian languages is crucial to our understanding of the way Bible translation is perceived and validated in the present, and provides the context within which Protestant identities continue to be formulated within India today.

The Importance of Nineteenth-century Debates on Bible Translation

Although the Protestant history of Bible translation and discussions on the nature of biblical translation in India go back to the early eighteenth century, this chapter focuses mainly on the nineteenth century for several reasons. From the beginning of the nineteenth century several perceptible shifts are apparent in the practice of Bible translation in India in terms of who was translating and what their preferred methodologies were. Most importantly, as I will demonstrate, there was a wider and more systematic debate on translation strategies for Protestant purposes, and as a result, these concretized as the century progressed into a strong discursive narrative on how best to translate the Bible into Indian languages.

First, the nineteenth century saw the entry of two societies of primary importance to the history of Bible translation in India. The first of these was the Baptist Society, which started work in Serampore, Bengal, in 1793. The second was the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), which opened its first Indian auxiliaries in Calcutta (1811) and Madras (1820). Both societies were actively involved in the translation of the Bible into as many Indian languages as was possible at the time: the former was the first society to start translating the Bible into the languages of northern and eastern India; the latter was the first to coordinate and organize Bible translation and revisions across several languages in India. Through its auxiliaries, the BFBS attempted to institutionalize the task of Bible translation in the major Indian languages. Whereas earlier Bible translators had worked in comparative isolation with Indian language pundits and with occasional inputs from colleagues, nineteenth-century Bible translation projects were mostly group efforts at translation by committees appointed by the BFBS. By the mid-nineteenth century, the BFBS had established a network that linked production, finance, translators, and their readers, more formally than in earlier centuries when translation efforts were left to individual commitment and enterprise. The BFBS very quickly became a nodal point that coordinated with all other Protestant mission societies, drew on their financial and human resources, and offered in return the translated Bible to be distributed in their mission fields. Equally important, the BFBS also initiated debate on Bible translations that later contributed to the establishment of formal rules and guidelines for Bible translators, revisers, and editors.

Second, nineteenth-century debates on Bible translation are important because it was the first time that the Bible was translated almost simultaneously into several Indian languages, thus making a comparative study possible. Until the end of the eighteenth century, Tamil was the only Indian language into which the entire Bible had been translated and so any discussion prior to the nineteenth century took place with regard only to the Tamil language and problems specific to its language culture. As I have argued in the introduction to this volume, this makes the history of Tamil translations for Protestant purposes unique in the Indian subcontinent. However, since my aim in this chapter is to widen the focus to Protestant translation practices across the various Indian language cultures, I will focus on the nineteenth century as the first period when there was an effort to systematically compare the sacred vocabulary of different languages and develop suitable common translation methods that could be applied broadly across *all* Indian languages.

Third, the debate on issues of Bible translation was more public in the nineteenth century: the space for discussion was no longer private diaries or letters exchanged with mission headquarters but missionary and secular journals, which began to be published in India from the early nineteenth century onward. Translators of the eighteenth century had left some information on the rationale behind their choice in terminology, but the practical problems of printing the Tamil Bible occupies more space in their narratives. This is not to suggest that the eighteenth-century translators were not aware of the complexities involved in conveying Protestant discourse in the Tamil language or that they lacked theoretical insight. Ziegenbalg, for example, was a self-conscious translator, leaving detailed information as to how he acquired knowledge of the Tamil language, his reactions to existing Roman Catholic texts in Tamil, and how he gained information about the religious systems in South India. However, equal or more space was given to the practical difficulties of producing the first Tamil New Testament and so his theoretical perceptions have to be pieced together from the entire body of information he left behind. Moreover, although Auguste Hermann Francke, in Germany, printed such translation experiences of eighteenth-century German Lutheran missionaries in the *Halleschen Berichte* (from 1708 to 1775), these were circulated mainly in Europe as evidence of the advance of Christianity and mission in South India and to elicit further and regular financial support.[8] Hence, these published reports did not contribute directly to a theorization of translation strategies and did not initiate wide debate on translation within the Indian context.

In the nineteenth century, on the contrary, there was wide and extensive exchange of ideas in India, through the use of print media such as journals, tracts, pamphlets, reports of translation committees, and introductions to and reviews of translated works. Most of these were printed and circulated in India, thus initiating dialogue on translation and language use in missionary circles within India. As in the previous century, copies of these missionary journals and annual reports continued to be sent to mission headquarters for circulation in Europe and America as proof of monetary donations well spent. As a result, these reports also served to keep dialogue open between interested members of the public in Britain and the missionaries in India. It was crucial for missionaries in India, as elsewhere in Asia, to defend Bible translation in order to maintain public support in Europe, both ideological and financial. Missionaries were frequently queried regarding what was viewed as an indiscriminate translation of the Bible into too many languages of the world. Their most powerful defense was that the translated Bible had the potential to effect conversion without human intervention. Various anecdotes were given as proof that the Bible or portions of it when distributed, led to change in religious persuasion without additional teaching by missionaries (Buchanan 1811: 43). Moreover, in Baptist formulations from Serampore, with the translated Scriptures in their hands, Protestant Indians too would be in a position to appeal to their neighbors in the most powerful manner, demonstrating to them that their faith was not without foundation. Such defenses of the act of translation grew more vociferous as the century progressed and the moral bases for empire were questioned from various quarters within imperial Britain. The image of handing translated Bibles to "lost" but grateful souls recurs in many of these narratives not only in answer to such criticism but as self-justification of the missionary project where the act of translating functions as a practical, visible trope for the performance of Christian duty.

Some nineteenth-century journals that actively encouraged these debates were the *Harvest Field*, the *Indian Evangelical Review*, the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, the *Ceylon Friend*, the *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, the *Morning Star*, and the *Madras Christian College Magazine*. The 1898 October and November issues of the *Harvest Field*, for instance, published a "symposium" on Bible Revision, where the suggestion of the Committee of the South India Missionary Association that the question of Bible Revision in the Dravidian languages should be discussed in the *Harvest Field* was taken up seriously, demonstrating the wide interest in Bible translation across the mission field. The questions posed in the following extract address principal elements in the debate on the project of Bible translation in India:

> We sent out to representative missionaries, working in the field covered by the Dravidian tongues, a set of questions to be answered. [...]: 1. To what extent can common principles of translation and common terminology be usefully aimed at in the various Dravidian versions? 2. What is the best method of revising—the one man method? The committee method? Or what combination? By whom should the reviser or revisers be appointed? 3. How far should the general Christian public be consulted in the revision? 4. Is the time come for revising the Tamil version? If so, how should it be done? ("Bible Revision with Special Reference to Tamil, A Symposium," 361–2)

Besides this use of print media, some missionary translators wrote formal essays discussing theoretical aspects of Bible translation. For instance, the Serampore Brethren published the principles of translation they followed as "Memoirs" concerning the translation of scriptures annually from 1808 onward. Similarly, C. T. E. Rhenius's *Essay on the Principles of Translating the Holy Scriptures*, printed in 1827, contributed to a growing discourse on translating the Bible in India. Further, there were circular letters sent out by the Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras Auxiliaries of the BFBS, while their annual reports and published histories functioned either to initiate discussion or to report the various opinions received from different parts of the country, thus providing a space in which editorial committees in the different languages could participate. These have played a vital role in maintaining continuity of discussion across the different language-literatures from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries.

Significantly, both BFBS histories and reports also included detailed lists of the number of languages the Bible was translated into (Cust 1900; Kilgour 1929), and the number of copies printed and sold annually, providing statistics of the "spatial progress" of the Bible across the languages of India. While languages with the most numbers of versions and editions were usually placed first creating a visual hierarchy (i.e., the more "sophisticated" the language, the larger the number of Bible versions available), these lists offered missionaries an instant picture of the languages with either no existing translations or possessing translations of only single books of the Bible. The cumulative effect of such data it was hoped would be that the interest of missionaries would be piqued and would be drawn to the study of Indian languages and Bible translation as a vital component of Protestant mission.

This chapter will investigate the development of some key Protestant interpretative strategies and translation practices in order to examine their perceived purpose and effect. Pollock's work on South Asian literary cultures has stressed that the creation of literary languages, and in association, grammars, dictionaries, and treatises on literary theory, has important social and political causes and repercussions.[9] The act of translating and the discourse on translation can be added to Pollock's list. I suggest that the project of translating the Bible and the accompanying Protestant literature had an intellectual and ideological function in envisioning a Protestant literary culture and a Protestant textual community in South Asia. In particular, I argue that the discourse on the linguistic and literary strategies that were to be followed with a view to arriving at standard translations was expected to establish a uniform Protestant reading community. I first investigate changes in attitudes to scripture initiated by this Protestant missionary discourse as one of the shifts in textual and reading practices most relevant to our discussion of Bible translation, then discuss the specific terms of the debate on translation, and finally examine how and why translation projects were expected to arrive at standard versions of scripture and uniform Protestant responses.

Competing Scriptures: The Bible, the Qur'an, and the Vedas

Protestant missionaries were ill-prepared for the number and variety of scriptures and scriptural traditions that they encountered in the Indian subcontinent. More importantly, they were ill-equipped to deal with either the conceptual differences of texts designated sacred, the several forms of Hindu scriptures, or the relationship between these sacred texts and their communities. Protestant missionaries assumed that a single sacred text occupied a central place in the religious life of each community similar to that occupied by the Bible in most branches of Protestant life: a free-standing source of religious doctrine, authority, and inspiration, whose meaning could be grasped without too much reference to original or later contexts (Levering 1989: 3). Instead of such a single central text, they found each Hindu subsect accepted the scriptural authority of different texts and that Hindu traditions of relating to sacred texts were very different from the way Western Protestants think about or read the Bible. For instance, radically inexplicable to them was the concept that

> the sanctity of Hindu scripture—most of which has been composed in Sanskrit—does not necessarily depend upon its intelligibility to one who hears or recites it. Nowhere has this been more clearly demonstrated than in the way the *Ṛg Veda*—apparently the centrepiece of the entire scriptural tradition—has functioned in Hindu life. (Coburn 1989: 114)

Such conceptions of the sacred text, alien to the Protestant model, meant that the missionaries sought to change the dynamics between sacred texts and their communities and the ways in which they functioned. Moreover, working from Protestant preconceptions, they were not in a position to appreciate the notion that what makes a text sacred may neither lie in its formal elements nor in its content but in the believing community that accords it an authoritative position. In this context, the Protestant missionaries' aim of inserting the translated Bible into the sacred and linguistic space already occupied by a sophisticated variety of sacred texts was tied in with other material and ideological practices.

One such device was the introduction of new discursive strategies and reading practices, central to the way Protestants have related to their scripture, into the literary culture of South Asia. These interpretative strategies were used to construct a rhetorical discourse that sought to distinguish "true" from "false" scriptures to accompany the translated Bible in India. So, for instance, in the nineteenth century, missionary literature and religious tracts were published in the various Indian languages the Bible was translated into to draw contrasts between the "true" Bible and the "false" Hindu and Islamic scriptures.[10] Let us compare the strategies employed by Christian tracts and the counterstrategies that Hindu tracts utilized.

Christian Tracts

"Tract Societies" were set up in conjunction with Bible translation. Often working closely with Bible translators and the Bible Society, tract societies facilitated the printing, translation, and distribution of Protestant tracts.[11] For instance, C. T. E. Rhenius, a nineteenth-century translator of the Tamil Bible, was one of the founding members of the Madras Religious Tract and Book Society (hereafter *MRTBS*), at whose suggestion the first tract in Tamil was prepared (*MRTBS* 1869). Successful tracts were translated from one Indian language into another, sometimes first going through an English translation. An excellent case is that of "Tracts for Muhammedans" first published in Bangla, translated into English in 1893, and subsequently rendered into Tamil for publication in 1897. The translator, in fact, indicates that the reason for the English translation is not only to reach Indian Muslims who knew English but also to encourage the publications of similar tracts in other languages.[12] My discussion here is based mainly on English and Tamil tracts, where English tracts have given me an indication of what was distributed outside the Tamil-speaking areas.

The contents of many of these Protestant tracts proposed to give rational proof that the Bible was the true "Veda"; that it must logically replace the "false" Hindu Scriptures; and that in spite of its appearance of being multiple or split across languages, it was ultimately one. Not only were Hindu scriptures full of "heathenish superstitions" but their plurality was contrasted unfavorably with the Bible as single source of authority. The Qur'an, on the other hand, with its close proximity to the Bible, was presented as deceitful in its attempt to "imitate" and denigrate the Bible as false. Tamil and English tracts such as *Tēyvam* (God, 1901), "*The Names of God*" (1897), "*Cāstiram*" (1897), "*The Koran*" (1893), "*Integrity of the Gospel*" (1893), "*Fatiha*" (1893), "*The Guru*" (1896), and "*Mantiram*" (1896) sought to prove the superior and infallible nature of the Bible over all Hindu scriptures (the Vedas, the Gita, the Puranas, and the Tamil *Tēvāram*) and the Qur'an. Examining and refuting the tenets of the respective religions point-by-point, these tracts, published as part of the "Bazaar Book Series," presented a striking contrast between Christianity on the one hand, and Hinduism and Islam on the other.

Most tracts claimed to present "facts" for the readers' attention and invited them to use their reason and judgment to discern for themselves "true" scriptures. Various strategies were employed in turn. In some cases, the scientific rationality of the Europeans was opposed to the "mythical" claims of the Vedas: "white people have been to all parts of the globe and can prove that there is no such mountain or tree…" (*Cāstiram* 1897: 15 [my translation]). Other tracts attempted to prove their point by quoting from Hindu Scriptures to expose the internal contradictions that supposedly belied the authenticity of the "*Shastras*": for instance, the tract "*Cāstiram*" quotes the several accounts of how the Four Vedas came into existence only to expose internal contradictions between the stories, thus revealing its own failing as reliable source of information (6–11). In other tracts, writers quote from nonsacred literatures of the language culture to criticize sacred texts, for example, the Tamil tract entitled *God* quotes Tiruvalluvar[13] on adultery as an indictment from indigenous ethical literature of Brahma's incestuous desire for his daughter, Saraswati.[14] Preaching in the bazaars, which often accompanied tract distribution, also presented the case against false scriptures by attacking their plurality. William Carey (1761–1834), a Baptist missionary in Serampore responsible for the translation of the Bible into Bangla and several other Indian languages, gives an account of an exchange after street preaching: "After preaching and prayer, one man said God had given one Shastri [*sic*] to them, and another to us—I observed that their Shastris were so very different from each other that if one God had given them both he must be a double-tongued being, which was a very improper idea of God" (Carey, Letter to Sutcliff, November 27, 1800). Carey here attacks widespread belief in the plurality of scriptures as illogical, setting up Protestant belief in a single authoritative scripture as the norm.

Further, these nineteenth-century tracts consistently referred to the Vedas as "your scriptures," while the Bible, or the *Christ-Vētam*, was *the* "true scriptures." A series of contrasts were drawn between the claims made by "true" scriptures and the "false": the false contained nothing but superstitions, fables, and impure stories that the missionaries claimed were too embarrassing to quote, while true scriptures offered its readers "historical facts" and "truths" about God and His relationship with the human world. While the Hindu and Muslim scriptures were man-made, the Christian one was God-given. Moreover, while the Vedas were available to a select few, the Bible was accessible to all: hence, the Vedas were specious—written in difficult verse understood by a fraction of the elite, leading readers to unending doubt, their very inaccessibility used to prove their deceitful nature. The Bible, in contrast, was in language easily understood, could be read by anybody, translated into any language in the world, and had traveled to all nations (*God* 1901: 22), and so clearly it was effective, transparent, and infallible. Using contrasting sets of literary images and tropes efficiently, Hindu scriptures were compared to a forest in which one could get lost, to poison, to a disease and a false light; in contrast, Christian scriptures pointing the way to human salvation, were a life-giving potion, a medicine, and compared to the welcoming light of a home. Such contrasts were not just confined to tracts but were also elaborated in book-length works.[15]

Another component of the Protestant translation project referred to in these tracts is the double role that scripture translation was meant to play: while the Bible was translated to reveal the "truth," Hindu scriptures were translated to expose the lies and distortions of truth, and to enlighten "the poor people who are held by their chains of implicit faith in the grossest of lies" (Carey, Letter to Sutcliff, March 17, 1802). William Carey's attitude to translating the Hindu scriptures was shared by many other Protestant missionaries. Ziegenbalg (1719: 229–30) was one of the earliest Protestant missionaries to use translation to point out perceived flaws in Islam: he attacked the absurdities of Mahomet "that affront Common sense and trample Reason . . . All this I shew'd them out of their own Writings translated into the *Malabarian* [Tamil] Tongue." Thus, the very act of translation was made to function as an instrument to measure truth: by displaying in each language either the supposed integrity of the Bible or the falsehood of non-Christian scriptures, translation became a double-purposed tool.

Some tract writers included their own translations of non-Protestant scriptures in their tracts, partly as an exercise to reveal the implicit "true meaning" of non-Christian scriptures where passages could be reassigned Christian interpretations. The writer of the tract titled *Fatiha* (1893) remarks:

> Muhammadans, in their prayers, constantly repeat the first chapter of the Koran, called Fatiha. They recite it in Arabic, generally without understanding the meaning of what they say. The prayer in question is short and very beautiful, and the eleventh tract shows how its full meaning can be understood only by one who believes in Jesus and his atoning sacrifice. (Rouse 1893: vii)

Rouse gives the first stanza of the Qur'an in Arabic and then its Bangla and English translations, admonishing his Muslim readers with, "Brethren, when you go through your namaz, do not repeat it like a parrot, without understanding its meaning. But understand its import . . . for this Fatiha which you are accustomed to repeat is a very good one" (90). The mystical power of repeated prayers or scripture verses was construed as irrational superstition rather than a reasoned engagement with the contents of scripture. There are many such attacks on what missionaries saw as the mindless repetition of scripture, especially the chanting of mantras without *understanding* them, in effect to reorient the relationship between text and believer.

On the nature of future Christian tracts, there were several different suggestions, of which the most important was that more "native Christians" should be writing tracts, as they would be better able to gauge what would interest the "natives": "Tracts composed by educated Natives have been the most telling among the Hindus. Though their composition may be in several points inferior to those of European Missionaries, they are more suited to the ideas and feeling of the Natives than the superior compositions of foreigners" (C. S. Kohloff, *MRTBS* 1869: 32). Accordingly, some Christian tracts were written by Protestant converts or their writings were printed and circulated as tracts, serving as examples of effective "witness" from the community: Vedanayaka Sastri (1861),[16] Vesli Apirakam (1870),[17] and Malligam Moodaliar (1869)[18], for example, authored tracts that either presented Christianity as the "wise" option or attacked the perceived superstitions of Hindu practices. As voices from previous insiders now convinced of the falsity of Hindu beliefs, their tracts were reprinted by several regional tract societies as authentic instances of conversion to truth.

The *MRTBS* also initiated other efforts, such as popular Christian magazines, to supplement tracts. So in 1832, a "Quarterly Tamil Magazine" was proposed to "advocate no particular human system of religion, but aim at the defence and propagation of truth..." (*MRTBS* 1869: 6). A good example of such Protestant print journalism aimed at promoting "rational" knowledge and truth was the bimonthly bilingual journal *Morning Star* (Tamil title *Utaya Tārakai*) published from Jaffna from 1841.[19] I quote from this journal on a few different occasions to substantiate my arguments because, managed as it was by two Protestant Tamil editors, it helps us appreciate the self-reflexivity of both an emerging Protestant Tamil discourse and the response to it from Tamils of other faiths. According to its Tamil editors the journal was "calculated to...improve the minds and hearts of our readers" with articles on "most of the useful sciences and arts."[20] But by the end of 1841, their plans for the following years show a perceptible shift to increasing numbers of articles on religion and morality, where the "standard of truth on these subjects is THE BIBLE" and they hope "in the spirit of benevolence which the Bible inculcates, to advocate according to our ability,...the great principles of truth and righteousness which it reveals" ("Prospectus of the Morning Star for 1842," December 16, 1841, 1 (24): 237). This journal had an important ideological function in presenting biblical "truths" on the same plane as a wide range of scientific, historical, and contemporary information about the world all offered equally as proven rational realities.

Protestant tracts complemented a much larger body of missionary translations of Hindu scriptures or Protestant interpretations of Hinduism in colonial India as evidenced in works such as Bartholomaus Ziegenbalg's early eighteenth-century manuscript *Genealogy of the Malabarian Gods from Native Writings and Letters*[21] or William Ward's (1769–1823) *A View of the History, Literature, and the Mythology of the Hindoos* (1815–18). Collectively, the combined interpretative strategies, literary metaphors, and translation practices employed by Protestant tracts, books, and journals to validate the Bible over and above all other scriptures influenced the ways in which faith communities in India had hitherto related to their sacred scriptures. This body of Protestant writing importantly also shaped the Protestant convert's attitudes to sacred texts; as a result, popular Protestant piety in India has predominantly viewed the Bible as the only scripture worth reading.

Hindu recipients of these tracts were reported to have mixed responses. Some were offended, for instance, Rev. R. Handman, a missionary in Tiruchirapalli, comments on the tone of some tracts (even of those otherwise very ably written) as rather offensive to Hindus, since they ridiculed the fallacies of Hinduism: "The consequence is that many educated Hindus show themselves rather disgusted with those Tracts, and become exasperated when we read them before them" (*MRTBS* 1871: 33). But others reportedly appreciated these methods. A colporteur's[22] report from Nagercoil in South India describes a Hindu's approval of Protestant strategies:

> At the last Mandacaud festival, I had a large sale of religious tracts. The words of a rich and influential Sudra...were very striking. To the people around he expiated on the good that has resulted to the country from Christianity, and remarked that while the Gurus of other religions zealously guarded their sacred books from public view, and hid them like counterfeit coins, Protestants circulated their Bible and other religious books, fearless of opposition or refutation, which itself was a strong testimony to their truth. (*MRTBS* 1878: 8)

But, whether offensive or otherwise, the tracts were most effective in creating an interest in debating the nature and design of sacred texts and the religious community's relationship with its scripture in the nineteenth-century public sphere. Carey (Letter to Sutcliff, March 8, 1809) had noticed that tracts "tend to...produce a spirit of enquiry among the Hindoos." Moreover, tracts encouraged both widespread curiosity in the teachings of other religions and comparative thinking about religions: as Rev. Ruttonji Nowroji of Aurangabad writes (1881), "It is the tracts which create a desire for the reading of the Word of God. The Mahomedans here would not at first come near us; but since the tracts have been circulated they attend our preaching…" (*MRTBS* 1882: 13). These are but few examples of countless instances of the "good effects" of tracts recounted in missionary records. The more worthwhile outcome of these tracts was surely the greater critical engagement with the nature and function of "scripture" and comparative awareness of the doctrines of other religions at a wider popular level.

Hindu Tracts

However sanguine Protestant missionaries might have been regarding the good effects of Christian tracts, this flood of Christian print in bazaar books and tracts attracted a complement of Hindu tracts that employed similar strategies of textual analysis, religious polemics, and print technology from organized Hindu groups. Tamil Hindus, for instance, were mobilized into forming parallel tract societies to combat the onslaught of Protestant tracts by publishing tracts countering Protestant Christianity. Hindu societies such as the Vibhuti Sangam, Sadur Veda Sidhanta Sabha, the Hindu Preaching Society, and the Hindu Tract Society were among those founded in the second half of the nineteenth century in South India, bringing members together for regular meetings that adopted forms of Christian meetings in their preaching and singing but, most important, in Christian scripture reading and printing. These strategies also often drew on Orientalist scholarship and translations of key Hindu texts, which offered a parallel discourse to that of Protestant representations: take, for instance, the prefatory comments attached to several translations of the Gita by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European scholars adopting it as the best example of Hindu literature, a "philosophical poem" that offers evidence of "a higher religion."[23] Such representations could be developed by Hindu tract writers to posit a challenge to the arguments put forward by Protestant tracts.

The first to adopt Protestant practices for Śaiva Siddhantism was the Tamil Śaivite Arumuga Navalar (1822–79) from Jaffna who wrote several tracts on Śaiva Sidhanta Hinduism: for instance, on appropriate Śaiva rituals for priests and on the right way to worship Śiva (Ambalavanar 2006; Hudson 1992b). Significantly, he was also one of the early Tamil scholars of the century who adopted the missionary strategy of translation to thwart their purpose. He believed that the high literary Śaivite poetry should be made available to Tamils through translation into more accessible Tamil prose.[24] Navalar's deployment of translation, print, and education, practices hitherto associated mainly with Protestant missionaries, was further developed by other Tamil Hindus as the nineteenth century progressed.

Anti-Christian tracts[25] were published and distributed to counter missionary propaganda along with tracts such as *Civanāmavilakkam* (1915) that explained Hindu tenets in an effort to educate a new generation of Hindus. Translation and exposition of the *Bhagvad Gita* in lectures and print became more common: Subba Row (1888), for instance, offers "discourses" on the *Gita* "to help students in studying its philosophy" and "lead them back to a purer faith." R. Sivasankara Pandiyaji, president of the Hindu Tract Society, Madras, delivered several public lectures explaining central Hindu "doctrines," devotional terms, and the significance of particular prayers and mantras. Published in 1888 and 1889 as tracts,[26] these lectures maintain the stance of the reasonable man presenting rational arguments in defense of Hindu practices. In 1889, the Hindu Tract Society printed fifteen thousand copies of *Yēsu Kristuvum Kaṭavuḷa* (Is Jesus God Too?), a tract that revealed the absurdity of the Bible by giving a literal reading of the biblical narratives (Pandian 2007: 28).

Significantly, these tracts drew parallels between Hindu and Christian practices, unlike missionary tracts that emphasized their dissimilarity, "so that the idea of a basic difference between them, which was foundational for missionary discourse, could be subverted" (ibid.). For instance, while Subba Row (1888) presents comparative analyses of the sayings of Christ, Buddha, and Krishna, Sivasankara Pandiya (1889: 2) points to the similarity between adherents of different religions in considering their own symbols useful and in ridiculing the symbols of others:

> [W]e see the followers of every religion in the world adopting one kind of symbol or other to represent the conception of God as contained in their religious books. For example, the Hindus have their *Saligramas and Vigrahas*, the Buddhists have their *Statues* of Buddha, the ancient Greeks and Romans have their statues of *Jupiter and other Gods*, the Roman Catholics have their idols of *Mary and Jesus*, the Protestants have their *Sacred Crosses*, the Mahomedans have their *Panjhas and Crescents*, and the Nineteenth Century scientific men have their statues of *Liberty and Heroism*.

Sivasankara's strategy is to present a level playing field among all the religions (astutely including nineteenth-century rationalists in his list), exactly the opposite of Protestant efforts to present Protestant Christianity as "unique." Other tracts drew parallels between Hindu ritual practices and those of the Old Testament: the importance given to sacred places, offerings, sacrifices, the burning of incense, music in the temples, the use of ashes to purify or remove sin, and so on (Houghton 1983: 132). Such arguments, turning the table on missionary discursive strategies, reveal a radical and self-conscious use of hermeneutical practices and comparative textual analyses in support of Hindu religious practices, serving to draw together disparate religious traditions to a more manageable and uniform conceptualization of what it meant to be a "Hindu."

As a result of these tracts circulated by Protestant missionaries and the vigorous response from nineteenth-century Hindus, scripture became an object of debate in the Indian public sphere for the first time. Pamela Price (2000: 27) has stressed the importance of studying the creation of public spheres for the development not only of political but also of cultural nationalisms in nineteenth-century India: as participants in political and social contests struggled with the political limitations as well as the opportunities in the new imperial context, they represented themselves in public in new ways, taking new associational forms, intending to create a new type of political society. The development of a vigorous public sphere in the nineteenth century also made it possible to debate key issues of religious difference and mobilize public consciousness with regards to belonging to a particular religious tradition. The intelligentsia within each religious tradition took responsibility to define, categorize, translate, and interpret scriptures when confronted with a range of questions from what is scripture to whether they should be made available to all.[27] This occurred in parallel with efforts to collate, edit, and publish Hindu scriptures by both Indian and Western scholars. As a result of this opening up of the discussion Christian missionaries, Hindus and Protestant converts could enter a wider conversation on "religion" and explore the very nature and implications of "belonging" to particular religious tradition and the boundaries between them.

The Terms of the Debate

Issues concerning translating the Bible, already the subject of vigorous debate in Europe for centuries, were manifested with a greater degree of complexity in the Indian context. Since the Bible did not travel to India in a vacuum but arrived inextricably linked with a number of ideological assumptions about the civilizational differences between Europeans and Indians as their "others," translating the Bible was not just a simple matter of its textual transference from one language to another but part of a wider missionary project of translating concepts considered integral and unique to Protestant Christianity. The debate on Bible translation acquired a whole new register in response to the specifics of transferring the Bible to new linguistic, cultural, and religious paradigms that were obtaining a space in the European imagination as a mixed bag of categories that were alien, sophisticated, multiple, and yet somehow inferior or dangerous. The range of voices that participated in the translation debate offered contributions according to their own ideological responses to this "Other" that was India.

Standard translation practices from Europe when introduced to India on a wider systematic scale in the interests of Christian mission effected a whole range of linguistic and literary changes in its cultural field. These have continued to influence Indian literary cultures throughout the colonial and, now postcolonial, periods. Literary translation had, of course, existed in practice before the arrival of missionary translators; but translation practices between Indian language cultures had creatively reused subject matter, style, and genre in the target language, where emphasis was not placed on replicating the original through linguistic equivalence. Surprisingly, although the practice of translation from one language to another has long been ubiquitous in South Asia, as Pollock (1996: 114) notes, there exists "no Sanskrit or other Indian discourse on translation; in fact, there exist [*sic*] no common word for translation in any premodern Indic language." Within Hindu sacred and literary traditions, the best-known example is the creative translations of the Sanskrit *Ramayana* into the major language cultures in South Asia, where each has functioned independently almost as "original" texts. Similarly with Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit Buddhist and Jain texts when transmitted into other Indian languages. Anne Monius's (2001) work on the Tamil *Maṇimēkalai*[28] (500–600 C.E.) demonstrates that although Buddhist texts in Tamil drew on material found in source texts, the translations were an attempt to make the text part of the Tamil literary landscape.[29] The most significant aspect of this process was that translated texts were not always presented hierarchically lower, as “copies” of “original” texts, but as independent creative works of equal merit. There was a flexibility in the translation process that allowed a freer relationship between an “original” and its translation. This fluid relationship between source and target texts was mostly unacceptable to Western translators who sought to control and structure relations between the original text, the translator, and the translated text, distinguishing in fundamentally new ways the translator from the author and the translation from its original. In doing so, they also took upon themselves the task of shaping and regulating the development of modern Indian languages and reading practices, and thereby, the linguistic identities of those who spoke them.

Five main points of the Protestant missionary discourse on translation are discussed in this chapter. Each debated point reveals that the primary process of the translation project was to involve three main but contradictory objectives: one, culturally make familiar or “domesticate” the translated Bible for its Indian audiences; two, simultaneously offer the Bible as unique to Indian religious cultures, infallible in its teachings and ultimately unrecognizable or “foreignized” from all existing scriptures[30]; and three, effect an appropriate “Protestant” identity for those who would convert. Although each contributor to the debate held different opinions on how any of these objectives were to be achieved, there was consensus on the one point that standard versions, employing standard terminology, were desirable in each language translation. This methodology would serve both to unite Protestant converts of all denominations across the language barriers in India, and to create a suitable environment for the formation of a uniform “Protestant” identity.

New Terms versus Existing Terminology

One of the most contentious debates on translating the Bible in India was whether to appropriate existing religious terminology or construct new terms. This was particularly challenging in the Indian context where most of the Indian languages already possessed an elaborate religious vocabulary “embedded” in complex “conceptual structures” (Hermans 2002: 5). Using existing terminology meant that these terms might point to non-Protestant conceptual structures and Protestant missionaries would not retain full control of signified meanings. However, invented terms could be rendered ineffective by not carrying sufficient Protestant meaning; moreover, it was feared that new terms would remain in competition with more powerful existing terminology to their detriment. What was at stake was the feared "confusion" or "dilution" of Protestant meanings.

The general opinion, as an article entitled "Revision of the Vernacular Versions" (1899: 138) rather colorfully suggested, was that "Christian thoughts cannot buy ready-made clothes at Hindu stores." Nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries acknowledged that some of the best religious terms were those employed by the Hindus with particular "Hindu" meaning. But for this very reason such terms were considered "unsafe" for use in the Bible (Wenger 1876: 8). Those recommending the use of Hindu terms warned that it was also imperative to know the exact meaning and value of terms and the "current coin of Hindu thought" (An Open Letter 1889: 6). They suggested that Hindu terminology could be adopted if it could be "re-baptised into our holy faith" because "it is not words that give value to ideas but ideas that give value to words" (Jones 1895: 50). Such observations that acknowledge the complexity of the relationship between words and their meanings, nevertheless, argue for somewhat simplistic solutions in desiring to transport "Hindu" terms into Protestant contexts. Neither are they able to provide strategies for "baptizing" terms to effectively serve Protestant purposes.

The choice of terminology depended on the missionary's opinion of whether the Bible was to be made familiar to its readers or not[31] and there was some disagreement over this. Those who thought that it was important to present the Bible as familiar supported the use of existing religious terms despite the fear of confusion with other conceptual structures. However, others believed that the translated Bible must be faithful to the original and its "truth" would best be defended by the use of source language terms. This was recommended even if it meant that a Hindu would be "repelled" by the strangeness or "foreignness" of the translation as argued by the editor of the *Harvest Field* who gave two reasons in support: one, the Bible according to him was not just a literary product but contained a religion; and second, the reader who is repelled by any uncouth phrases was unworthy to realize the new ideas conveyed by them. As proof, he gave the example of the *Gita* translated into English, where he points out that the translation could not avoid sounding foreign because of the presence of technical Sanskrit terms but this was better than Vedantic ideas disguised in English masks ("Revision" 1899: 138). This is a significant comparison for two reasons. Those commenting on Bible translation rarely compared the similarity in techniques between translating the Bible into Indian languages and translating Hindu texts into European languages. What is more, he makes an important distinction between literature and scripture and the supposedly different hermeneutical processes required by each—a distinction I will examine in greater detail in chapter four.

Further, in the discussion on whether Indian languages had an adequate vocabulary to receive the Bible, some languages were deemed less capable. Hindi, according to a missionary writing to the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* ("Indian Notes" 1897: 910),

> offers special difficulty as a medium for the expression of Biblical truth... We have no word in Hindi for "person," none for "matter," as distinct from "spirit." The word for "omnipresence" suggests rather universal pervasion than what we mean by presence. There is often difficulty in finding exact words even for moral ideas... Neither is there any word which connotes the same thought as our word "ought," so that, naturally, Hindi has no word for "conscience."

Similarly, Greenfield (1830: 62) defends the Serampore Marathi version of the Bible by highlighting the shortcomings of the Marathi: "In translating... from the copious language of the Greeks, or the ruder language of the Hebrews, innumerable words and phrases must occur which have no corresponding term in Marat'ha, but without which the peculiar tenets and doctrines of the Christian religion cannot be explained." Languages were thus placed hierarchically depending on how far they were perceived to be able to convey Protestant Christian concepts.

Unfortunately, the absence of a biblical lexicon was cited as proof of the lack of conceptual and moral values, which needed to be written into these languages and cultures (Sugirtharajah 2001: 65). Although some languages, such as Bangla, Tamil, and Sanskrit, were declared sufficiently developed to be able to express biblical ideas, there was a continued effort through translation to stretch, bend, and "perfect" all Indian languages to make them more suitable for Christian usage. When terms were appropriated, either a prefix or suffix (usually from the Sanskrit) was added to create a superficial change in meaning. Some twentieth-century Indian theologians have chosen to see this as a revolutionary effect of Christianity on language where the "pioneer" missionaries took over Sanskrit terms, emptied them of the old context, and endeavored to fill them with distinctly Christian meaning (Rajarigam 1958: 13). At best the claim seems misplaced since many such terms continued in uneasy tension with their previous "meanings," and at worst it is an arrogant assumption that existing religious terminology needed "revolutionizing." Overlapping usage of terms across religious boundaries was certainly some cause for anxiety to Protestant translators: "Nearly all our theological terms are of heathen origin and are used in Hindu writing in senses far different from those in which we employ them" (T.S.W. 1875: 497). This problem was circumvented to an extent by the kind of words that were chosen from the existing vocabulary: the translators took care to pick either those that did not refer directly to Hindu ritual practices or those that were not widely used. In most cases, they presumed that the higher "truth" of Protestant semantics would shape the word to Protestant advantage.

Over a period of time, Protestant meanings did accrue to some terms and came to be regarded as exclusively "Protestant terms" within the Protestant community. Those in the twentieth century who continued to view these terms as "inappropriate," insisted on changing them and offered the reason that a non-Christian should not be confused or offended by the Bible. In many Indian-language revisions, biblical scholars in the twentieth century were unhappy about the use of certain terms in the translated Bible but were either reluctant or were prevented from changing them because these terms were thought to have acquired new "Protestant" meanings within the Protestant community. The result of the lack of resolution on this point has meant that often when Indian languages have been "modernized" in the twentieth century (which has included the introduction of new words and usages, such as scientific and technical terms, for instance), Protestant usage has remained conservative.

"The letter but not the sense": Idiomatic versus Literal Translation

The advantages of an idiomatic translation over a literal one was another significant point of debate. In the nineteenth century, the term "faithful" was also often contrasted with "idiomatic," and idiomatic was treated as synonymous with "free." Although most missionaries felt that the Bible in each language ought to be close to the idiom of the language in question, translators were usually cautioned against too idiomatic a rendering. They feared that an idiomatic translation that paid more attention to the conventions of the target language and its notions of textuality might be more prone to experimenting with God's truth. *Faithfulness* was regarded as the first and highest accomplishment. Hinton (1838: 66), in a letter to the president of BFBS, maintained that not being faithful was an attempt to please humans rather than God. An article in the *Friend* considered faithfulness an absolute essential for Bible translation:

> In the rendering of any other work this would not be so important, since it is quite conceivable that the so-called translation might be of more value than the original. But all who believe that the Bible is the Word of God will acknowledge that in a translation of that Book of books a faithful rendering of the original is an absolute necessity, the absence of it being fatal to the character of a version ("Bible Translation" 1870: 113).

Nonetheless, the writer also recognized that the faithfulness of a version could only be decided comparatively. And herein lay part of the problem: it was difficult to arrive at a consensus on what particular elements of the biblical source text translators should be faithful to—individual words, formal structure of sentences, conceptual paradigms, and so on. A good example that exposes the extent of this confusion is the disagreement over interpreting biblical passages designated "ambiguous." The common understanding among nineteenth-century missionary translators was that it was best not to "interpret" ambiguous passages in the Bible but to "faithfully" transfer the ambiguity of meaning to the target language. However, when William Hooper's (1902: 27) translation committee tried not to interpret ambiguous passages but translate them literally, they found that the result was not "faithful" either: "We began, indeed, by introducing ambiguities corresponding to those in the original wherever we could. But . . . in every case we . . . found that our ambiguous rendering either gave no meaning at all, or rather suggested the less probable meaning." As a result, this principle was apparently abandoned in the Hindi and Urdu translation projects. However, in other languages such as Tamil, another strategy, which I will discuss later in this chapter, was offered as a better choice.

In the colonial context, there was added emphasis on producing a faithful translation because recent converts were thought lacking the discernment their European Protestant counterparts possessed. New converts, "destitute of the means of forming a correct judgement of [their] own" (*Brief Narrative* 1870: 117), were in danger of being easily misled. A Memorial of the Baptist Union claimed that "a regard to fidelity of translation must indeed be considered absolutely indispensable in every attempt to circulate the Scriptures *among heathen nations...*" (*Bible Translation Society* 1840: 26–7; emphasis added). This emphasis on the accurate preservation of God's message to the extent of transferring ambiguous passages wholesale points to a far more significant assumption about the Bible's colonial audiences—that they fundamentally lacked the sophistication to discern subtleties of meaning or the ability to analyze texts in the round; prone to reading "idiomatic" translations literally it was assumed they would inevitably arrive at "wrong" textual interpretations. Literal translations were supposedly more suited to communicate to this audience that had not yet fully refined its hermeneutical faculties.

Despite this, there were equally strong arguments offered in favor of idiomatic translations by others. Some missionaries thought that idiomatic translations better communicated the "real" meaning of God's word and the style was to suit the target reader as the original suited its readers: "the style should...be such that the readers may, if possible, forget that they are perusing a foreign book, and receive the impression that it is a work originally written in their own tongue" (Wenger 1876: 16). Further, a too literal translation could produce a text that conveyed merely the surface meaning of the words at the expense of all other layers of interpretation, allegorical, moral, and anagogic, which could be read into the biblical text as part of God's divine scheme of communicating to humans: "what is called the most literal version will, in fact, convey frequently the least correct idea of the original" (*Bible Translation Society* 1840: 64). Although arguments in favor of idiomatic translations seem more open to the translator's intervention, the underlying rationale still continues to be that the Bible's audiences correctly identify the one essential meaning intrinsic to it.

Take for instance, the long debate over two Tamil versions of the Bible available until the mid-nineteenth century. Some were of the opinion that Fabricius's Old Testament in Tamil had to be revised because it was "more literal but more obscure" (*Contributions* 1854: 9). Others rejected Rhenius's Tamil New Testament as an example of an idiomatic translation that was too "free" with the original. However, Rhenius's (1899: 5) own argument in his essay on translation was that a version that strictly adhered to the letter of the originals could not be called a faithful translation because it gave "the *letter* but not the *sense*." Neither was he in favor of paraphrasing the original. He claimed that literal translations into "uncultivated" languages (according to him, these were languages that had no grammars, dictionaries, or writings by which their idiom was fixed and regulated) would not be at a disadvantage; but

> in languages which are already cultivated, and the idioms of which are fixed by grammars and classical works, such as the Sanscrit, the Tamil, &c., the case is very different. A literal translation into these would convey ideas in forms very different from those in common use, and would accordingly be of little service to the people . . . (Ibid.)

Significantly, Rhenius's theorization of Bible translation was based on hierarchies of languages in India that were developing as a result of comparative philological researches undertaken by European scholars. This allows him to assume that languages with a limited textual history had few established literary idioms for translators to employ and that speakers of such languages would therefore be unable to recognize the "real" meanings behind idiomatic expressions.

"Faithful" and "idiomatic" methods, often perceived as dichotomous in the translation context, were emphasized as equally indispensable to Bible translation on the grounds that the converts should not be misled. This dichotomy was premised on the assumption that the source text and language as well as the target text and language were stable signifiers of meaning. It is only when an "intrinsic" meaning can be fixed to a text that a "faithful" transfer of that meaning can even be entertained. In any case, experimentation in one specific direction or the other in the translation of scripture was usually frowned upon and labeled as "mistranslation."

Literary versus Common Language Translation

This debate was especially relevant in the case of some Indian languages, such as Bangla and Tamil, because of the wide difference in their literary and common registers. This issue was linked to the types of target audiences the translated Bible was aimed at and its perceived functions: the question was whether the language of the Bible should satisfy the literate Brahmin, or be accessible to the semiliterate (and in many cases illiterate) lower castes; was the translated

Bible for the Church or for the "unbeliever" yet to be converted; was it intended only for liturgical purposes in the church or for popular use. Though most were aware that it was "not possible to combine both in one translation" ("Editorial Notes" 1898: 480), each emphasized the importance of one over the other according to the demographic group they targeted. Thus, those who supported the notion of the Bible being a book for the lower castes or social classes saw the use of nonliterary language registers as important: the "affectation" and "pedantry" of literary language was rejected as not intelligible to the mass of the population and a Bible that was unintelligible to them was only half translated (*Bible Translation* 1870: 114). Protestant missionaries had long used the association of Hindu scriptural traditions and reading practices with Brahmanical Hinduism to draw a contrast with Protestant egalitarianism. For those missionaries who supported plain language, the religious truth of the Bible's content far outweighed its literary style: for them, an interest in preserving a high literary style meant a misplaced concern with outward form, an interest that they associated with the Hindu poets to their detriment. Drawing an important (but flawed) comparisons with the situation of the illiterate Hindu, that the average Hindu was ignorant of his or her scriptures because of its high literary registers, Protestant Tamils such as N. Gnanaprakasham too suggested that the Bible should be conspicuously different ("Revision of Vernacular Versions" 1899: 141).

In Bangla, the Bible was seen as an instrument for bringing the sophisticated level of Bangla within reach of the common people. Opinion regarding Urdu was different. The revisers of the Urdu New Testament decided to "conform to standards of literary purity" because of the perceived difference between Urdu and most other Indian languages:

> Here Urdu Revisers are in a happier position than…[those] who deal with other Indian tongues, the literature of which has been manipulated by a priesthood after archaic and unnatural models. Though Urdu has a definite religious colouring, yet it had its origin in the needs created by the amalgamation of races in an organised empire; and so it has been moulded not by the policy of a priesthood, but by the needs of a people. (Weitbrecht 1900: 29)

Contrasted favorably against Sanskrit, Urdu is being constructed as a literary but, more importantly, "secular" language that had evolved through common usage rather than Brahmanical texts and therefore more suited for the Bible.

An important feature of this debate was whether the translated Bible was to be used directly as a medium for conversion but opinion was further divided over whom to convert first—the high or the low castes. In the history of Tamil Bible translations, it was assumed that choosing the former required a highly literary translation, and the latter, a translation in the more ordinary, nonpoetic colloquial styles of Tamil. Rejecting both registers, Rhenius (1899: 43–5) recommended the use of "the middle language" in Tamil translations. By this he implied "a pure and grammatical style" using "proper terms in common use." However, there was little consensus among the translators or Protestant Tamils as to what was "proper" or "common."

Opinion among Protestant Tamils, however, usually supported the use of literary Tamil for Bible translation. Difficulty arose when Protestant Tamils insisted paradoxically that the level of Tamil in a particular version they supported was literary but could be understood by all Tamil castes and regions. For instance, in the 1750s, when a large body of Sri Lankan Tamils had been asked to judge whether De Melho's version of the New Testament (1759) would be understood by the "common people" they pronounced it "intelligible to all" (Chitty 1859: 75; *Letter to the Lord Bishop* 1850: 11–12). Paradoxically, in a letter to the Bishop of Colombo (1850), they also referred to De Melho's translation as superior to others because its literary register was "simple, correct, and dignified, well suited to the gravity of the subjects of the Divine Word" (*Letter to the Lord Bishop* 1850: 19). This argument continued well into the second half of the nineteenth century as the opinion of two Protestant Tamils reveals. S. Gnanamuttu thought that the style of the Bible was very different from Tamil literary works and since the Bible was for the scholar it should have the desired literary standard: "The Hindus very naturally speak contemptuously of the Tamil style of the Scriptures, as it is utterly unlike that of their religious or devotional works. It is very desirable to introduce a change in the style from simple and ordinary to literary and classical." Conversely, N. Gnanaprakasham argued that the Bible was for the people and therefore should be simple and idiomatic, as a simpler style better suited the uneducated ("Revision of Vernacular Versions" 1899: 140, 141). I return to this important debate at length in chapter three. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that the translators of the Tamil *Tiruviviliyam* decided on formally adopting the principle of translating the Bible into a "common language"; in fact, its alternative title is "Common Language Translation." However, despite its claim of using "common" Tamil, it is perceived as using very high, literary registers of Tamil and this is offered as one of the reasons for its unpopularity.

Language register thus acquired importance as a distinguishing factor between the Bible and other sacred texts. Pollock (1995: 3) maintains that in a "multilingual space" literary language choice "is [itself] part of a larger cultural strategy for establishing or discontinuing associations, addressing more important, or larger, or different audiences, and creating new identities." The translated Bible was certainly perceived as a text that could make interventions in existing faith communities, creating new religious identities evolving from new attitudes to language and scripture.

The Original and Its Translation

Attitudes to the Bible's "original" texts were ambiguous. Bible translation toward the end of the nineteenth century experienced a shift worldwide because the "Textus Receptus," which until then was used as the "original" Greek New Testament, was proved to be a corrupt version of recently discovered older manuscripts. In its place Westcott and Hort's *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881), which was the first modern critical edition of the Greek New Testament, began a new stage in the history of biblical textual criticism.[32] Consequently, missionaries such as Rev. Sharrock (1899: 39) warned, "it is a very critical time in the history of the Bible,...while this crisis lasts it is a most inopportune time for our revisions." However, well before this uncertainty about the Hebrew and Greek originals, discussion in India on the relationship between the original and its translation focused on the King James Version (KJV) as the best textual referent for Indian language translations. Perhaps one reason for this was the lack of sufficient numbers of missionaries in India who had a thorough knowledge of Greek or Hebrew (*Brief Narrative* 1870: 100), which would have made it difficult for any kind of valuable reference to the "original" in case of disputed interpretations. However, despite some degree of uncertainty regarding original texts, Protestant missionaries continued to insist on the responsibility of the translators to "get the precise meaning" of the *original* and "to express it exactly" in the target language. Similarly, translators were not at liberty to leave anything "untranslated" either and combined with the issue of interpreting ambiguous passages the relationship between original and translated texts was particularly unstable.

Until the nineteenth century, missionaries had used other language translations such as Luther's German version or available Portuguese translations in interpreting the Testaments in the original languages. Likewise, when the Roman Catholics began translating the New Testament in the mid-nineteenth century, they used the Latin Vulgate as their original (Dibb 1873: 119). However, from the beginning of the nineteenth century Protestant missionaries began referring increasingly to the English KJV as an alternative "original." Invested with great authority and often referred to as "original" it began to overshadow the source texts in importance and position. By mid-century, using the KJV of the English Bible as the primary standard of reference in most other Indian translation projects became standard practice among Protestant translators.

This meant that contested passages or terms with ambiguous meaning were translated in accordance with the interpretation of the English translation rather than Greek and Hebrew "originals." For instance, the committee in charge of revising Fabricius's Tamil Version of the Old Testament in the nineteenth century deliberately chose to follow the KJV above all other translations to translate ambiguous passages, because they "believed that our safest and wisest course...was to follow the meaning adopted by the English" (*Revision* 1869: 12). This decision was taken despite recognition that Fabricius's translation was often closer to the Hebrew than the English rendering:

> It was evident that Fabricius had followed neither the German nor the English, but had translated direct from the Hebrew,...though Fabricius's renderings seemed in many instances to be preferable to the English, being more in accordance with the ancient versions, or with the best modern critical versions, or with both, yet it did not appear to us to be right to accept any variation from the English without examination. (11)

Additionally, according to the nineteenth-century committee of Tamil translators, the English Bible was a useful precedent because it supposedly combined strict accuracy with the correct style for popular use (7). Of course, this understanding of the KJV "as a trustworthy guide to the meaning of the original" had not developed until much later and David Norton's (1993) analysis of the long controversy over the language and style of the KJV in seventeenth-century Britain provides a useful counterpoint to this argument.

This practice had significant repercussions: virtually every language in India has a nineteenth-century version based on the KJV that is popularly known as "the authorized version." This, in turn, has been given the status of an "original" in each language and thus is a translation that cannot be tampered with. Whenever the question of revision came up, the institutions that controlled the translation of the Bible—the BFBS and the various Mission Societies—were wary of allowing revision: "To the unlearned, the version to which they are accustomed, stands in the place of an original; and to injure their opinion of its authenticity, is to shake their confidence in the Word of God itself" (Vansittart 1812: 17). This bias in favor of using the English version as "source Text" continued to the end of the century even after the publication of the Revised Version in English [New Testament (1881), Old Testament (1885), Apocrypha, (1895)]: "there should be strict fidelity to the original; that is, to the text chosen as the original. In this case, it would be the text of the English Revision Committees" ("Bible Revision, A Symposium" 1898: 455). Associated with the missionary translators of the past and bolstered by their proximity to the English Version, nineteenth-century translations of the BFBS such as the Tamil *Union Version* have continued to exist in the popular imagination as the original word of God. The processes of canonization are so strong that in some instances, as in the case of the Tamil Bible, the perceived symbolic power of the authoritative *Union Version* effectively prevents acceptance of subsequent revisions or new translations by the Protestant community.

"Native" Assistance: Foreign or Native Translators?

Before the nineteenth century, despite strong evidence that most missionaries in India worked with "native" language experts or pundits (many of them not Protestant converts), the existing narrative on translating the Bible represents the history of the project as firmly under the control of missionaries. Missionary translators framed this issue primarily by asking how effective and reliable Indian language pundits were as translators. This is despite ample evidence that interpreters and translators had worked alongside European traders and governors from the very beginning.[33] In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the memoirs of the Serampore Missionaries claim that Indians had to be "taught" (Western) principles of translation, as if no adequate process of communication had occurred between two Indian languages until then. So a number of "learned Natives" were now apparently trained in correct methods of translation: "They...have now acquired a pretty clear idea of Translation as consisting, not in the exchange of a number of words for an equal number in another language, but in transfusing into one *precisely* the ideas expressed in another" (*Seventh Memoir* 1821: 25; emphasis added). While the memoirs also recommend the training of "Native Christian Youth" in the original languages (i.e., Hebrew and Greek), so that they continue the work of translation, as the nineteenth century progresses there is increasing evidence of the incorporation of "native" assistance with more recommendations to consult as many "natives" as possible in official reports and minutes of editorial committee meetings.

By the end of the century, it was unthinkable that a single European missionary with the assistance of his *munshi* or pundit should be entrusted with the translation or revision of the Bible in an Indian language ("Bible Revision, A Symposium" 1898: 452). Nevertheless, caution that the "indigenous scholars" should not be trusted implicitly continued to be offered: "the attempt to test a translation by its lucidity to an intelligent person who has no previous knowledge of the subject is both idle and mischievous" (Goudie, "Bible Revision, A Symposium" 1898: 446). Help rendered by the pundits was more acceptable as the nineteenth century progressed but with continued reservation[34] as to their ability to understand the contents of the Protestant scripture and their expertise in effective translation. There was a parallel tendency to blame "inappropriate" translations on Indians; for Slater (1875: 40, 47), "Brahmins" become convenient scapegoats who "as a class, are not slow to pervert...and sometimes wilfully, our Christian terms and sentiments..."

Despite such misgivings, "native" translators, scholars, and language pundits have been a part of the Bible translation project from the very beginning. Unfortunately, there are no accurate records of the extent to which they were involved in the translation process or even at what particular stages they were required to help. Very few nineteenth-century Bible translation committee meetings even name their pundits. In spite of their absence from most official records of translation projects, and very little direct evidence of what those language assistants themselves thought of the entire process, their presence can be gleaned from an assortment of letters or diaries left by missionaries who were principal translators.[35] Early missionary reports limited the role of Indian language scholars, translators, and interpreters to correcting errors in grammar or syntax in the translations. Apart from their own fears of placing the task of translating the Bible in the hands of Indians, Protestant missionaries feared criticism from the "Christian Public" in Europe, which was quick to condemn any translation based on reports that Indians had had a large part in its translation. Carey's (Letter to Sutcliff, May 4, 1808) defense addressing this specific issue in the early nineteenth century is significant evidence both that "native" experts were intrinsic to Bible translation projects and that there was opposition to this missionary practice in Europe:

> It is perhaps necessary to obviate the objections founded on our employing natives to assist us, which represents it as if no advantage could be obtained from employing a "Wicked Brahman." [...] we never print a sentence without examining it and seeing it through and through...We do employ natives, and avail ourselves of all the help we can, but we never give up our judgement, in any Language, nor ever intend to do so.

Moreover, not only was any translation work done by Indians apparently well monitored by his team of missionaries, Carey (Letter to Sutcliff, May 11, 1810) also accused his detractors of using ill-informed Indians to judge his translations.

It is also worth pointing out, however, that it was not just the European public that was critical of help from non-Protestant scholars. Protestant converts too have been suspicious of the "assistance" rendered by non-Protestant language experts. As I discuss in chapter three, nineteenth-century Lutheran Evangelical congregations as well as twentieth-century Protestant Tamils have been very critical of non-Protestant involvement in Bible translation. While most of the debates were repeated with very little difference in the twentieth century, there is a shift to a greater involvement of Protestant Indians in the translation of the Bible into their languages—that is, in demanding revisions when they felt the need, in the capacity of translators in translation committees and as informed critics of translations.[36]

These debates in India and elsewhere in the world where the BFBS set up mission contributed to a sustained discourse on Bible translation that fed into formal principles of translation in the twentieth century. From early in the second half of the twentieth century the United

Bible Societies[37] drew on new developments in linguistics, semantics, and anthropology to formulate formal theories and systematic principles of Bible translation. But it also brought into this process its entire repertoire of historical knowledge, practical experience, and the complex discourse on Bible translation that had taken place worldwide in the previous century. It is for this reason that I have spent some time in charting out some of the main terms of the debate, emphasizing at the same time that this is not a monolithic one-dimensional discourse. It is the variety of opinions that kept the conversation on translation alive as the nineteenth century progressed.

Standard Versions, Uniform Terms, and the Acceptable Protestant Convert: The Institutionalization of Bible Translation

"Uniformity" and "standardization" were two principal catchphrases that underpinned the translation debates we have discussed so far and thereby defined the Protestant translation project in nineteenth-century India. Uniformity of two kinds was imagined, of vocabulary and style within a single language establishing one translation as a "standard" version and of key Protestant terminology across several or all language groups in India. The result hoped for was the creation of a shared vocabulary for a Protestant readership with which to articulate a standard and collective Protestant identity. Institutions such as the BFBS played an important role in creating frameworks for producing standard versions and uniform Protestant terms that could then be used to evaluate what qualified as "good translations". However, there was a disjunction between the efforts of the BFBS to construct a standard understanding of Protestant Christianity at an institutional level across India and the discursive strategies of popular piety deployed by Protestant converts to appropriate these elements variously.

The Role of the British and Foreign Bible Society

The primary agency responsible for creating interest in uniformity and standardization was the BFBS. The Society, founded in 1805 in England to meet the shortage of Bibles in Wales and other parts of Britain, rapidly expanded by establishing "foreign auxiliaries" all over the world in the following decades. Within a short period, the Society claimed that it was the largest distributor of "authorized" versions of the Bible in languages and dialects in which the Bible had never been printed before. Amid controversy, and on occasion, severe criticism in Britain of the Society's aims and methodology, contemporary reports and histories published by the BFBS represented it as a success and as vital to missions (Browne 1859; Canton 1904; Dudley 1821).[38]

From the nineteenth century onward, it is difficult to separate the history of Bible translation from that of the BFBS. Though there were some modest claims to being a "handmaiden" to other missionary societies, it more frequently projected itself as the pillar that supported the rest of the missionary enterprise. It did not "send" missionaries to the field but recruited missionaries from their stations to participate in the process of translation. The immense power and institutional authority it gained, partly by a process of self-authentication, meant that almost all attempts to translate or revise the Bible anywhere in the world were partnered or were to be approved of by the BFBS. This implied that key components of the processes of translation were under the direct or indirect control of the BFBS. From material concerns (of providing printing infrastructure and finance for a translation project) to the ideological (into which languages the Bible would be translated and when, who would translate, the principles of translation to be followed, and what was an acceptable translation), the BFBS dominated the field of Bible translation in the nineteenth century. It provided resources such as libraries equipped with source texts and language dictionaries, prescribed guiding principles to follow, coordinated response from different Protestant denominations, and distributed the printed version widely through an elaborate system of "agents" and "colporteurs." Importantly, it sold its Bibles at very low prices to increase sales. In the twentieth century, the BFBS dissolved into independent national societies responsible for separate country jurisdictions, so, for instance, the Bible Society of India (BSI) was formally inaugurated in 1944 to take responsibility for all future Bible translation projects into Indian languages but with affiliation to its parent organization now known as United Bible Societies (UBS).[39]

The BFBS enjoyed much success in the nineteenth century because of certain decisions it took regarding Bible translation. In order to survive as an institution within the context of constant Protestant infighting, it made uniform and standard versions a part of its manifesto. A "standard" translation, if such a version could be agreed upon, would make both the translation and its publishers acceptable to all Protestant denominations. Publishing the Bible unaccompanied by exegetical notes in all languages was one principal strategy for achieving this. It effectively cut short doctrinal disputes over the text of the Scriptures. This enabled the presentation of the Bible as the unmediated Word of God in keeping with the Protestant emphasis on the "self-sufficiency" of the Bible for human comprehension. Such a Bible was also more acceptable in the mission field, as the mass-produced "standard" text suited the needs of all Protestant sects without highlighting confusing doctrinal controversies to new converts. Henry Martyn (1781–1812), in a sermon preached in Calcutta in 1811 to "promote the objects of the British and Foreign Bible Society," assured his audience that one of its most important principles in his opinion was the decision to print only the text of the Bible. "You may be assured," he claimed, "that they will not depart from this rule, because the very existence of the Society depends upon their adherence to it. The certainty that nothing will be given but the Bible, and that without note or comment, is the only principle, upon which Christians of all denominations will unite in it, or could do so legitimately" (15). This decision certainly helped to quell the disapproval of many established denominations in Europe and their mission societies in India. But most importantly, the Bible could be presented in the colonies without highlighting the long history of doctrinal battles or the human intervention of the translator. BFBS could thus market its Bibles as uniquely coherent, self-referential, and sanitized of all undesirable human interpretative agency.

This project of uniformity and standardization undertaken by the BFBS seems to have succeeded because it worked in conjunction with other standardizing secular colonial projects of the British Empire. The establishment of standardized higher education in the nineteenth century, or the introduction of print media, for instance, created a class of literate Indians who were equipped both to function in the processes of imperial government and to participate in Protestant culture if they so desired. It seems that the BFBS established an "empire" based on the Bible within, and equal to, the Empire. BFBS's resourcefulness in coordinating translation committees, funding, printing, and disseminating the Bible around the globe replicated the activities of Empire, and thus became a conduit for the mediation of imperial culture and authority to peoples who were actual or potential imperial subjects. As a sign of the success of this project, Bibles translated into the different languages of the world were displayed in the Bible Society stall at the Great Exhibition of 1851 as one of the many exotic artifacts of the British Empire. Further, translation and empire were clearly linked in the language used to represent the successful spread of translated Bibles—often it was the language of empire—of conquering (through the Word) and of establishing a kingdom (of God). Nevertheless, it is imperative to point out that the Protestant missionary project did not at every point work in collusion with the imperial project. There is substantial evidence of a number of issues over which the two parties disagreed, working at cross-purposes to thwart each others' goals. There are several scholars of British colonial and missionary histories (Bayly 1989, 1999; Chakravarti 1998; Porter 1997, 1999; Young 2009, to name a few) in South Asia who point out that despite shared interests and goals between colonial and missionary agencies, there were also moments of tension and conflict that do not allow for a simplistic binary reading of either/or. They show ample evidence that the missionary enterprise at times provided avenues for imperial control to follow, but at others delayed colonization or even subverted colonial authority.

Having provided this caveat, however, I draw attention to the discursive rhetoric of those who supported BFBS, which worked by linking the project of translating the Bible with the project of the British Empire. Interestingly in this nineteenth-century discourse, each project was justified by referring to the other: India, for example, was "given" to the British by God so that the Bible could be taken there and the Bible, when translated and distributed in the colonies, would bring greater "blessings" to the British nation. In the words of a nineteenth-century missionary, "It is worthy of notice…that the time in which the Lord began to bless his servants, was that in which *his holy word began to be published in the languages of the natives*" (*Brief Review* 1794–1834: 57; emphasis in the original). The Society's rationale for its existence was that making the "light of the gospel" available to India (or Asia) was the means by which Imperial Britain could repay its debt to them. Conversely, the preeminence of Britain among its European rivals was a God-given opportunity for the dissemination of the Bible: "Her generals and admirals have caused the thunder of her power to be heard throughout the earth; now her ministers of religion perform their part, and endeavour to fulfil the high destinies of heaven in favour of their country" (Martyn 1811: 35). For Martyn, himself a translator of the New Testament into Hindi and Persian, and others who shared this view, printing and distributing "standard" versions that united all subjects under the banner of the Protestant faith was a service rendered to both God and king. This line of argument was offered more emphatically by Protestant missionaries such as Alexander Duff (1806–78) and Henry Martyn than the British government to justify their purpose in the colonies. Nonetheless, such claims on behalf of the nature and role of the translated Bible informed BFBS' translation policies of the nineteenth century.

The Case for Standard Protestant Versions

Clearly, standard versions were to unite all Protestants under one banner: one God, one Bible, and one Church, which would progress to a collective Protestant identity. A "standard" version in each Indian language was perceived as essential for achieving interdenominational unity within each language domain. This debate gained momentum because by the second half of the nineteenth century, each language had more than one translation of the Bible. Weitbrecht (1900: 26), for instance, comments on the importance of standardizing the New Testament in Urdu, to prevent attacks from non-Christians, like the "Mohammadan" opponents who were "constantly on the watch for evidence to prove the corruption of our Scriptures." True of most Indian language translations, such arguments are particularly noticeable in the history of Tamil Bible revision: one of the important justifications given for starting each revision was the need for a single Tamil Bible for all Tamil denominations. The simultaneous use of several Tamil translations was often referred to as an "evil" that must be overcome by a standard version.[40] The revision committee of the *Union Version* (1869) justified revising the existing Tamil versions by claiming to unite all the Protestant denominations of the Tamil church:

> Considering the evils arising from the existence and use amongst Tamil Christians of a variety of versions of the Tamil New Testament, it was felt by all who were interested . . . in the spiritual welfare of the Tamil people, that it was in the highest degree desirable . . . to secure to the Tamil people the advantage of a version of the New Testament which . . . accepted by all, . . . should tend, if possible, to bind together all religious communities in the Tamil country, . . . by the bond of a common record and standard of faith, expressed in a common speech. (*Revision* 1869: 2–3)

More importantly, one translation would support the Protestant claim of the one God speaking through the one Bible regardless of its translated status, and thus one true religion. Two years after the publication of the *Union Version*, Ashton Dibb (1873: 123) writes that "the common and obvious answer" to criticism of the variety and divisions within the "Protestant Church" is that "the Bible is the point of union." This "union version" was consciously linked to the idea of a united Protestant Tamil community since both Protestant missionaries and converts were aware of the rival gaze of non-Protestant groups—Catholic, Hindu, and Muslim—who used this very point of multiple Bible translations in each language to attack Protestant claims. Increasingly, the ability to arrive at one "standard" version was also offered as proof of the success of Protestant missions.

To augment this unity, standardization in Bible translation went together with other attempts at standardization in each language area—of church organization, of the liturgy, and of the hymnbook. For instance, the *MRTBS* (1875: 34), soon after the publication of the *Union Version*, put out a proposal to publish a "common" hymnbook for all the Tamil churches on the grounds that: "A common Hymn Book would tend to unite the different bodies of Native Christians, and make them feel more their oneness in the Gospel." One of the respondents offers typical feedback on the "unpleasant variety" of hymnbooks: "Of course, union in this direction, if accomplished, would prove a great boon to the Church of Southern India" (Rev. Barnes, *MRTBS* 1875: 35). Significantly, in this rhetoric on the evils of internal division, translation acts as a mechanism by which unity among all Protestants belonging to a language group can be imagined.

The Case for a Standard Protestant Terminology

The desire to fix a standard Protestant terminology across all Indian languages was intimately linked to the project of establishing standard versions. While the act of translation was used as an interpretative frame to first measure the competence of languages to "receive" the Bible, importantly, it was also seen as a tool with which to develop a "recognizable" Protestant vocabulary across this linguistic hierarchy. This translation strategy focused on "a common terminology" for the fundamental terms of Protestant doctrine. Most nineteenth-century revision committees gave "uniformity of rendering" as one of the important principles that guided them but spent much time on disputing the rendering of key terms considered central to Protestant teaching.

An editorial of the *Harvest Field* (December 1898) pointed out that viewing Bible revision from a wider standpoint would allow terminology and the "idiom of several languages" to be determined at the same time. Since it was an accepted theory among European scholars of Indian languages that Indian language groups shared many characteristics in common because *all* of them derived from the Sanskrit, the intention was to use Sanskrit as a basis to control the development of a standard Protestant terminology in all Indian languages. From the earliest efforts at translating Catholic and Protestant literature into Tamil for instance, Sanskrit had already been treated as a source language, a repository of both specialized sacred terms as well as an ancient and classical source for the composition of new Christian words. The theory that all Indian languages ultimately derived from Sanskrit was not confined to Christian missionaries, but was very much shared by colonial officials and Orientalist language scholars. According to their shared archive of knowledge, Sanskrit, as Dodson (2005) has argued, being the language of sacred text, ritual, literature, and philosophy, could be read as civilizational in definitive ways and constructed in a significant sense as India's "national language." Admiration for its copious and expressive vocabulary and grammatical perfection attributed "classical" status to it (814) and placed it at the apex of Indian languages, with the rest arranged hierarchically in relation to it.

Dodson has underlined the importance of this exercise for the translation of European scientific and philosophical texts into Indian languages and I argue that this attitude to Sanskrit is also fundamental to the nature and function of the construction of Christian, and for our purpose here, Protestant terminology. In the Protestant narrative, Sanskrit existed as part of a merciful divine plan for conveying God's message. Even Caldwell (1875: 13) argued that those Indian languages that were "uncultivated as yet[41] . . . are able to enrich themselves at will out of the wealth of words providentially laid up in store in Sanskrit for the benefit of all India." This meant that the production of new words to express novel Protestant concepts was thought best achieved by choosing a Sanskrit root and extending or modifying it to suit each language. This served a double purpose: on the one hand each language would acquire a corpus of Protestant terms that harnessed the cultural and sacred authority that Sanskrit already traditionally enjoyed; and on the other, since Sanskrit was considered the civilizational root of all Indian language cultures, it would become the principal means by which one standard Protestant terminology could be established across the different language groups.

This partiality is apparent in the several nineteenth-century lists of biblical terminology in the major Indian languages compiled to ensure that a standard Protestant vocabulary developed across them. An early effort is William Mill's *Proposed Version of Theological Terms, with a view to Uniformity in Translations of the Holy Scriptures &c. into the Various Languages of India* (1828).[42] Here Mill clearly focuses on Sanskrit terms as the root for religious terminology in all Indian languages as the title suggests. Later in the century, John Murdoch's *Renderings of Scriptural Terms in the Principal Languages of India* (1876) listed important terms from the Hebrew, Greek, and English and their equivalents in ten Indian languages to ascertain how many key Protestant terms had "uniform" equivalents across these ten languages. Murdoch acknowledges in the preface that this attempt at standardization might be a futile exercise after all: "Complete uniformity of rendering is impossible, for in most cases the original terms and those in the vernacular are not exactly synonymous" (n.p.). However, this effort continued till the end of the nineteenth century with efforts to review the use of standard terms as well as the continued lack of standardization in some cases.[43]

The project to standardize Protestant terms across languages was resurrected again in the twentieth century. Unlike the nineteenth century where the point had been to fix a standard terminology, twentieth-century efforts were to gauge how successful standardization had been in practice (Hooper 1957: vii). Therefore, the focus was on terms that had both acquired Protestant meaning and those that were still "confused" with non-Protestant usage. This follow-up program to ensure that existing biblical terminology functioned correctly, showing up the "standard terminology" project as not an unqualified success, importantly also signals the tenuous basis on which the claims of Sanskrit as the foundational language of India had been requisitioned for Protestant translations. However, since no other single text was translated systematically and self-consciously into all the major languages of India, this kind of comparative word analysis had not been formally and repeatedly attempted in any other context. It is primarily the project of Bible translation assiduously synchronizing translation into several Indian languages that offered the possibility of deliberate, simultaneous constructions of new terms based on Sanskrit roots; and hence, also presented an opportunity for a comparative philological analysis of the extent to which each Indian language derived from the Sanskrit.

Ironically, this project, which drew on the dominant Orientalist theory of Sanskrit as source language, was the very one that also revealed the flawed nature of this thesis. The characterization of the "Dravidian languages" as an independent "family" of languages, contradicting the general understanding of the relations between Indian languages, was suggested by missionaries and discussed in the context of Bible translation. This had an obvious immense impact on the Protestant project of standardizing Protestant terminology from Sanskrit. The elaborate "Dravidian proof" provided by Ellis and Caldwell[44] undermined the Protestant project of establishing a single shared Protestant vocabulary across the subcontinent. The solution proposed by some missionaries was developing a common terminology separately for the four Dravidian languages but a few questioned whether this standard terminology project was at all viable. Wilhelm Dilger, chairman of the Malayalam Bible Revision Committee, doubted the possibility of adopting a common terminology for all Dravidian languages: "There may be a number of terms that can be used in most or all of these languages, because most of the technical terms have to be drawn from Sanskrit. But it is a well-known fact that Sanskrit words acquire different shades of meaning as they come to be used in different Dravidian languages" ("Bible Revision, A Symposium" 1898: 451). Dilger's point that each Dravidian-language calques Sanskrit terms in specific ways makes the important point that the relationship between Sanskrit and the other Indian languages was not static, neither did it allow a Sanskrit word to be transported into very different languages with identical effect. Similarly, although Goudie supported the study of comparative terminology in the Dravidian languages, he thought it "would be a great pity to impose any restriction on the free and full use in each language of its own resources" ("Bible Revision, A Symposium" 1898: 447). Such warnings against the stultification of languages from fellow missionaries reveal further weaknesses in the standardization project that sought to fix Protestant meaning once and for all across the spectrum of Indian languages.

Ironically, mid-nineteenth-century Tamil[45] Bible translation projects also contributed to the further development of the "Dravidian languages" theory. For instance, the translation committees of the Madras and Jaffna auxiliaries of BFBS had a serious disagreement over the translation of Jaffna's "Tentative Version" and Madras's "Revised

Version" between the late 1830s and 1870.[46] One of their several disagreements was over "a frequent use of Sanskrit instead of a Tamil term of synonymous import" (*A Brief Narrative* 1870: 86). Before the two were finally amalgamated into the *Union version*, the Jaffna missionaries had conducted an exercise to compare the proportion of Sanskrit used by each committee in their versions of the Gospel of Matthew. Listing the number of Tamil and Sanskrit words in each, they concluded that the "clamour raised against [the Tentative Version]...on the grounds of its super-abounding Sanscritisms" was unjustified. This is one of the earliest recorded nineteenth-century disputes that interprets the presence of Sanskrit words in a Tamil text as a sign of "bad" translation. In doing so, these missionaries in South India also clearly position themselves outside the Sanskritist framework of the dominant Protestant discourse in nineteenth-century India.

The Case for Standard Protestants

These projects of standardization were to effect a new shared identity built on the sharing of a new Protestant vocabulary. Here "Protestant" carried a broader civilizational reference. Regardless of the historical and cultural specificities of each individual's past, the convert was meant to fit into a universal category labeled "Protestant." The aim often was to replace local religious practices, often deemed "heathen" or "barbarous superstitions," with "Protestant" ethics and values. "The Bible Society," asserts Sue Zemca (1991: 104), "based and justified its existence on the belief that the exposure to Holy Scriptures created an abstract Christian subject with similar attributes of behaviour and belief regardless of cultural conditions, material environment, or pre-existing religious beliefs." My contention is that shared language use was one of the primary civilizing and humanizing tools of the Protestant project; and translation was the mechanism by which this shared vocabulary could effectively be mobilized to initiate the move to new, shared Protestant identities.

The official historical accounts of the BFBS are packed with narratives that claim the civilizing effects of the Bible, some narrated by the missionaries and others reportedly by the newly "civilized" proselytes. So, for instance, a converted "Hottentot" welcomes the humanizing effects on his tribe:

> When the Bible came amongst us we were naked; we lived in caves and on the tops of the mountains; we had no clothes, we painted

> our bodies . . . The Bible charmed us out of the caves, and from the tops of the mountains. The Bible made us throw away all our old customs and practices, and we lived among civilized men. We are tame men now. (Browne 1859: 246)

Similarly, Rev. Ellis working in the South Sea Islands claimed that the Bible had the power to "tame" the romantic wildness of the landscape into a "cultivated garden" and the savage into human where "the wanton, roving, idle Native, has become a decent, steady, and industrious member of society" (Browne 1859: 442). Closer home, the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, in its history of Bible translation in India, quotes a missionary in South India to justify its role in circulating the Bible: the contrast between "the mental state and conduct, both of those who have not received the Word of God and are comparatively ignorant of it, and of those who have received it" is plain (*Contributions* 1854: 6). Thus, the translated Bible, while translating souls from a "heathen" to a "godly" state, also translated their bodies and morals to an acceptable "human" condition.[47] It is such repeated representations of the wider civilizing effect of the Bible that merge with other colonial discourses to justify empire and give it a "moral" basis.

This broad civilizational improvement is also apparent in visual representations of Protestant converts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Take, for instance, the photograph on the book's cover[48]—while the Indian "catechist" or preacher is often dressed in neat European attire, always with a book in hand, his as-yet-unconverted audience is usually partially clothed in nondescript "native" attire. The figure of the "native" Indian preacher, caught in mid-flow, standing in authority over his squatting, barefoot audience, crowding together on the ground offers a striking example of the way the wholesale "transformation" of the Protestant convert was invoked and displayed in this period. Significantly also, the crowd is separated from the preacher by the book (perhaps the Bible?) in his hand and its associated power. One among several promotional strategies for Protestant mission, such photographs graphically presented the conceptual difference between the converted and unconverted in order to advertise the good effects of the translated Bible to both Indian and European audiences.

Be that as it may, there is ample evidence that converted Protestants attempted to reinterpret Protestant Christianity to suit their own cultural contexts. These instances often became points of contention between them and the Protestant missionaries who were wary of "misinterpretations"—either of the Bible or of Protestant doctrines and practices. Individual initiatives to interpret were suspect, construed as these were to be the result of lingering association with undesirable cultural and religious practices. Carey's (Letter to Sutcliff, November 27, 1800) desire to curb what he considered an overimaginative interpretation of the Bible is amusing: "Gokool told me a religious dream...As I fear his mind is naturally very susceptible of an enthusiastic turn—I warned him against regarding dreams and told him that Satan would try to ruin the Faith he had embraced; and that it would be very unsafe to deviate at all from the Word of God." However, more serious contestations over the "meanings" of dreams, words, translations, and even of the Bible continued. There were, for instance, several organized nineteenth-century attempts by Protestant converts to form alternative churches. Kaj Baago (1969) writes of three such indigenous movements: "The Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus" started in Tinnevelly in 1858; the National Church started in Madras in 1886; and "the Calcutta Christo Samaj," founded in 1887. All three were early attempts to create united, indigenous churches based on a reinterpretation of Protestant doctrine, incorporating modified Hindu customs and ritual practices. They signal a disruptive reminder to the missionary project that not all their converts were willing to conform to a homogenous definition of the "Protestant".

It cannot be denied, nonetheless, that large sections of the Protestant community in India *did* respond positively to Protestant interpretative and linguistic practices. In the specific case of the Protestant Tamil community, it can be argued that some sections of the community colluded with this missionary project because it was in their interest to do so. Upwardly mobile low-caste groups, such as the *Nadars*, who had converted in large numbers to the Protestant faith in the second half of the nineteenth century, found that the missionary program enabled them to climb the social ladder through literacy, education, and jobs in the colonial government.[49] In contrast, Protestants from higher caste groups, such as the *Vellala*, were reluctant to give up cultural practices that signaled their high status in Tamil society and resisted efforts to "civilize" them according to Western cultural codes. Hardgrave (1969: 90) contends that the "Vellala lost status by conversion, but the Nadar gained status, rising above his former position." The convergence of Nadar and missionary interests in this case meant that Nadars may have actively aspired to the ideal "Protestant" image that the missionaries had promoted because it suited them at this particular juncture in history. It is thus important for us to keep in view social and political imperatives in colonial India, which at times worked in conjunction with Protestant strategies to translate and civilize but at others challenged this Protestant project in important ways. Either way, the very need for Protestant converts to engage with the range of categories that were propelled into discursive action as a result of Protestant translation strategies has reconstituted the way they have thought of themselves and how they relate to the wider world.

Conclusions

Missionary assumptions about sacred language, religious texts, and their translation strategies were under constant and tremendous pressure in the nineteenth century to address cultural differences that refused to be straitjacketed into a set of "rules and guidelines for Bible translators." The strain evident in the records left behind by translation and revision committees confirms that it was not possible to arrive at universal equivalents or fixed standards of language use for translating the Bible. This was an obvious problem given the extent and complex nature of translating the Bible into all existing languages in India. Even as they claimed that the Bible could be revealed in any language, the translators were unable to gain complete control over language and the Protestant belief in the cultural transparency of the Bible remained at odds with their translation experience. Moreover, the attempt to constrain contradictory experiences into a universal "theory" points beyond the anxieties of the translation project to the wider anxieties of Protestant mission itself. There was either a direct or an implied relation between the problems of translating the Bible and other religious and sociopolitical concerns, such as the unity of the Church in Europe, the future of the Protestant community in India, the relationship between "Hindus" and "Christians" in India, which underpinned the missionary enterprise. Finally, for the missionary translators, the very act of translating the Bible functioned as a two-way prism. On the one hand, it made the defense of Protestant Christianity and mission from the attacks of Western skeptics possible: the claim that the Bible could be translated into any language without loss of meaning served as proof of its divine nature. On the other hand, the translated Bible could disperse the irrationality, false beliefs, and "darkness" of the East. Ziegenbalg (1718: 13) had very early on in this history claimed that the "plain Truth of the Gospel of Christ" would expose the vain ignorance that informed the "frivolous Disputes" of Tamil poetical Wits.

One final point needs to be kept in mind as we proceed with the specifics of our analysis. Although the translation of the Bible has been characterized by the narratives of Christian empire and read by others in the present (Zemca 1991) as a monolithic and hegemonic imposition of missionary ideology on passive and silent receiving cultures, there were several important factors that interrogated the "macropolitics" of both Empire and missionary translation projects. First, Protestant missionaries disagreed among themselves on the finer points of language use and translation strategies adopted. So while I have highlighted the chief characteristics of the dominant missionary narrative on Bible translation, it is to be remembered that there were many types of challenges offered from among missionaries. Second, not all Protestant converts have unquestioningly accepted the interpretative frameworks employed by missionaries to define or organize them and this will become more apparent as we examine particular points of dissent in the following chapters. Finally, some sections of Protestant converts did collude with the "civilizing" project of Protestant missions, not because they were passive audiences powerless to offer an effective response but because they may have seen the opportunity to enhance their social status within the traditional networks of social power. This detail, however, has often been missed in the narratives of success constructed by Protestant missionaries who have optimistically claimed these converts as evidence of mission accomplished. I have deliberately focused on the wider institutional concern with language use displayed by Protestant Christianity in India to set this as a broad backdrop to my examination of some key conflicts of interest in the translation history of the Bible in Tamil in the following chapters.

2

Locating the Sacred in Terminology

The construction of a “sacred” Tamil for Protestant use has not been the result of stable, reliable processes progressing in a linear fashion toward establishing a fixed set of terms as “Protestant.” As I demonstrate in this chapter, there are two main reasons for this. First, the dichotomy between the desire to fix a set of terms as sacred and the fluidity of language use in social practice has disrupted the construction of a permanent Protestant sacred in Tamil. Second, and more importantly, existing “sacred” terms from the Tamil religious domain, when co-opted into the Protestant context, have circulated in parallel Protestant and non-Protestant religious domains and have thus been called upon to denote different meanings in each. The expectation that the same term should function with differentiated meaning in multiple religious contexts has meant that non-Protestant usages of terms have continued to challenge the semantic boundaries of Protestant terms. In general, both translators and readers of the Tamil Bible have proceeded by making continual efforts to distinguish sacred meanings as either Protestant or non-Protestant, with the dominant view among translators being that a clearly visible “Protestant sacred” could only be demarcated by its disassociation from the structures of beliefs, scriptures, and ritual practices of rival religious faiths. Indeed, this vocabulary newly invested with Protestant meaning was to have the additional function of designating converts with a Protestant identity. As we will see, a range of strategies, from lexical modifications to rhetorical claims, have been employed to assemble suitable Protestant terms in Tamil; these strategies have contributed to a wider discourse that has offered a progressive narrative on Protestant Tamil terms: that is, that there has been a linear development toward the accumulation of a fixed set of terms with more-or-less impermeable boundaries, thus clearly denoting a Protestant sacred for Protestant use.

Such narratives of linear development regarding the Tamil Bible and language have involved translating twice over: they have entailed translating the source text into Tamil, which demanded in turn the "translation" of the Tamil language itself into an appropriate linguistic vehicle. Let me clarify with an example. The following exchange between Ziegenbalg and some "Malabarian (Tamil) heathens" who visit him brilliantly captures the central tension in the Protestant use of the Tamil sacred:

> [*Tamil*:] [Y]ou may rail . . . as much as you please, against our Books; yet, for what I can find, your Books have no Letters, but ours; and no Words, but what are borrow'd from our Books, and from our Language.
>
> [*Danish missionary*:] 'Tis very true . . . that I make use of your Words and Characters, in order to make myself intelligible to you, . . . : [But] tho' your Words are very good, yet what you mean by them is Falshood [*sic*] and Vanity. (Ziegenbalg 1719: 243)

As this brief exchange recorded by one of the first translators of the Tamil Bible demonstrates, Tamil words must first be separated from their "meanings" to enable a process of *conversion* from their original "false meanings" to "true meanings." In other words, key sacred non-Protestant terms had to be reinscribed with Protestant meaning in order to allow their incorporation into Protestant holy ground. Importantly, this was neither a rejection of Tamil sacred terms nor a denial of the sacred status of the terms, but a redefining of the sacred signified by these terms. Or, Protestant translators often engaged in a "complicated linguistic ratiocination" similar to earlier Catholic translators who, as Županov (2005: 242) points out, assumed that terms only provided "neutral" phonological husks for Christian concepts while at the same time preserving something of an authorial mystique culturally inherent in these words. Selective alterations or appropriations of Tamil terms into the Protestant fold and the justifications offered to accomplish this make visible the several discursive translation and reading strategies that together or oppositionally construct sacred meaning. In saying this, I should clarify that these disputes over terminology occurred not just between translators but also between translators and their readers and among subgroups within the readership.

Before we proceed any further, it is worthwhile to contextualize this Protestant use of Tamil within a longer history of Tamil religious translations. The selective appropriation of some Tamil terms for purposes of translating and rewriting sacred texts has been visible in earlier rivalries between Tamil religious sects. Monius (2001) examines how in the literary culture of early medieval South India language choice, particularly in relation to religious identity, became an issue of tremendous and self-conscious concern to a variety of sectarian communities, especially Buddhist and Śaivite poets. In her study of Buddhist literature rewritten in Tamil from approximately the sixth century C.E., Anne Monius (2001: 80) observes that "nowhere does the *Maṇimēkalai*[1] simply translate verbatim from the Pali or Sanskrit per se; rather the text offers a Tamil version of stories found in non-Tamil sources…". She points out however, and this is a significant point of comparison with the Protestant translations we are studying, that for all the technical phrases translated or transliterated into Tamil, the *Maṇimēkalai* surprisingly lacks translations of those Pali and Sanskrit terms specifically used to describe enlightenment, salvation, renunciation, and the various Buddhist paths leading to liberation. She speculates that the reasons for this curious gap in the translated text suggests that terms such as merit (*puñña*) or enlightenment (*nibbāna*) were actually quite narrowly defined, whereas the possible paths to liberation were broadly conceived as multiple, amorphous, and extending far beyond what is suggested by one or two specific terms of monastic origin (79).

Her inference that the primary concern of the Buddhist text was not to establish the specifics of a salvific vocabulary is quite the opposite of Protestant intentions centuries later, where the importance of establishing one specific path to salvation demanded the locating of specific terms to indicate just that one way. Of further relevance to this study of Protestant use of Tamil is her discussion of late sixth- or early seventh-century Śaivite condemnation of a perceived Buddhist disregard for the Tamil and Sanskrit languages (84–6) and her contention that the "Tamil language emerges as a basic means of articulating religious, cultural, and political orientation, as a highly valued indicator of cultural and religious identity, arguably remaining so into the modern era" (84). The selection of Tamil terms from among a wide spectrum of available language and vocabulary choices has been a highly self-conscious skill exercised by the translators and readers of most sacred traditions available to Tamil-speaking communities. A more open-ended approach to translation meant less resistance to a plurality of meaning. The difference with Protestant

Christianity lies in its understanding of the nature and practice of translation: as discussed in the previous chapter, the intention was to produce an *exact* "equivalent" of the original in its translation, that is, to replicate its sacred "value" in the translated term. Although the translation ethics (of a one-to-one correlation between source and target texts) that informs Protestant translators and their texts has been different to Tamil translation practices, by sharing sacred terms from a common linguistic pool Protestant Tamil texts too participate in an ongoing battle over which Tamil terms will indicate specific sacred meanings or identities.

As I have shown in chapter one, the choice of linguistic terms in Protestant translations has been perceived by translators as governed by one of two broad principles: to either use existing terminology with their accrued meanings intact or invent a new sacred vocabulary to convey Protestant meanings. This choice was complicated by, on the one hand, a lack of consensus as to what comprised "Protestant meanings" and, on the other, the apprehension that an entirely new religious vocabulary risked being unfamiliar or meaningless to their Tamil audience, alienating the latter from the very religious system that the vocabulary was created to convey. Hence, in examining the use and reception of key terms in this chapter, I analyze how when Protestant Tamil translations either appropriated, reinvented, or regulated the sacred signified of existing Tamil sacred terms instead of introducing a new vocabulary, immense pressure was put on the Tamil language to signal significant differences in religious doctrines and practices. This chapter demonstrates the fundamental paradox that has fractured the translation and reception of the Protestant sacred among Tamil audiences: how was Protestant Christianity to communicate *difference* while using the *same* language? That is, the question was if Protestant translators in South India were to accept the proposition that it was entirely possible to locate linguistic equivalence, did *linguistic* equivalence between different languages also indicate *conceptual* equivalence between religions? Conversely, is it possible to utilize *linguistic* equivalents between languages inhabiting two different religious cultures without also pointing to *conceptual* equivalence between those religions?

In the long history of the Tamil Bible in translation, Protestant "equivalents" were constructed by using a range of methods—borrowing, appropriation, modification, and invention. My argument is that whatever the method followed, each translation choice has worked to reinforce a narrative of difference between the religions in the Tamil context. This is despite realization that existing terms reveal uncomfortable similarities between the theological systems of Protestant Christianity and non-Protestant religious traditions in South India. In fact, as we will see later on, the search for "linguistic equivalents" in Tamil has developed in tandem with the construction of a narrative that has sought to downplay conceptual similarities between Protestant and non-Protestant religious systems. These impulses work at cross-purposes for obvious reasons because, in effect, the search for *linguistic* equivalents implicitly involved a paradoxical search for terms that did *not* indicate *conceptual* equivalence between the Protestant and non-Protestant Tamil religious systems.

In this, Protestant translation practices in Tamil have differed from what is commonly understood as fundamental to the task of translation, to identify target language terms with meanings as close as possible to the source language terms. The greater the use of such close "equivalents," the more faithful the translation is usually deemed to be. On the contrary, in the Protestant case under study here, the existence of what are perceived as sacred "equivalents" has not always suffused the translators with delight. Instead, while the dominant Protestant debates on translating the Bible in India apparently foregrounds the importance of locating linguistic "equivalents" of one kind or another, the repeated debates and conflicts over the "right" term to use also reveal an underlying discomfort with terms that are perceived as close sacred lexical "equivalents." This discomfort lies deeply embedded in the margins of an authoritative Protestant discourse on translation, undermining its efforts to construct a convincing narrative of the "uniqueness" of Protestant Christianity. In short, in its conversion history into Tamil, borrowing heavily as it does from a sophisticated bank of existing religious vocabulary in Tamil, the Tamil Bible hovers between a futile search for linguistic equivalence and a retreat from theological similarities that the existence of such "equivalents" points to.[2] As my analysis shows, Tamil sacred terms have continued to function in overlapping religious discourses (Protestant and non-Protestant), and such multiple, contradictory semantic claims on Tamil terms have had an impact on the way Protestant Tamils can speak about their religious faith and of themselves.

I further suggest that the articulation of Protestant Tamil identity has been framed by the tension between the fluctuating, multiple, and to some extent unpredictable nature of language use over a period of time and the desire to fix readily identifiable "Protestant" meaning to lexical terms more or less permanently. For this purpose, I retrace some of the linguistic specificities of textual construction and consumption by juxtaposing arguments offered by translators, scholarly analyses of the translations, and the interpreting faith community. For instance, legitimizing outside the immediate Bible translation context was done through the dictionaries compiled by missionaries who began the practice of marking entries as "Christian" so that they formalized certain usages as falling within particular *religious* rather than *linguistic* groupings (traditionally and more commonly the difference between Sanskrit and Tamil). In the discussion that follows, I focus on a few key Tamil sacred terms that have repeatedly become the center of critical attention over the course of several Protestant translation projects and have, as a result, become twinned with constructions of Protestant identities among Tamils.

The Four Categories of Tamil Terms

By the time the earliest translations of Christian texts into Tamil occurred in the sixteenth century, existing religious terminology in Tamil was a blend of Tamil and Sanskrit. As I mentioned in the introduction, in the written, sacred context of Tamil, there has been a long history of borrowing from the Sanskrit. Catholics translators had relied heavily on Sanskrit because they saw Sanskrit as the Latin of India, a special, technical, and divinely inspired language (Županov 1999: 238). Catholic missionaries such as Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) learned Tamil mainly from high-caste Tamils and consciously attempted to articulate Catholic ideas in a Sanskritized Tamil in order to capitalize on the high status of Sanskrit and acquire an elevated position for Catholic Christianity in Tamil society. Early Protestant borrowing from this terminology followed this strategy and although later discussions of sacred terms reveal a desire to disassociate Protestant usage from Catholic, tracing etymological roots of Tamil sacred terms back to the Sanskrit and to early Catholic usage persists until the end of the nineteenth-century and well into the twentieth century.

I have kept my discussion of the etymology of the terms to a minimum. I rely considerably on Bror Tiliander's (1974) detailed and valuable study of the various religious terms available in Tamil, their etymological history, and where Protestant and Catholic usages have differed from Hindu usages. However, my intention in this chapter is not to repeat previous etymological discussions in their entirety or simply to give a history of the terms used by the various agents but to extend Tiliander's [and that of a handful of others such as Kulendran (1967); Packiamuthu (2000); Sandgren (1991)] examination of Protestant Tamil terminology by inquiring into the range of discourses that have played their part in the processes of linguistic appropriation. One of these discourses, as I argue, is the very scholarly tradition of Tiliander, which by focusing attention primarily on etymology and the semantic differences in translators' choice,[3] precludes the linking of the linguistic and textual with the political and social organization of concepts of the "sacred" by religious groups. Such a tradition does not adequately take into account material shifts in literacy and reading practices, the greater accessibility of the translated Bible in print, the changing relations between Protestant and non-Protestant communities and the several shifts in political conditions under which different versions of the Tamil Bible have circulated. This scholarly discourse has also worked in conjunction with other primary discourses of the translators to construct a somewhat coherent history of translation choices and their effect. However, the construction of a consisted historical narrative is belied by the seemingly arbitrary choice of terms, which try as one might do not fit into a regular pattern of translation choices. On the contrary, what is discernable is that a range of random choice of terms are justified by these discourses to fulfill the same important purpose—to present the message of Christianity as *unique* to the uninitiated.

Thus, rather than identify a standard logic of translation choices across a wide variety of terms, I am more inclined toward examining the disagreements between the various Protestant groups, the shifts in emphases, and the multiple negotiations between languages and between religions that took place in colonial South India. It is for this reason that I focus primarily on terms that have provoked the most conflict as it is in this space, between a particular translation choice and its potential others, that one can see the politics of compromise and power at work. For the purposes of convenience, I have organized my discussion of Protestant Tamil terms broadly into four categories: first, transliterations; second, modified Tamil and Sanskrit terms; third, existing terms combined to form new compounds; and fourth, terms used with no lexical changes. But I wish to reiterate that this is not to be viewed as an effort to identify and examine a repeated set of choices with the intention of establishing a clearly definable "norm" in Bible translation in the tradition of Toury (1995). Instead, in approaching these categories as part of a history of change I hope to move, as Anthony Pym suggests (1998b), beyond the mapping of translation norms onto just one social group or dominant ideology and in its place start to see disagreements in translation choice as a key factor in the social struggle for the right to represent oneself.

Transliterations into Tamil

This first category comprises simple transliterations from the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or Portuguese. For instance, the Portuguese "*cruz*" (cross) became *kurucu*; the Latin "*Spiritus Sanctum*" (the Holy Spirit) was transliterated as *icpiritu cantu*; and "*ekklesia*" (ecclesial) from the Greek was converted to *ekkilēciya*, and "*apostolos*" (apostle) to *apōstalar* in Tamil. Some of these were later translated using Tamil words: *paricutta ātma* (literally, holy spirit) for the Holy Spirit, for instance, but others such as *apōstalar* continue to be used until now. These terms were initially transliterated by the early Catholic missionaries because they were believed to be central to the Christian faith and best left untranslated. However, these transliterations did not fall readily into the Tamil writing system (as the sequence of sounds were alien to Tamil writing) drawing attention to Christian beliefs and practices as "foreign"; so many of these were later translated into Tamil by Protestant translators. However, some early transliterations have been replaced by other transliterations and are still in use. So, for instance, although *kurucu* has been phased out, *ciluvai*, borrowed from the Syriac *slībo*, is currently the standard Tamil term for the cross.[4] Although the history of transliterations especially of personal names in the Catholic and Protestant contexts is fascinating, it deserves in-depth study as a separate, parallel history to "translations," so I will not explore this category further at this point.

Modified Tamil and Sanskrit Terms

The second category comprises Sanskrit terms that circulate in Tamilised form but were reintroduced in the Protestant context with minor lexical changes. Familiar to non-Protestants at a lexical level, these terms would have been pressed into Protestant (and in some cases, Catholic) semantic service. Nevertheless, since very similar terms were being stretched to convey dissimilar ideas and practices, the modified terms required explanation that emphasized subtle differences in meaning and usage between these similar terms. As a result, although these terms have featured as part of Protestant terminology in different phases of this history of the Tamil Bible, the appropriateness of several terms in this category continued to be debated. The debate hinged on whether such terms were perceived to have developed sufficient differences between Protestant and non-Protestant concepts and therefore could be retained or were considered not to have accumulated Protestant meaning to a sufficient degree and hence discarded. In this section, I discuss two significant terms, *Caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* and *parāparaṉ*, for "God," used successively in a few eighteenth-century versions of the Tamil Bible.[5] I investigate the use of a third term *tēvaṉ*, which also falls in this category, at some length in the second part of this chapter. The use of *parāparaṉ* and *tēvaṉ* as terms for "God" in the Tamil Bible demonstrate that despite the similarities in the way the two terms were adopted for Protestant translations, the rhetorical claims that have been made in favor of *tēvaṉ* have far exceeded justifications for the use of *parāparaṉ*.

Before I examine *parāparaṉ* in greater detail, I must discuss two terms that had similar but short-lived histories in the Tamil Bible. The terms are *tāmpiraṉ*, first introduced by Henriquez, and *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* by Nobili, both used in early Catholic Tamil literature. Tiliander (1974: 119) suggests that Nobili disapproved of Henriquez's choice, perhaps because Śaivite leaders addressed each other by this name in spite of its divine meaning and had instead added the Tamil masculine singular end to the Sanskrit *Sarvēsvaraha* to make it the Tamil *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* [*caṟva* (all) + *Īcvara* (lord)]. It is this lexical modification, giving the term a definite masculine singular ending, that allowed its entry into Protestant vocabulary through Ziegenbalg. *Caṟuvēcuvaraṉ,* as a result of Nobili's and Ziegenbalg's usage, became the term for "God" in both Tamil Catholic and early Lutheran churches until the mid-eighteenth century.

The standard narrative that attempts to explain the later rejection of *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* is that it was the result of an increasing Protestant knowledge of and rejection of terms closely associated with Śaivism and Śiva. Tiliander (1974) offers this reading citing Abbé Dubois, a Catholic missionary at the Pondicherry Mission from 1792 to 1823. He quotes Dubois as having claimed in a footnote that it was a term that Native Christians used to express God, and that Protestant missionaries had objected to the use of the word because it was one of the titles of the Hindu God Śiva (92–3). Dubois, ever critical of Protestant translation strategies, seems to have read a particular meaning into the discomfort that nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries supposedly felt with the use of the term and this interpretation is added to as the nineteenth century progresses: *caruvēcuvaran* would draw parallels with Śaivite usage rather than present a "Protestant" God. Later in the century, Winslow in his *Tamil and English Dictionary* (1862) gave "The Supreme Being" as the meaning for *caruvēcuvaran*; but under *īcvaran*, he points out that it commonly referred to Śiva and *caruvēcuvaran* to Śiva as "the Lord of the Universe." It is clear that after Ziegenbalg, Protestant opinion shifted against the use of *caruvēcuvaran* in the Tamil Bible so it would be useful for us to return to the context in which Ziegenbalg used the term.

Although Tiliander traces Ziegenbalg's use of *caruvēcuvaran* to Nobili, it might well be that Ziegenbalg was independently aware of how the term was used among Śaivite Tamils. And it is here that we might be able to detect a clue to his inclusion of the word. In his principal German manuscript on the "Malabarian gods," *Genealogy of the Malabarian Gods*, he observes:

> When the South Indians talk of the Supreme Being, as far as it is considered as a purely spiritual and immaterial being, they speak very rationally and accept as unquestionable truth everything that we Christians believe regarding God's being and attributes . . . The names with which they consider the divine being are expressions of divine attributes such as Sarvesvara, the lord of all . . . (Trans. Jeyaraj 2005: 49)

Clearly, Ziegenbalg here identifies the conceptual *similarities* rather than the differences between the "Christian" and the "South Indian" conception of the Supreme Being. However, he also observes later in the *Genealogy* that in practice, the term *īcuvaran* was used very differently:

> Most of the South Indians consider Isvara to be a great god . . . they identify him with Civam [i.e., goodness]. Because of this, he has all the names of the Supreme Being . . . *If one would consider him apart from his appearances*, the South Indians speak and write of him just as one would speak and write of the one (true) god. *Should*

> *he be considered according to his appearances*, then the descriptions about him in their Puranas or history books are almost always absurd...One has to take note of his names that are—because of his various appearances—several and manifold. If a person is not aware of this, one will think that in each local, village and city temple of the South Indians a *separate* deity is being worshipped. (Trans. Jeyaraj 2005: 69; emphases added)

Ziegenbalg then names eighty-nine such names, each emphasizing one particular aspect of Śiva over others so that each individual name could be taken to refer to a god distinct from Śiva, the Supreme God. Ziegenbalg is making a very important distinction here between the conceptualization of Śiva as one Supreme God on the one hand and the practice of worshipping different physical manifestations of Śiva by Tamils. Though the Tamil conception of Śiva is that of the "one [true] god" the "absurdity" of the different, multiple forms in which he is worshipped in Ziegenbalg's opinion directly challenges their idea of Śiva as the "one" god. The term *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* was thus used to refer not only to a Supreme god but also to individual, different manifestations of that Supreme God.

Possibly, it is this slip between the term's assumed reference to a "purely spiritual and immaterial being" and its use in practice to allude to the separate manifestations of Śiva that allows Ziegenbalg to retain the term *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* in his translation of the Bible. But in using *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* he is also conscious that the conceptual similarity poses a potential rupture to the Protestant signified and so Ziegenbalg is also compelled to explain that the one term signifies two separate deities simultaneously. By Ziegenbalg's (1719: 85) own admission his preaching had to clarify the new Protestant meaning indicated: "his Name is not *Tschiwen* [Śiva], but *Saruwesuren* (God); he never had a Wife...but he had a son...[who came to the world to save...]." This is an anxious attempt at renaming or attributing a new referent to a name that has multiple functions in Śaiva social practice. One can glimpse in this usage that Ziegenbalg's exploiting of the split in the use of the term *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ*—and his effort to negotiate a Protestant meaning in-between the several uses of *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ*—was based on fragile ground.

For missionary translators after Ziegenbalg, the similarity in concept between Protestant Christianity and Tamil Śaivism indicated by the term proved far more troublesome. This term, with little lexical difference to indicate a possible difference in meaning, was unable to present a Protestant unique and had therefore to be abandoned in later Protestant translations of the Bible.[6] As later Protestant missionaries negotiated with complexities within Hindu beliefs and devotional practice, the Protestant desire to present their god as unique, sharing no similarities whatsoever with any existing conceptions of rival gods in circulation in Tamil society, was made more difficult.

Parāparaṉ, a compound of two Sanskrit terms *parā* (remote or celestial) and *param* (heavenly), referred to God as a transcendental Being beyond reach. Both *parā* and *parama* can be used as attributes to the Supreme, for example, *paramātmaṉ*, that is, "the supreme soul" (Tiliander 1974: 127). Tiliander and Lehmann credit Walther, who was a Lutheran missionary in Tranquebar from 1725 to 1739, with the introduction and popularization of the term in Protestant translations. Certainly notes in Walther's notebook[7] showing the missionary was assessing the various meanings of *parāparaṉ* supports their argument: he understood *param* as a being that certainly exists but does not have shape or body in a way that can be perceived with the senses; and *aparam* as that which cannot be perceived with the intellect.[8]

Why had Ziegenbalg not used this term? Ziegenbalg's use of a related term "*Parāparavastu*" (Supreme Divine Existence) in his *Genealogy* suggests how he understood the term functioned in Tamil use: as evidence of theistic beliefs among the Hindus (Sweetman 2003: 115). The first part of his *Genealogy* is titled "*Parāparavastu is Ens Supremum*, i.e., the one ever-existing, supreme or highest divine being" and "*Parāparavastu*, who is the highest divine Being and the source of all deities" (Trans. Jeyaraj 2005: 41, 48). And he devotes the first two chapters of part one to explain the Tamil belief in the one supreme god. His definition of *parāparavastu* here shows some remarkable similarities with Protestant conceptions of the one Supreme God and I suggest that it may be for this reason that he does not adopt *parāparan* in the way he felt possible with *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ*. Significantly, however, he does use the term *parāparavaṣttuvānavar* in the title of his translation of the Old Testament, perhaps to signal to the Bible's new audience in South India that he is writing about the "real" unrevealed god implicit in their popular usage.

Walther's influence may have helped the success of "*parāparaṉ*" in Protestant circles. By the 1740s when Tamil catechists first began writing letters to Gotthilf Auguste Francke (1696–1769)[9] in Halle, they used both *parāparaṉ* and *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* interchangeably giving equal weight to the two terms.[10] This is evidence that *parāparaṉ* was introduced in the first half of the eighteenth century in Lutheran churches and was in circulation before its use in the next Tamil version of the Bible by Fabricius. By the 1750s, *parāparaṉ* was used almost exclusively by the Lutheran missionaries and a treatise addressed to the Tamil people in 1755, to prove that the Protestant God was the only true one, uses only *parāparaṉ* (*Tamiḻc cātiyārukkeḻutiṉa nirupam,* “Letter to the Tamil People,” Ca. 1755).

According to Tiliander’s (1974) reading, Fabricius seems to have concurred with Walther’s opinion on the appropriateness of using *parāparaṉ* in the Tamil Bible. Fabricius gives to *parāparaṉ* “the meaning of God as being at the same time transcendent and immanent, beyond reach and yet approachable, hidden and yet revealed” (Tiliander 1974: 127–8). Fabricius (1786) analyzed *parāparam* as *param* + *aparam* in his Malabar-English dictionary, “remote” and “not-remote” and offers the meaning “deity, Supreme Being.” Of all the terms for God in his dictionary, he gives only *parāparam*, *parāparaṉ*, and *parāparavastu* the meaning: “God Almighty, the Supreme being,” and “the Supreme Deity.” Interestingly, of the five terms for God discussed in this chapter *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* is the only one he does not include in his dictionary. Usually found as a neuter noun in Sanskrit and Tamil literature, *parāmpara**m*** was changed to a definite masculine singular *parāpara**ṉ*** for Protestant use and for the Tamil Bible, indicating that the “Protestant” *parāparaṉ* was different from the existing “Hindu” concept *parāparam*. This minor lexical shift from *parāmpara**m*** to *parāpara**ṉ*** in fact has an important function in that it is seen to signal a parallel semantic shift, therefore rendering it “suitable” for Protestant use. I will return to the significance of this lexical shift later when I discuss *tēvaṉ*.

At some points Fabricius also used the term *karttarākiya parāparaṉ* (God who is Lord) for Jehovah in Isaiah 12:2, 26:4 (Old Testament 1898). This usage, however, may have caused some confusion, as Rhenius (1841) reports later. When visiting schools in 1819, he reported, “I was surrounded by the boys, one or two of whom asked me, with great anxiety, whether the words *Parābaraṉ* and *Kartā* [Creator God], were used as synonymous terms” (183). Nonetheless, the term *parāparaṉ* proved a greater success in Lutheran circles, having found its way into liturgical and devotional works from Fabricius’s Bible.[11]

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, with Protestant views shifting significantly from the Lutheran to a more Anglican perspective, support for the term starts waning. Under *parāparam*, Winslow's (1862) gives a separate entry for *parāparavastu—parāparaṉ*, with "The Supreme Deity" as its meaning and *Kaṭavuḷ* as synonym. But an accompanying note clarifies that "though this word is used by Christians for the true God, it is not unexceptionable." Rottler's (1834) definition for *parāparam* in his *Dictionary of the Tamil and English Languages* was that "the usual derivation of this word is from *param,* the *m* is elided and *aparam*, the two short letters being united by Sandhi into par*ā*baram, the Most High or Supreme." Although the meaning of *parāparaṉ*, according to him, was "the same as *Kaṭavuḷ*, God," he distinguished *parāparaṉ* as Christian usage:

> This word, with a masculine termination, has the prevailing usage among Christians: but the best Tamil authorities sanction the usage of the neuter par*ā*baram, which leaves no idea of a Sacti, or female energy, or negative power. Besides par*ā*bara*ṉ* is not a fit rendering for *deos*, but best expresses the idea of the Eternal, or the Most High.

Although aware that the term circulated in Christian usage and was part of existing versions of the Tamil Bible, both these nineteenth-century lexicographers were convinced that it was not an entirely appropriate term for the Protestant God. Both offer the meaning "Supreme Deity" or God and yet disapprove of the term. It is by highlighting the "female principal" that Winslow and Rottler are able to argue that the term did not serve Protestant purposes fully. However, the term *parāparaṉ* continued to be popular among Tamil Lutheran translations as well as in devotional hymns. Later in the nineteenth century, the Lutheran churches opposed the British and Foreign Bible Society's revision of the Tamil Bible, and refused to adopt the *Union Version* after its publication, giving the change from *parāparaṉ* to *tēvaṉ* as one of the main reasons. It was only in the twentieth century that Tamil Lutherans showed a willingness to give up *parāparaṉ* in favor of *kaṭavuḷ*.[12] As mentioned earlier, I will return to a fuller discussion of the third term *tēvaṉ* in this category in the second part of this chapter, where I will compare it to the use of *kaṭavuḷ*.

Terms Combined to Form "New" Compounds

This third category in Protestant Tamil translations comprise new words generated by combining two or more Sanskrit or Tamil terms that give a parallel meaning of the original words or compounds in Tamil: for instance, "gospel" was translated as *cuvicēṣam*, a literal rendering of the Greek meaning, "good" (*cu*) and "news" (*vicēṣam*). Except for a few difficult combinations, most of the calqued terms in this category are understood without much difficulty since they are "literal" word-for-word translations of original terms or compounds. These new combinations help to convey intended Catholic or Protestant ideas more easily because the roots of the two terms in the combinations are already familiar; so, for instance, neither *cu* nor *vicēṣam* would require explanation as individual terms. This has meant that these lexical inventions could construct new meanings by extending rather than replacing old ones. However, these are still not wholly adequate because the final signified had to be further clarified: for instance, when the two terms are combined to make *cuvicēṣam*, the new term acquires a different value because it refers to a very particular "good news" located within Protestant (and Catholic) theology. Similarly, the surface meaning of the term for "Son of God" *tēvakumāraṉ*, a combination of *tēva* (god) and *kumāraṉ* (son), would be perfectly clear to a non-Protestant Tamil audience; however, they would have to be informed that in the Protestant context, the term *tēvakumāraṉ* indicated not just the son of any god (e.g., Murukan, the son of Śiva, usually known as *kumāraṉ*), but that it specifically indicated Jesus Christ as the *only* "Son of God." Thus, although this category gives the impression of most successfully referring to Christian concepts, the terms may still remain unstable in practice because the "new" Protestant terms need further qualification, either by *limiting* or *extending* them to denote Protestant connotations. The use of the Protestant terms *ñāṉasnāṉam* and *vētākamam*[13] in this category demonstrate the different types of difficulties that such combinations may pose at times.

First of all, the translation history of the term *ñāṉasnāṉam* (baptism), that is, *ñāṉa* (wise, good) and *snāṉam* (bathing), is a good example of terms invented to disguise hermeneutical differences among the Protestant missionary groups. At one point in the nineteenth century, doctrinal differences between the Baptists and the other Protestant missionary groups over the correct interpretation of "baptism" were serious enough to create considerable rifts in Bible translation in India. The controversy centered on whether the term should be interpreted as "immersion in water" or the "sprinkling of water," with the Baptists supporting the former.[14] In various Indian languages, translators preferred to transliterate the term to avoid controversy, so, for instance, the term *baptisma* was used in the Hindi Bible, leaving the interpretation of the term to the readers. The Tamil Bible translators decided on translating the term using the Sanskrit term *snāṉam* (to bathe) as the most appropriate because besides being a term familiar to Tamils, it was a generic term for all types of ceremonial cleansing or bathing, and could thus indicate either sprinkling or immersion in water. Now the prefix *ñāṉa* when added to the term was meant to imply that this was a holy act resulting in wisdom received. Interestingly, the root term *nāṉam* in *snāṉam* also means wisdom (*ñāṉasnāṉam* then more accurately equates to wise-wise bathing), so the additional *ñāṉa* then stresses on the *result* of the ceremonial cleansing rather than on bathing as a *ritual act*. Perhaps because of this implicit presence of "wise" in *snāṉam*, the early Lutheran translators attempted to differentiate between the Hindu rituals of purification, understood literally as purifying the soul from the Protestant ritual, which was a symbolic act of purification:

> I intimated, that the Use of *Baptism* or sprinkling of Water among *Christians, for the washing away of Original Sin, was only* symbolic, representing unto our Faith the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which purifieth the Conscience…not that Water, properly and materially speaking, can wash away our Sins, and purifie our immaterial Spirits. (Ziegenbalg 1719: 218–19)

Although *ñāṉasnāṉam* recalls similarities in ritual practice with rival religious systems, by emphasizing the symbolic significance of bathing over and above the necessity of fulfilling a ritual act within the Protestant context, a space is created to develop conceptual particularities that will present the term with a particular "Protestant" meaning beyond other latent connotations.

Ñāṉasnāṉam did gain currency as a Protestant Tamil term and dictionary entries that demarcated the term as "Christian" have played their part in this. While Fabricius did not distinguish *ñāṉasnāṉam* as a Christian term in his dictionary in attributing the meaning, "the holy baptism, the washing of regeneration," he does specify that to give and receive baptism is "to christen" and "to be christened" thus linking the term with Christian usage. Under *snāṉam*, Winslow gives "bathing, ablution" and in a note he elaborates on the seven kinds of *snāṉam* or purification counted by Brahmans, after which he differentiates *ñāṉasnāṉam* as a term of Christian usage. Rottler, too, distinguishes the term as Christian and adds the meaning "spiritual-washing." Like Winslow, he also separately lists the "seven types of purification for the Brahman." This act of identifying terms as "Christian usage" formalizes the boundaries of some of these terms so that they are not co-opted once again into non-Protestant circulation. Although Bower (1852a: 16) mentions *jalasamscara* (purifying rite with water) and *jala Bishcah* (consecrating with water) as alternatives, neither were used in his *Union Version*. The *Revised Version* retained *ñāṉasnāṉam* despite both *ñāṉa* and *snāṉam* being Sanskrit terms. Once again there is discursive backing for retaining the term: "After some discussion about the relative merit of *ñāṉasnāṉam*...the general mind of the Committee was that in order to avoid the danger of possible controversies, where no question of doctrine were meant to be touched, the term *ñāṉasnāṉam* should be retained" (Report of the Committee on their discussion of terms for the Revised Version, BFBS Tamil file No. 3: 1923–26: 6).

Following nineteenth-century marking of this term as "Christian", when Tamils began compiling dictionaries in the twentieth century, the term *ñāṉasnāṉam* continued to appear as a Christian term. For instance, in P. Sankaranarayana's *An English-Tamil Etymological Dictionary* (1911), the entry for "baptism" was that it was a ritual act specific to the Christian religion. *Ñāṉasnaṉam* has been conferred further recognition in the twentieth century as a standard Christian term by the Madras University Tamil Lexicon (1982) and is defined as an important cleansing ritual performed to enter the Christian religion. A point to note, however, is that while Bible translators and missionaries compiling dictionaries downplayed the "ritual element" of *ñāṉasnāṉam*, both these twentieth-century dictionaries reintroduce the ritual aspect into Christian usage. This term is a clear example of a Tamil word calqued by Protestant translators, acquiring a "Christian" meaning and circulating as a parallel term with comparable but not identical meaning.

The translators of the *Tiruviviliyam* have followed this same principle but with different terms, and so introduced a completely new term combined from Tamil roots—*tirumuḻuku*—where "*tiru*" is holy and "*muḻuku*" refers to dipping. Since *tirumuḻuku* favors immersion over sprinkling of water, it is surprising that all the denominations represented in the translation committee agreed to this.[15] However, the new term was coined by putting two roots together much the same way as *ñāṉasnāṉam* except that it used Tamil roots instead of Sanskrit. Not familiar outside Christian circles in the way *snāṉam* was, it is likely that "*tirumuḻuku*" will also come to be known as a specifically Christian term. Both terms were invented for Catholic and Protestant use; they were effective because the concept of ritual cleansing was familiar to Tamil culture. This parity in religious ritual and concept had thus the potential to undermine the Christian notion of baptism. However, this was managed through strategic claims: although the actual performance of the rite was a visible reminder of similar acts of cleansing that were important to other religious traditions, the Protestants were careful to emphasize that this cleansing was symbolic, and further, that it conferred holiness and wisdom on the baptized. The two terms *ñāṉasnāṉam* and *tirumuḻuku* have acquired currency as "Protestant" because they are not terms that refer in practice to identical religious beliefs or ritual practices. The result of new combinations, these terms could be ascribed Protestant meaning because it was possible to draw significant differences in practice.

Terms Used with No Lexical Changes

Existing terms from the Sanskrit and Tamil religious vocabulary reused in the Protestant context without any changes at all form the fourth category. These terms were not altered at the lexical or semantic levels, so they did not require the removal or alteration of old meanings to make way for new; however, the old meanings were meant to refer to a new Protestant signified. This category of terms that were not altered in any way for Protestant use have posed the most powerful challenge to Protestant concepts as the following discussion of *pali* and *kaṭavuḷ* demonstrate.

Before we move on to the next section where I compare *tēvaṉ* and *kaṭavuḷ*, I will discuss the term *pali* to illustrate my point regarding perceptions of terms that "share" conceptual meaning with non-Protestant terms. The use of the term *pali* has an unusual history, which nevertheless proves my point. Although, like the term *kaṭavuḷ*, it was adopted without any lexical changes its co-option into the

Protestant fold was possible primarily because unlike *kaṭavuḷ*, both translators and readers seem to be of the opinion that the meaning of the term *pali* differed considerably in "Hindu" and "Protestant" contexts. Despite a few regular detractors of the term, *pali* has functioned to denote two different conceptions of "sacrifice" in the Protestant and non-Protestant contexts. This has worked because both those who support the term and those who are critical of it offer the view that the "Protestant" idea of sacrifice is entirely different from the "Hindu" notion of sacrifice. As we will see later, this *conceptual difference* functions as a key factor in the Protestant discourse on sacred terms and offers sufficient reason to accept *pali* without any lexical changes as a Protestant term.

The difficulty of conveying the idea of Christ's sacrifice of his life as central to Christian belief generated much debate especially in the nineteenth century. The earliest Catholic and Protestant translations used *pali*,[16] a Sanskrit loan-term in most Indian languages, including Tamil. Nineteenth-century Protestant critics of the term accused Catholics of adopting it at first without regarding the original meaning of the word. It was strongly criticized by some as "abhorrent to our true idea of sacrifice," suggesting rather the fury and vindictiveness of the Divine Being (Slater 1875: 51). Protestant missionaries emphasized the Christian idea of sacrifice as different from what they thought the Hindu conception was. Although a few missionaries were aware that "sacrifice" in the Hindu context had several connotations—from sacrifice as an act of worship of higher gods to the slaughtering of animals to appease demons—the controversy surrounding *pali* has tended to focus on the understanding that Hindu practices emphasized killing to offer blood sacrifice to demons and lesser gods and was man's gift to appease an incensed divine being.

In the eighteenth century, Ziegenbalg distinguished public offerings made only by Brahmins from offerings made by *panṭārams* (non-Brahmin priests) in the temples of the *grāmadēvtās* (village or local gods). Of the six "principal offerings" he lists,[17] he names the fifth *pali*, which he defined in these terms: "The fifth offering is known as the Bali. It is a slaughter offering in the temple of the Gramadevatas...there is the [sacrificial] altar Balipitha on which they behead the goats, cocks and swine; usually the Talaiyaris slay the animals because the Brahmins do not kill anything that has life" (Trans. Jeyaraj 2005: 182). This linking of sacrificial animal slaughter to non-Brahmanical practices connoted by the term *pali* is repeated in Tamil and Sanskrit dictionaries. For instance, Monier-Williams's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1872) defines the term as a "propitiatory oblation (esp. an offering of portions of food . . . to certain gods, semi-divine beings, household divinities, spirits, men, birds, other animals and all creatures including lifeless objects;)." Rottler's entry under *pali* is likewise "an animal, or its flesh offered to Durga"; and *narpali* (human sacrifice) "a human sacrifice to Cali." In all these attributed meanings, *pali* is associated with human propitiation of an angry deity; and crucially, this "deity" is considered either a local deity or a powerful demon. However, what is significant is that although Ziegenbalg and others after him differentiate between these different types of sacrifices and terms for sacrifice, it is the term *pali* indicating animal or human blood sacrifice to appease a lower god or demon that is repeatedly used as the equivalent of Christ's sacrifice.

The nineteenth-century LMS missionary T. E. Slater (1875), among those who were against the use of *pali* in Protestant translations, offers several arguments against the term. He blames the Catholic missionaries who, "took the word *bali*, . . . and introduced it into the Bible" without discriminating that it was a word "steeped in the vilest associations—a word solely and inseparably connected, as a slain offering, with the worship of demons or of the bloodthirsty Kali . . ." (39). He further contended that instead of the idea of Christ's sacrifice as "the highest and benignest revelation of Divine love," they had used a term that conveyed "simply enmity, terror, cruelty, pain, and death, in which the God of the Bible takes no pleasure,—being nothing but a bribe of blood offered to ward off a dreaded, evil influence!" (42). In his opinion, this would give even the more enlightened Hindus an idea of Christian sacrifice far inferior to that which they had received from their own sacred books. Slater was not the only one to have such misgivings; a brief reference to the controversy on the use of *pali* in the Bible in *The Indian Evangelical Review* (1874) emphasized how different the Christian notion of sacrifice was supposed to be from the understanding of the term *pali* in Hindu contexts:

> After this explanation of *bali*, feeding the hungry *rakshasas* and *bhutas* in order to draw their attention away from their real god and his processions, I tried to find out whether this is the general meaning of *bali* among the heathen, and I am certain that it only means offerings to Kali in any form, or to *rakshasas* or *bhutas*, and

> can never be compared with or used for the sacrifice of Christ. I only wonder how this abominable word could stand so long in the Bible, and be used by missionaries and native helpers. These latter ought to have found it out. ("Notes and Intelligence" 1874: 515)

Slater writes in dismay of a "native missionary" who distinctly asserted that he preferred *pali* because it conveyed the idea that the sacrifice of Christ appeased the wrath of God. Slater and a few others believed that Tamils would continue to attach such negative "Hindu" associations if the Bible were read without the help of missionaries.

However, those who supported the use of *pali* seem to have been far greater in number. The arguments in favor of *pali* suggest that there is a significant difference perceived between the "Hindu" and "Christian" concepts of sacrifice, and it is precisely this perception that makes *pali* more acceptable. The two were differentiated conceptually: while the Hindus attempted to appease a malicious lower god or demon, the Christian idea was explained as God's (not human) sacrifice and God's *benign* gift to "save" the sinful human. Therefore, from this viewpoint, although there is blood sacrifice involved the nature and purpose of the sacrifice are contrasted in missionary discussions of the term.

The alternatives available to the translators were *yajna* or *yagya* (both of which mean an "act of worship," "devotion," "offering," or "sacrifice"), also Sanskrit in origin, both of which Slater and a few others felt better expressed the sacredness of Christian sacrifice. In contrast to *pali*, *Yajna* was understood as a sacrificial rite that was an act of worship offered to a principal God. Winslow's entries for the two terms *pali* and *yajna* suggested the difference in usage. While he explains the former term as "Sacrifice of an animal, regarded as food for a ferocious deity…to obtain favours," the latter is glossed simply as "a sacrifice" and "an oblation." Slater cites Rev. Kittel's *Tract on Sacrifice* (1872)[18] to support his argument that *yajna*, being the one word to denote ancient religious sacrifice among the Aryans to which great sacredness was attributed, served the Christian idea much better. Slater (1875: 43) distinguished this term mentioned in the Vedas, "regarded by true Hindus as a divine institution" from the "heathen bali," a childish present to pacify a fury. Slater's attack of *pali* works by separating "true Hinduism," presumably high Brahmanical, from the lower "heathenish" forms and so it is not difficult to see why he supports the appropriation of *yajna* for Protestant use. Slater's favoring of *yajna* over *pali* is an excellent example of appropriating what he considers "higher" Hindu principles and practices while rejecting elements classified as "low" and therefore more "devilish."[19]

Evidently, Slater's concern was twofold. First, that the language used by Protestant Indians should highlight the differences between Christianity and Hinduism. Slater's second concern was that Indians should not associate Protestant Christianity with what were considered as lower elements in Hinduism. Increasing knowledge of the complexity of Hinduism among some Protestant missionaries meant that as the nineteenth century progressed, there was an understanding that the higher forms of Hindu beliefs were more sophisticated, possessing concepts that were not very dissimilar from Christian concepts. Such missionaries often colluded with the established hierarchies within Hinduism and co-opted elements considered superior in Hinduism, in order to present Christianity as the ultimate fulfillment of Hinduism.[20] Where does the use of *pali* fit in this scenario? Despite *pali*'s repeated construction as undesirable "lower," "heathen" Hindu practice, and the claim that the "Hindu" idea of *pali* was the *opposite* of the "Christian" idea of "sacrifice," it is *pali* that is used in each translation of the Tamil Bible (and in most other Indian languages) from 1714 to 1995. Fabricius used *pali* in his Old Testament (1898); Rhenius's revision of 1844 also used *pali* in the Old Testament and for Christ's sacrifice in the New Testament except once when he uses *aṭikkapattār* (i.e., Christ "was beaten," 1 Cor 5:7); and similarly, the *Union Version, Revised Version*, and the *Tiruviviliyam* all use *pali*. One late nineteenth-century Protestant missionary writes of *pali* as a good example of a successful reworking of the original meaning. Referring to the controversy over the use of the word *pali*, this missionary gives an extract from a German missionary's letter in South India as evidence that inappropriate terms could acquire "appropriate" meanings: "None of the twenty catechists saw anything wrong in the use of the word; the reason being that they all grew up in the church, reading the word bali in the Bible from childhood, and perhaps have even been taught so in the seminary" ("Notes and Intelligence" 1874: 514). Clearly, the term *pali* has remained firmly within the Protestant lexicon until the twentieth century.

Significantly, the term was not modified lexically or used with qualifying prefixes or suffixes but was required to function as a Protestant term because of the widely held view that the term conveyed entirely different connotations in "Protestant" and "Hindu" contexts. Why is the "lower" *pali* brought into Protestant Tamil? And, why was *yajna* ignored repeatedly despite the broad claim that technically it was more equivalent to the Protestant conception of sacrifice? I suggest that the answers to both questions lie in *yajna*'s perceived conceptual similarity with the Protestant idea of sacrifice and hence its potential to render the boundaries between the two religions indistinct. Whereas *pali* by not referring in its original context to an idea thought of as "Protestant" could be co-opted for its perceived ability to point to a conceptual difference between Protestant and Hindu beliefs. All that was required for *pali* to function as an effective Protestant term was that it signify a wholly Protestant concept of sacrifice within the Protestant context, which it was able to do only because it *did not* in any case refer to an identical concept (but only similar practice, if that) in another religious system.

Despite Slater's misgivings, it is apparent that there were many who argued that the term had been reworked into the Protestant context and by at least the late nineteenth century, *pali* was understood by Protestant Tamils (and Protestants speaking other Indian languages) as functioning well within the Christian context with no residual associations with Hindu practices in their minds. A brief record of the popularity of the term *pali* in Protestant circles in nineteenth-century South India presents an interesting counterpoint to Slater's anxieties described earlier. In the course of instructing their local catechists, missionaries working in the "Canara district" in 1873 reported the following:

> Among other things, we objected strongly to the use of the word *bali* for the sacrifice of Christ, contending that it means only and exclusively an offering to *kali,* or to *rakshasas* or demons…We proposed the word *yajna,* and requested our catechists to make it a point of study during next year, to learn to understand the meaning of the word *bali*, as the heathen understand it and report about it next time we meet. I do not think that our advice has as yet done much good, as I hear again and again preached *bali*. ("Notes and Intelligence" 1874: 514)

For most Protestant Tamils at least, any unseemly elements in the term have been bleached out and it now performs a predominantly Protestant function.

Should we then consider the Protestant appropriation of the term *pali* a "success"? In that, it seems to function to all intents and purposes as a Protestant term with a separate "Protestant meaning" different from other religious contexts. Once again Slater (1875: 45) posits etymology as an impartial arbiter with which to judge whether a term has been successfully incorporated: "etymological definition, though trifling when a word's imported meaning is sure, becomes indispensable when the meaning is unfixed, as in the case before us, where the Christian and heathen ideas of sacrifice, as popularly held, so widely differ." But Slater and others like him do not take into account that etymologies of words are also constructs that can serve specific purposes at certain historical moments—a factor that is amply illustrated in the following section.

Strategies of Appropriation: "Tēvan̲" versus "Kaṭavuḷ"

From the four categories given above, I have chosen to focus at greater length on two terms for "God"—*tēvan̲* and *kaṭavuḷ*. The use of these two terms has been at the center of most discussions on the merits of different versions of the Tamil Bible since the beginning of the twentieth century, featuring prominently in all arguments either against or in favor of translations. In fact, in popular Protestant Tamil discourse these specific translations have been identified so closely with the use of each term, that the *Union Version* is often referred to as the "*tēvan̲* Bible" while the *Tiruviviliyam* is referred to as the "*kaṭavuḷ* Bible." There is a repeated discursive call on the two terms to represent not only two very different translations but ultimately two points of view within the community, so much so that the Protestant Tamil community from about the mid-twentieth century has perceived its split across important ideological (including doctrinal) and social lines in terms of those who support the term *tēvan̲* and those who back the use of *kaṭavuḷ*. Moreover, so far in this chapter the focus of my examination has been on translation strategies to engage with why different translators chose particular terms and how these choices have fed the larger narrative that seeks to present Protestant Christianity as unique. This focus is unavoidable since in most cases there is little surviving evidence from before the early twentieth century of how these terms were received by Protestant Tamils; hence drawing definite conclusions from the limited information available would be largely speculative. However, from the beginning of the twentieth century there is greater indication from various sections of the community as to where their partiality lies and, although this is still not the full picture, it is possible to trace broad preferences and the rationale offered to support each term.

Hence the following examination of the two terms combines an analysis of translators' strategic adoption of each term and an analysis of how these have circulated and been deployed by different sections of the community. The reading practices of Protestant Tamils indicate that support for or opposition to either term follows a certain pattern. The first step involves the construction of an etymological profile for each term as a basis from which to argue in its favor. Building on this constructed history of the linguistic makeup of the preferred term, the argument then turns to usage, focusing primarily on how familiar the term is either among Tamils across the religious and caste spectrum or within the Protestant Tamil community. The final argument is determined by the extent to which individuals (translators or readers) favor universal familiarity over exclusivity.

Tēvaṉ

Tēvaṉ derives from the Sanskrit root *div* with the primary meaning "shining." However, *tēvaṉ* is a modification of *tēvar*, a "tamilized" form of the Sanskrit *dēva*. *Tēvar* has historically been associated with "lesser" divine beings combining both male and female divine principles (*tēva* and *tēvi*). Incidentally, this is also the title of a particular Tamil caste known as *tēvar or tēvarkal*. There had been considerable hesitation over the use of "*tēva*" in Christian translations. Most Indian-language translations of the Bible had avoided it, especially so in Tamil, because the term is usually used in the plural (*tēvarkal*) to refer to the entire pantheon of Hindu Gods or to minor deities. *Tēvaṉ* was first used in the Tamil Bible of 1850 known as "the Tentative Version."[21] After it was introduced into the "Tentative Version" of the Tamil Bible by Percival's Committee in 1850,[22] it was subsequently adopted for the *Union Version* by the BFBS Revision Committee headed by Henry Bower in the mid-nineteenth century.

Although the term was not sectarian, its association with "Hindu" polytheism and with minor gods was considered to be to its detriment. In fact, as Kulendran observes, on occasion when *tevā* did occur in Hindu usage to refer to an almighty god, it was with a qualifying term added to it.[23] It is evident that in Tamil Śaivite usage the term *tēvā* on its own was not considered adequate to refer to a Supreme God but had to be qualified by combining a term that added to its value. Thus, the term worked more as an adjective that suggested the divine aspect rather than as an independent noun. Somewhat similar to this Hindu practice, the early Protestant translators too used the Tamilized "*tēvaṉ*" in various compounds to denote Protestant concepts.[24]

Significantly, however, until the nineteenth century, the term *tēvar* was used independently by Catholics (especially Nobili) and Protestants only on occasions where "false gods" were referred to: that is, "*poyyāna tēvarkaḷ*" (false gods). The letter written by the Danish missionaries to the Tamil people (1755) clearly differentiates between *parāparaṉ*, the Protestant God, and the false *tēvarkaḷ* (gods) and *tēvikaḷ* (goddesses), which were to be rejected. In his *A Dictionary: Malabar and English* (1786), Fabricius marks the term *tēvaṉ* with an asterisk to denote its Sanskrit origin and differentiates the singular from the plural: for *tēvaṉ* and *teyvam*, he gives "God" and "the Godhead" but for *tēvar* and *tēvarkaḷ*, "the fabulous gods of the heathen."[25] Winslow's *Dictionary* published a few years before work on the *Union Version* begins does not attribute any Christian significance to the term *tēvaṉ*,[26] and similarly Rottler provides three primary non-Christian meanings for *tēvaṉ*: a God, a king, and a title given to certain tribes or a titular name added to the proper names of feudal chieftains. Under *tēvar* (*tēvarkaḷ* in modern usage) in the plural, Rottler gives "the gods of the heathen" and mentions the names of five gods according to the Śaiva *akamās*.[27] It is thus clear that in the first half of the nineteenth century Protestant missionary scholars of Tamil do not as yet attribute a particularly Protestant significance to the term on etymological grounds, but associate "tēvar" in the plural with "false" gods.

Henry Bower (Preface 1841), who headed the revision committee of the *Union Version*, himself showed a similar preference for *parāparaṉ* over *tēvaṉ*. He had compiled a *Biblical and Theological Dictionary* (Tamil title, *Vēta Akarāti* 1841) prior to his appointment as the chief reviser of the Tamil Bible to enable Tamil Christians, both clergy and laity, to understand biblical terms and teachings (3). He defined both terms *parāparaṉ* and *tevaṉ*, based on his understanding of Fabricius's version. It is evident from the annotation and space devoted to each that he gave *parāparaṉ* precedence as a Christian term over *tēvaṉ*. The entry for *tēvaṉ* starts with a number of associations: "Common name for god. True god. God of Gods. False god. Idol"[28] and mentions that the term collectively refers to the entire Hindu pantheon. According to him, Satan was the "*tēvaṉ*" of the world; lords, judges, and other elderly were also called *tēvaṉ*; and last, the stomach was the preoccupation, and thus the *tēvaṉ*, of those who sought carnal or worldly pleasures (345; my translation). While Bower apparently associated popular usage of *tēvaṉ* with lower divinities, his six-page entry for *parāparaṉ* in the same dictionary begins with the series of positive attributes that Protestant missionaries were claiming exclusively for the Protestant God: a being who was "Omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. With no beginning or end. Unchanging. Self-begotten. Complete. Holy. Just. Reason. Truth. Love. Mercy. Creator and Preserver. One who is life and intelligence; Incomparable and Eternal" (389–95; my translation).[29] Bower confers similar distinction on the term *parāparaṉ* in his *A Vocabulary English and Tamil Comprehending Terms Relating to Christian Theology* (1852b). Compiled to serve "schools and private scholars," he states in his introduction that "only words of common and principal usage have been given" (v). This is further proof that at the time he writes this, it is *parāparaṉ* that is in "common and principal usage" among Protestant Tamils.

Given this history, it is significant that Bower as the chief translator of the *Union Version*, along with his committee, chose to follow Percival in replacing *parāparaṉ* with *tēvaṉ*. It is for the first time that the translators do not add any prefixes or suffixes to it, an ironic contrast to prevailing Tamil Hindu practice, where the term is used mainly to form compounds when referring to a supreme deity. Of all the Sanskrit and Tamil terms discussed so far, this term is apparently the least capable of conveying the Protestant sense for "God". Perhaps the attraction for the word lay, as has often been suggested, in the understanding that in Tamil it could not directly be connected with any specific Hindu God, something that could not be claimed for either *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* or *parāparaṉ*. However, once again the logic of presenting the Protestant God as one, unified, Supreme Being, lord of all, required that the term *tēva**r*** be modified from the plural to the masculine singular *tēvaṉ*.

Much more useful than the etymology of this term is an examination of how its etymology was reconstructed and used rhetorically by both supporters and detractors of the term. Such reconstructions can be linked to other considerations that acquired greater importance during the translation of this version. As mentioned in chapter one, uniformity of translated terms across the Indian languages was a primary concern in the nineteenth century. *Tēvaṉ*, with its close phonetic resemblance to the Latin *Deus* and the Greek *Theos*, as well as deriving from a Sanskrit root available in all Indian languages, satisfied the requirements of uniformity more than any other Tamil term. Mill (1828) had categorically proposed that "God be always translated…DEVA (the same word as DEUS)—being the proper term for the Hindu Jupiter, Indra and his subordinate deities…" and Wilson (1828) agrees with him: "God…dev is the same word as theos and Deus, and may be used wherever they are used. It is the corresponding term to *Dieu*, God, &c. in the European languages and like them admits of a plural sense…" (Mill 1828: 1, 25). Accordingly, Bower argued in favor of *tēvaṉ* along these lines later in the century:

> In the new version the word Devan has been adopted, a word common to Sanskrit and all the Indian languages; and in using it we do not translate, but simply transliterate the Greek *Theos*, and the Latin *Deus*. The equivalent in Tamil for the Saxon word God would certainly be kadavul which in sound and signification is similar; for the meaning of kadavul is good. But this term is peculiar only to Tamil; whereas Devan (derived from a Sanskrit word signifying light) is common to all the Indian languages. (Lawrence 1926)[30]

Perhaps unaware of Bower's justification to the contrary, Tiliander (1974: 85) concludes: "The Lat. Deus could hardly have influenced the choice." However, this appears to have been a strong motivating factor as it was confirmed by Bower's contemporaries who approved of the choice for these very reasons. Ashton Dibb (1873: 118), writing two years after the publication of the *Union Version*, gave the choice of *tēvaṉ* as one of the reasons for the valuable contribution the version made: "it introduced that Tamil word for God which is most simple, most suitable to all connexions, and most likely to meet with general adoption." Rev. Carr (BFBS Editorial Correspondence, Tamil file 5: 1929–33), a secretary of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, in a letter to Kilgour, head of the London Editorial Sub-Committee of BFBS, echoed this view in the twentieth century: he supported Bower's choice of *tēvaṉ* because he perceived a link with the Greek *Theos* and the Latin *Deus*. Similarly, at the point when a decision on whether to retain *tēvaṉ* or change to *kaṭavuḷ* had to be taken, Kilgour recalled this claimed link between *tēvaṉ* and European languages in a letter to Organe at the Madras Auxiliary of BFBS:

> It was also pointed out that the word formerly used "*Dēva*" even though it is connected with Sanskrit conveyed the thought of

> "God" not only in all other parts of India where in some form it has been accepted by the Christians as well as by those of other religions but also in all tongues European and others which have some form of the Latin word "*Deus*." (BFBS Editorial Correspondence, Tamil file 5: 1929–33, dated August 5, 1926)

Kilgour's letter confirms that the nineteenth-century decision to use *tēvaṉ* had been influenced more by the desire for uniformity across all Indian languages and a perceived connection with European languages rather than etymological considerations *within* specific individual languages.

This linking of the Tamil *tēvaṉ* with other languages, both Indian and European, is suggested well into twentieth-century scholarly analyses of Protestant Tamil vocabulary. Tiliander (1974: 74–5) observes that the recurrence of the root *div* in Indo-European languages was notable, "leading scholars to assume a common Indo-European deity."[31] And by commencing his own discussion of "deva" with the comment that he begins his analysis with a term, "which is linguistically closest to western vocabulary" (74) and his subsequent analysis of the term with reference to European and Indian languages—Latin, Greek, Spanish, French, Italian, Sanskrit, Kannada, Malayalam, and Telugu—Tiliander continues to foreground the supposed greater universal appeal of the term. His examination of how the term was used in several Hindu contexts (including Sanskrit and Tamil Śaivite literature) as well as previous Protestant translations of the Bible points out that *tēva* was not widely used on its own; yet, his explanation for the incorporation of the term in the *Union Version* contradicts his careful analysis thus far: "Probably the use of the word Devan for God was widespread at that time" (85). I suggest instead that *tēvaṉ* was co-opted into the Tamil Bible precisely because it was *not* widely used in existing Tamil scriptures to denote a Supreme Being or deity. By not already conveying the required Protestant meaning in non-Protestant contexts, and by virtue of the space it allowed for a minor lexical change—from *tēva/r* to *tēvaṉ*—it was perceived to have grown in its capacity to convey a "unique" Protestant concept.

The reception of this term among Protestant Tamil audiences shows some significant differences in opinion. There was some opposition to the change from *parāparaṉ* to *tēvaṉ*, and we have evidence of this from early nineteenth-century Lutherans. The earliest evidence comes from Vedanayaka Sastri's essay titled *Pututtiruttaliṉ* *cōtaṉai* (the Ordeal of the New Corrections, n.d.),[32] written against proposed revisions of Fabricius's version, in the first half of the nineteenth century.[33] While on the whole Sastri was critical of what he saw as substituting terms with inappropriate synonyms for the sake of change, his criticism of the shift from *parāparaṉ* to *tēvaṉ* is particularly significant. In his discussion of the corrections to the first chapter of Genesis, Sastri condemns the use of *tēvaṉ* in the place of the "glorious" term *parāparaṉ*.[34] His reasons are: *tēvaṉ* is a common noun that could be used to refer to all the gods of the "heathen" who claimed to have thirty-three million gods; each sect and caste had its own particular tutelary head or "*tēvaṉ*"; and last, Fabricius had used *tēvaṉ* wherever the heathens referred to the Christian God (*parāparaṉ*) without respect (my translation). Significantly, he concluded his condemnation of the revisers' use of *tēvaṉ* in the Bible as a grievous "sin" in its resemblance to "heathen" usage. Sastri's arguments against *tēvaṉ* continued to be offered by the Tamil Lutheran Church as reason for not accepting the term or the *Union Version*.

In a remarkable turn of events, however, *tēvaṉ* has become the most widely accepted term among twentieth-century Protestant Tamils. Once the *Union Version* was recognized as the standard Tamil Bible, *tēvaṉ* acquired legitimacy as the standard Protestant term for God. *Tēvaṉ* has entered the devotional language of prayers, sermons, and hymns on a far wider scale than previous terms used in the Tamil Bible. Although the official Lutheran Church Bible continued to be Fabricius's version using *parāparaṉ*, the *Union Version* also penetrated Lutheran homes on the back of the controversy over the *Revised Version* in the middle of the twentieth century. At present, the dominant opinion among a majority of Protestant Tamils is that *tēvaṉ* is the particular and unique term for the Protestant God unlike the alternatives that were used by all other religious groups in Tamil society. An explanation for such a contradiction, where a term is acknowledged as least appropriate but is embraced as the best term to represent the particularity or even peculiarity of the Protestant conception of God, must be sought in the various overlapping social and cultural realities within which the term has circulated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One of the reasons for the comparatively easy establishment of the term in Protestant usage could be the coinciding of the *Union Version*'s publication with increased literacy among Protestant Tamil converts in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although Protestant mission schools had been open since the first decades of the eighteenth century, these were few in number and there was no established policy for education until the nineteenth century. Leading to the Educational Despatch of 1854, there was controversy about who was responsible for and what should comprise the "education" of "natives": mission or government; the inclusion of religious teaching; and the introduction of English literature into the school curriculum were all fiercely debated throughout the nineteenth century. Grafe (1990) points out that all policies discussed and framed previously tended to favor governmental support for high-level education benefiting the elite at the cost of universal education. However, the "grant-in-aid" system proposed by the Educational Despatch allowed wider scope for private and missionary enterprise particularly at the lower levels (194). Besides increased numbers in primary schools, the second half of the nineteenth century also saw the establishment of several institutions of higher education. The Indian university system was formally instituted on the pattern of London University in 1857 and the universities of Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay were opened. Presidency College in Madras was instituted in 1840. The Madras Medical College (which was started as a medical school in 1835) gained its present status in 1850 and its first batch of students graduated in 1852. Similarly, Madras Christian College (at first, the Central Institution) was affiliated to Madras University in 1865, and the Sarah Tucker Institutions were established in 1858 with branches all over Tirunelveli district.[35] This is by no means an exhaustive list of all the Christian educational institutions that were established in the late nineteenth century but as Grafe points out (1990: 200), around 1900, Tamil Christians were, after Tamil Brahmins, the most highly literate group and according to the 1901 *Census of India*, in the Madras Presidency, about 14 percent of the Christian population was literate as against 6 percent of the Hindu population and 7 percent of the Muslim population.

This increased literacy among Protestant Tamils within the space of a few decades led to a significant shift in Protestant reading practices from the second half of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, the laity, largely illiterate, accessed the Tamil Bible largely through the authority of the missionaries and their "catechists" and a memory created out of aural effect. It seems that eighteenth-century Protestant Tamils did not find the change from *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* to *parāparaṉ* within the span of one generation a point for critical dissent. There is no surviving evidence of opposition or conflict as a result of the change from *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* to *parāparaṉ* in the Lutheran churches. The sixteen surviving letters written by mid-eighteenth-century catechists show their ease with both terms, moving within the same letter from one to another with no apparent discomfort. Unlike the eighteenth century where literacy and Bible reading were confined to the few Tamil literate itinerant catechists, Protestant congregations in the nineteenth century were moving toward becoming a wider reading audience. Thus, the first signs of protest emerge in the first half of the nineteenth century with the literate, high-caste, non-clerical Protestant Tamils, mainly from the Lutheran Church, raising objections to the replacement of Fabricius's *parāparaṉ* with *tēvaṉ*.

However, the primacy of the biblical *text* as the primary authoritative basis of truth becomes a reality for large sections of the community only in the late nineteenth century with increasing levels of literacy among Protestant Tamils of both high and low castes. The *Union Version* was the first translation that was bought and read in Protestant homes as part of family and private devotion. Now the Bible moved from the church to the home, changing reading practices: that is, besides being read as a corporate text in church services it began to acquire a central place in private devotional experience. Divested of most other visible forms of religious ritual, the act of reading the Bible becomes a central Protestant ritual for Protestant Tamils. An important component of this ritual devotion was the memorizing of passages from the Bible, often presented with pride as a significant part of Protestant practice.[36] Hence this translation became the first version that was known intimately and as a personal devotional text committed to memory by large numbers of individual Protestant Tamils. Memory, now created from the reading of a printed text by large sections of the community, helped to entrench *tēvaṉ* as intrinsic to the Tamil Bible. *Tēvaṉ* as a result successfully established itself as the primary Protestant term for God.

Among Protestant Tamil detractors of the term *tēvaṉ*, there is a popular belief today that this term was brought into the Tamil Bible on the advice of the Jaffna Śaivite Arumuga Navalar,[37] who assisted Percival out of a malicious intent that the Protestant God should come to be known not as the supreme God but merely as one of the many gods the Hindus believed in. This rumor continues to circulate today: several Protestant clergymen I interviewed, who were against the use of *tēvaṉ*, offered this account as a "historical fact" by way of explaining the appearance of this "inadequate" term in the Tamil

Bible. Their narrative portrays it as one man's hatred for Christianity manifested in the introduction of an inappropriate term for the Christian concept of a supreme deity. This is convenient since they hesitate to censure missionary translators for "errors" in translation. Moreover, both Kulendran and Packiamuthu in their histories of the Tamil Bible rightly refute this account on the grounds that Navalar did not translate the Bible on his own and that he was under the authority of Percival and the Jaffna Revision Committee in all translation decisions that were taken. Thus, they place responsibility for the use of *tēvaṉ* on the nineteenth-century missionaries based both in Sri Lanka and Tamilnad who were involved in the translation process (Kulendran 1967: 133–4; Packiamuthu 2000: 203–7). Kulendran (1967: 135) also criticizes the confident belief of these missionaries—that a new meaning could be infused into a preexisting term—as dangerous, especially in the instance of Tamil as it possesses several grammars that control the direction in which the language moves. Kulendran's criticism of nineteenth-century translators' assumption that they could successfully appropriate some terms for Protestant use is accurate. They found that in practice, such terms continued to be used in their old contexts and with their old meanings intact. "*Tēvaṉ*" is unfamiliar to Hindu Tamils who continue to use it in its plural sense; there is no widespread awareness among them that it is a Protestant Tamil term to refer to the Protestant God. Thus, old meanings challenge the new, resulting in an uneasy tension in usage.

While *tēvaṉ* is definitely a part of the written tradition of Protestant Tamil literature, the term has not become as much a part of the oral vocabulary or tradition of Protestant Tamils. Instead, as Packiamuthu (2000) points out, Protestants use *āṇṭavar* (lord), *kaṭavuḷ* (God), *cāmi* (master), and *karttar* (creator), which are terms commonly found in Tamil Hindu speech patterns.[38] However, lay Protestant Tamils do use *tēvaṉ* in other nonformal written forms such as personal letters. That after a hundred and fifty years of its introduction *tēvaṉ* has not become an integral part of the spoken vocabulary of Protestant Tamils but remains largely confined to their written tradition, Packiamuthu sees as evidence of the "failure" of the term in the ultimate analysis (207). Although this argument is persuasive, the strong and continued opposition to the use of the term *kaṭavuḷ* in twentieth-century Tamil translations of the Bible undermines Packiamuthu's conclusion. While *kaṭavuḷ* may exist in the speech patterns of some Protestant Tamils, most sections of the community would prefer to keep the term out of the formal written text. The case with *tēvaṉ* is opposite. There is considerable attachment to *tēvaṉ* as the standard Protestant term for God in the formal context of the translated Bible. Almost all lay Protestants I interviewed were in favor of *tēvaṉ* as a term that specifically denoted the Protestant deity. This was often expressed as "it is a term for *our* God," demonstrating strong group identification with the use of the term. Even those who were aware of the negative etymological connotations of the term continued to insist that only this term served to mark Protestant identity as distinct. The combination of factors, which have enabled *tēvaṉ* to be established as the Tamil equivalent for the supreme Protestant God, have equally contributed to the opposition to the use of the term *kaṭavuḷ*.

Such wide-scale support for using the term *tēvaṉ* is an excellent example of a case where the etymological considerations of a term become irrelevant. Once a term is adopted and identified as "representing" the interests of the entire community, its adequacy in terms of its etymological and semantic make-up ceases to matter. Instead, most arguments are circular: the use of a particular term is supported because it is seen as representative. The term is representative because it conveys the correct meaning. It best conveys meaning because it represents the community. As a result, attempts to replace *tēvaṉ* with *kaṭavuḷ* using arguments of etymology are not very effective, as we will see with the following discussion of *kaṭavuḷ*.

Kaṭavuḷ

Of the terms for "God" discussed so far this term, introduced to the Tamil Bible for the first time in the early twentieth century, is the only one that is of Tamil origin pointing to a conception of deity that is monotheistic and genderless. Arguments offered in favor of *kaṭavuḷ* have operated by contrasting the etymological break-up of *kaṭavuḷ* with *tēvaṉ*. As Tiliander (1974: 133) points out, the Tamil root *kaṭa*, that is, "to pass over," means both to pass over from one place to another and to surpass or transcend human speech, mind, and existence; the root *uḷ* means "existence"; together, the two roots combine to form "transcendent existence." Fabricius's entry in his Malabar-English dictionary for katavul is "the Lord, God." Winslow's analysis of the term was: "*kaṭa*, surpassing, or *kaṭam*, bounded in, or by whom all are bound, the all-comprehensive being by whom universal nature is bounded." While giving the primary meaning of the term as "the deity, the Supreme Being," in a note he also draws attention to the fact that "some philologists identify this word with the Anglo-Saxon word, *God*." Despite these attributed meanings, this term was not used in any version of the Tamil Bible until the twentieth century.

When the process of revising the Tamil Bible was under way in the early twentieth century, discussion on the comparative merits of the terms *tēvaṉ* and *kaṭavuḷ* continued vigorously.[39] Incorporated first by the *Revised Version* (1956), it remained in subsequent translations, including the *Tiruviviliyam* (1995). Translators emphasized the monotheistic characteristic of the term *kaṭavuḷ;* that it was unique to the Tamil language; and that the term was familiar to all Tamils, both Protestant and non-Protestant. This decision was momentous in the history of the Tamil Bible. For the first time the explicitly stated discursive strategies of the translators focused not on locating conceptual *differences* but on identifying a linguistic term that might function as a *conceptual equivalent* of the Protestant notion of God. Whether equivalence is achieved through this term in actual fact or not, it is this decision that has given rise to the longest controversy in the history of the Bible in Tamil translation.

Since one of the main reasons for opposition to the twentieth-century Bible revisions was the displacement of *tēvaṉ* in favor of *kaṭavuḷ*, the meaning of *kaṭavuḷ* has been reviewed and discussed in detail by translators as well as Protestant Tamil readers both before and after the publication of the two twentieth-century translations. Well before the publication of the *Revised Version*, there was opposition among Protestant Tamils over the proposal to use *kaṭavuḷ* in the Tamil Bible. This reached such proportions that BFBS editors in London were concerned about the success of the translation, leading to further investigation of the two competing terms. Kilgour wrote to Organe, secretary of the Madras Auxiliary Bible Society (BFBS Editorial Correspondence, Tamil file 4: 1926–28, letter dated August 5, 1926), that the London Office was investigating the merits of the change from *tēvaṉ* to *kaṭavuḷ* independent of the Madras Auxiliary as it was concerned about the controversy that had risen. The Committee wanted to know the history of the translation of the terms for God in Tamil, the meaning and usage of *kaṭavuḷ* and "what the ordinary Tamil peasant uses in prayer—Christian and non-Christian" (BFBS Editorial Correspondence, Tamil file 4: 1926–28, letter dated, September 16, 1926).

A. C. Clayton, a missionary in Tamilnad in the twentieth century, was one of those who argued in favor of *kaṭavuḷ* on mainly etymological grounds. In his "Note on 'kadavul'" he sent to the London Editorial Committee of the BFBS (Tamil file No. 4: 1926–28), he mentioned that the term had two "similar roots" with two meanings both serving Protestant purpose. He further observed, "In any case 'katavul' is the highest and purest word in Tamil for The Deity. The commentators on the 'Kural,'[40] the ancient Tamil classic uses 'katavul.'" According to Clayton, "*kaṭavuḷ*" was also used for the Supreme God in ordinary popular usage. He pointed to another great advantage—that the term had no female form whereas both *parāparaṉ* and *tēvaṉ* included the feminine in *parāparai* and *tēvi*. He ended by emphasizing that *tēvaṉ* "is a word that is associated with the idea of many gods, goddesses and godlings. It is a word that has lost prestige…it is a poor and unsatisfactory rendering of 'God who made the world' in Acts 17:24, where '*kaṭavuḷ*' is the right word" (note 15). However, this careful etymological argument, which constructs a favorable blueprint for *kaṭavuḷ* in contrast to *tēvaṉ*, finds limited support as we will see later.

The response from several others offers a further defense of *kaṭavuḷ* arguing that the term was already "familiar" to all sections of Tamils. Professor A. S. Geden, a former Wesleyan Missionary in Madras, speaking of his experience at the end of the nineteenth century, maintains that *kaṭavuḷ* was not alien but a term used by the common people with whom he came in contact and *tēvaṉ* was looked on as the word of the missionaries (BFBS Editorial Correspondence, Tamil file 4: 1926–28, dated, letter to Organe, February 10, 1927).[41] Professor J. D. Asirvadam [interview, February 5, 1924 (BFBS Tamil file No. 3: 1923–26)] of Madras Christian College pointed out to Kilgour in 1924 that neither of the terms used in both previous versions of the Tamil Bible (Fabricius's and the *Union Version*) were in common use: "The one version uses a word [*parāparaṉ*] meaning 'Highest,' 'Almighty,' and the other uses the Sanskrit word 'Dēvan,' which to the ordinary Tamil only suggests the idea of 'clear,' 'shining,' and can be used of 'gods' rather than 'God.' The ordinary word used by the Tamil speaker is *kadavul*." Both Geden's and Asirvadam's responses to the editor's queries emphasize one point above others—that *kaṭavuḷ* was a term already familiar to Tamils, both literate and illiterate, and that it was not an "alien" term. I will return to this binary opposition between "familiar" and "alien" later to demonstrate that such dichotomies are constructs that are set up to support other constructs. Further, as we will see, the arguments are framed by rhetorical claims on behalf of the rival merits of "familiar to a few" versus "familiar to all." As will become apparent this clearly feeds into the wider debate we have been considering so far, whether Protestant Christianity should present itself as similar to or different from other religious traditions.

Among those Protestant Tamils whose "opinion" is recorded in Bible Society files is Paul Lawrence, about whom all we know is that he was a recent convert to Protestant Christianity working for the MABS and closely involved with the revision of the Tamil Bible:

> The common Hindu villager when he prays uses all these words (*swāmy, Āndavaṉ, Bhagavāṉ, Īswaraṉ, Para Brahman, Dēvaṉ, Mahā Dēvaṉ, Sarwa Īswaran, Kadavul*) pronouncing most of them in a string. To him all these are interchangeable and he considers that they all apply to the one God. When he grows to be specially religious then he restricts himself to the use of words peculiar to his [sect] . . . [However] *Swāmy*, *āndavaṉ* and *kadavul* are used by all. (BFBS Tamil file No. 3: 1923–26)[42]

Lawrence makes an important point here—that it was customary for Tamils to use several terms "interchangeably" while addressing "God" so that in oral devotional practice, it is hard to link or fix a single term with one particular god. It is this fluidity in devotional speech patterns that makes it harder for Protestant translators to fix boundaries of difference between cognates in order to harness a particular term as peculiarly "Protestant." Although this is true among present-day Protestant Tamils as well (*tēvaṉ*, *āṇṭavar*, *cāmi*, and ayy*ā* are often used interchangeably in prayers)[43] the difficulty lies in the increasingly dominant Protestant view that Protestants ought not to use the term *kaṭavuḷ* in either formal, written textual contexts or in everyday speech and devotional language because it denotes a particularly non-Protestant conception of God. Importantly, by way of contrast, Lawrence analyzes the etymological limits of *tēvaṉ* when used for the Protestant God and his observation from the 1920s, nearly half a century after the incorporation of *tēvaṉ* in the Tamil Bible, tells us that it had acquired a veneer of Protestant meaning among most Protestant Tamils that did not exist in non-Protestant contexts.

Kilgour's attempts to analyze the merits of using *kaṭavuḷ* in the *Revised Version* underline the extent to which the acceptance of the new translation depended on using a term that would be accepted by all as an appropriate term for God. His letter to Organe (August 5, 1926) reveals that the BFBS editorial committees viewed the shift to *kaṭavuḷ* as unnecessarily "radical":

> Even your reply did not convince us that in Tamil, the earliest language in India to have any translation of the Scripture,...it was wise to make a change in such an important word after more than a century of its use...We can quite conceive that such a radical change might wreck what otherwise might be a very acceptable translation.

However, Kilgour was later informed that *tēvaṉ* had been in use in the Tamil Bible and among Protestant Tamils only since 1864, which in his opinion made the change to *kaṭavuḷ* "less abrupt" (Letter to Organe, February 10, 1927). The rationale was that if a term had not been in use for very long, it would be easier to substitute it with another. But contemporary evidence in the Bible Society files for the 1930s reveals that many Protestant Tamils already strongly identified *tēvaṉ* as the only Protestant term for God and vehemently disputed arguments in favor of *kaṭavuḷ*.

There was severe criticism of the use of *kaṭavuḷ* when draft revisions were circulated. As the following discussion illustrates, the Protestant Tamil community was not very concerned with the comparative merits of the etymological roots of the two terms. Unlike those who supported use of the term *kaṭavuḷ* offering the logic of wide familiarity among *all* Tamil speakers, those who favored *tēvaṉ* emphasized that it had become a familiar and personal term among *Protestant Tamils* and should thus be valued above any other term. A few Protestant Tamils, who sent their comments to the Bible Society, wrote that though the revision was an improvement on the existing translation, they doubted "the wisdom of rendering God by *kadavul*" and preferred *tēvaṉ* (BFBS Tamil file No. 3: 1923–26).[44] Resistance to *kaṭavuḷ* only grew stronger as the twentieth century progressed. Edward Jesudian (1945: 24)[45] defends *tēvaṉ* using etymological arguments to claim that *tēvaṉ* did not mean "anything less than katavul" and that "the word katavul now used in the Revised Version connotes something which is not strictly what the Christian conception of God is." There were some missionaries who shared their view. Rev. Carr (Letter to Kilgour 1929) thought it true that the Hindu idea of God was impersonal and the personal *tēvaṉ* was not used in Tamil classics, but that was where the Christian message could be presented as *different*:

> But through our Christian message we have to introduce to India the personal; and *the old translators were quite well aware when they adopted devan that it is not in accord with the terminology most commonly in use in Tamil literature*...Why should we at this stage introduce another word, well known to, but discarded by, the old translators—a word which does not convey what the Christian message wishes to convey? (Emphasis added)

Kilgour, by then persuaded that *kaṭavuḷ* was acceptable, informed Carr that "We of the Bible Society are always anxious that the opinions of those speaking their mother tongue should have full weight in the various versions" (Letter, May 14, 1929). So, in an interesting turn of events, Kilgour presented the change as the result of a desire expressed collectively by all Protestant Tamil readers of the revised Bible.

Opposition to the use of *kaṭavuḷ*, which began during the course of the revision, continued until well after the publication of the *Revised Version* in 1956. As a result, the Bible Society had to stop the publication of this version. Protestant Tamil congregations, with the exception of a few Lutheran churches and seminaries who have used the *Revised Version*, did not accept the use of *kaṭavuḷ*. At present the *Revised Version* is used only in a few theological colleges and seminaries as an example of what they consider to be the most academically accurate and literal Tamil translation extant.

It is significant that despite the strong resistance to *tēvaṉ* in the *Revised Version*, the Translation Committee responsible for the *Tiruviviliyam* (1995) decided once again in favor of *kaṭavuḷ*. This renewed opposition among Protestant Tamils. Their main reason for dissent has been that *tēvaṉ* had by then been established as the Protestant term for God and they did not want it displaced by what to them was a "Hindu" term that they preferred to avoid. Protestant clergy of various denominations too have made only desultory attempts to use *kaṭavuḷ* as part of the liturgy, prayers, and sermons. Rather, church leaders and "pastors" of Pentecostal and Evangelical churches strongly condemn the use of *kaṭavuḷ* as "ungodly." Tiliander's (1974: 132–3) rather sanguine comments from the mid-1970s have not been borne out: "Kadavul as name for God had . . . come to stay. It was met with general acceptance. Naturally the previous terms, Sarvesuran, Parabaran and Devan continued in use, but Kadavul slowly made its way. It is not likely to be substituted in future translations. Kadavul has become common property for all Christians in the Tamil area . . . " Comments such as this ignore the complexity of fixing one set of terms as "common" for "all Christians." Tiliander, while quite willing to engage with a plurality of meanings across the religious spectrum in Tamil society, does not adequately take into consideration the break-up of the community along lines of denominational and linguistic affiliations in his analysis of Christian Tamil terminology. For instance, with the increasing strength of the Pentecostal Movement in South India in the 1980s and 1990s and their penetration into more established church traditions, there have been greater denominational shifts post 1970s. By and large Pentecostal Tamils have viewed the use of *kaṭavuḷ* as a sign of corrosive irreligious beliefs. Thus, while some Protestant Tamils, translators and readers, approve of the "pure Tamil"[46] *kaṭavuḷ* as a term with the most appropriate meaning, most others see its inclusion as divisive and a betrayal of the true Protestant concept of God. In their view, this brings undesirable elements such as politicized language use from the public, political sphere into the sacred domain. We will return to this discussion in chapter three.

To sum up then, our examination of the choice of the four different terms for God, *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ*, *parāparaṉ*, *tēvaṉ*, and *kaṭavuḷ*, has revealed that although they belong to three of four different translation categories enumerated in the first half of this chapter, very similar justifications have been offered in favor of each. The arguments that present *kaṭavuḷ* as the closest Tamil equivalent to the Protestant concept of God are most convincing, but ironically, they continue to be the least accepted by most Protestant Tamils. This paradox is difficult to explain as long as we confine ourselves to a comparative discussion of etymologies. Instead it is important to take into account the constructed nature of etymologies and the way these are put to use by different participants in the debate. Moreover, lexical changes allow the construction of distinct etymologies tailored for one's purposes. Therefore, in cases such as *tēvaṉ* the community understands lexical changes, however minor, as better able to signal difference between religions, whereas it is suspicious when confronted by a near-equivalent term that reveals corresponding structures of belief in rival faiths. *Kaṭavuḷ* has been least successful because by referring to a concept of God identical to Protestant notions outside Protestant territory, not only does it preclude the necessity of lexical modifications to "make" it more Protestant but it also challenges the dominant Protestant narrative that claims a unique space for itself in a multifaith context. This accounts for the anomaly that terms demonstrating conceptual "equivalence" to the greatest degree between languages and between Protestant and non-Protestant traditions are thought to be the least appropriate. *Kaṭavuḷ*, by signifying a parallel concept in non-Protestant circles, is perceived to blur the boundaries between "Protestant" and "non-Protestant," and therefore seen by most as jeopardizing that uniqueness of Protestant belief and identity acutely.

Conclusions

From what we have seen so far, the religious idiom of Tamil becomes a site of conflict when it reveals parity rather than an absence of concepts and vocabulary between the contesting religions. The rhetorical claims and counterclaims offered regarding the "sacred" nature of the terms in the Tamil Bible bear out Benjamin's proposition in "The Task of the Translator" (1968) that there is no a priori meaning that is translated but that meaning is constituted in and through translation. I would argue further that it is not just meaning but notions of equivalence too that are constituted in and through translation. Just as much as the process of translating involves a process of "re-making" sacred meanings, the accretion of sacred meanings to terms draws attention to how equivalence is constructed between languages and religions. Thus each new attempt at translation or revision reopens the debate on equivalence. We have been examining some linguistic anomalies in the construction of Protestant Tamil vocabulary in order to ask what textual and reading practices have been employed to assert equivalence and what these signify in terms of ideological or cultural positionings. We have seen evidence that semantic "equivalence" is not a "natural" result of translation, but is pronounced on translations by performative speech acts to authenticate them (Hermans 2007): hence a particular Tamil translation is perceived as conveying the Bible's unique sacred message by declaring it an "equivalent"—lexical, semantic, and theological.

In fact, the inconsistencies we have investigated in the adoption of some terms at the expense of others have indicated the overriding concern of a majority of those who have produced and consumed the translated Bible in Tamil to have been not so much the semantic sameness between the original and its translation but to what extent the translated Bible could be circulated as a unique sacred message. As a result, taking into account the artifice of equivalence offers fresh perspectives on how Protestant Tamils have constructed their individual and collective identities. On the one hand, acts of authentication become doubly important in this context as, if the translated Bible is to function as an "authentic" sacred text, its users *must* be able to believe that some form of equivalence has been reached. But, on the other hand, the Tamil context is complicated by a long history of contesting authentications claiming different translations as *the* authentic translation: it is in this situation where more than one translation is declared as having achieved semantic equivalence that the cracks begin to appear more obviously.

I have attempted to demonstrate that the significance of the choice of particular terms and disputes over the appropriateness of sacred terms lies not so much in what was chosen and at the expense of which possible alternatives but in what was emphasized and what might be disguised through those choices. I borrow an argument offered by Willis Barnstone (1993) on the translation of the Bible to explain the Tamil case we have seen so far. Discussing how the Bible in its present form has been constructed by processes of translation, Barnstone points to the history of "disguisement" in translations of the Bible: "translation serves, in divine matters, not as an instrument for linguistic fidelity or historical accuracy but rather as a way of hiding likeness in proving or disproving the truth and import of an earlier text, praising or condemning the ancestral message, or, as with the Bible, revealing or concealing a prehistory" (144). Barnstone's argument regarding how and why biblical translations have concealed similarities with its prehistory is an important one and what he argues regarding the Bible's diachronic relationship with its own past can be extended to the translated Bible's relations with its competitors in the South Asian context. This "disguising" has occurred at two levels: first, concealing uncomfortable hermeneutical differences between Christian denominations in its own immediate European past and second, concealing similarities with rival religious systems in South India. Terms that indicate a close similarity with non-Protestant conceptions of the sacred have been avoided or included with reluctance after much dispute among translators or rejected altogether by Protestant Tamil readers. Both these concerns have serious implications for the way Protestant Tamils have conceived themselves at different stages in this history and for visible differences of opinion among Protestant Tamils in the twentieth century.

Therefore, pertinent questions to foreground in this debate is of how the relationship between terms and their meanings proceed once terms are released through translation into new contexts; and why debates on how terms are or ought to be constructed and understood continue to occur in efforts to fix a permanent Protestant sacred in Tamil. To a great extent, arguments based on the etymological appropriateness or inappropriateness of terms tend to function as academic exercises and do not offer a complete explanation for patterns of circulation in practice. The plural levels of circulation for the terms discussed here suggest that control over the permutations that terms take on is not an easy matter and so in a rather circular movement, while appropriate meanings are "fixed" for and in the name of the sacred, the sacred is called upon to safeguard key terms whenever there appears to be a threat that might undermine those meanings. While Bourdieu's (1991) argument that there is nothing intrinsically natural or neutral in the choice of language for communication is amply demonstrated in the continuing debate over the "right" terminology for the Tamil Bible, I argue that acts of translation can make the "*delegated power* of words" more visible and thereby point to the authority that comes to language from outside it. We have seen plenty of evidence that attempts at revisions or retranslations of sacred texts are disruptive because they expose the wider social processes beyond the sacred domain that create and maintain the legitimacy of sacred words as *sacred*. Discussions and, more so, disagreements over the appropriateness of individual terms between translators magnify the this-worldly, specific contexts within which "God's Word" is reproduced. Moreover, contestation of the legitimacy of sacred terms force into the same field what is believed to be the atemporal, sacralized nature of biblical language and the temporal social conditions within which languages are interpreted and used.

So while the dominant rhetoric has been to identify an unchanging atemporal sacred Tamil harnessed for the Bible, changes in political and social conditions with shifting relations of power between translators and readers and between different groups of Protestant Tamil readers have undermined the lasting legitimacy of one set of terms. Terms are accepted, appropriated, rejected, or even calqued in particular ways to suit specific requirements for specific members of the community at any given point. In chapter three, I will show how the rhetorical power of the "Pure Tamil Movement" was simultaneously evoked and rejected by Protestant Tamils in the twentieth century for similar purposes. Herein lies the value of historicizing discursive assertions made on behalf of word etymologies; linking them to language factors outside the religious community exposes the ways in which readers of the translated Bibles have related to and deployed claims of linguistic exclusivity in order to affirm sacred exclusivity.

3

Symbolic Versions: The Power of Language Registers

> The great mass of the Indian readers, both mission workers and others, simply accept what is put before them.
>
> —BFBS, Tamil File 4: 1926–28

This chapter contradicts the epigraph given here.[1] It examines two significant moments in the history of the Tamil Bible when serious protest was mobilized against two different Bible translation projects. Central to these protests was the attempt to equate a "correct" Tamil register for Protestant use with a collective identity for Protestant Tamils. In chapter two, I focused on the discursive claims made on individual terms, examining how competing etymological assertions and claims of equivalence were mobilized on behalf of each to develop "Protestant meanings" for Tamil words; we also investigated how these terms circulated simultaneously in Protestant and non-Protestant contexts thereby drawing disparate religious traditions to a shared linguistic field. In this chapter, I intend to broaden the frame to analyze attitudes to language registers and what purpose claims made on behalf of or against particular language registers served in articulating Protestant Tamil identities. We will examine anxieties regarding fixing an appropriate Tamil register for the circulation of the Protestant Tamil Bible in the context of wider language politics in Tamil-speaking South India, where the complex layering of different languages (Sanskrit, Telugu, and Marathi with Tamil) in the early nineteenth century and attempts to "purify" Tamil in the twentieth century reveal the complex intersection of religious and linguistic concerns among Protestant Tamils.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, language plays a crucial role in constituting the "sacred" for a religious community. Since the sacred is expressed and experienced through language, sharing a "faith" demands consenting to a shared language. The question is whether when a faith has been experienced in one language register, using a different language register alters the *way one experiences* the faith or the very *nature* of that faith? In the Protestant Tamil context, disputes over experiencing faith in a particular language register are often presented in terms of a challenge to the very nature of the Protestant faith. Thus, studying prevailing notions of "good" language among Protestant Tamils offers valuable insight into how definitions of what it means to be "Protestant" have been discursively constructed at different historical points. I therefore investigate how and why rhetorical claims regarding religious identities are made by ascribing truth status to some translations of the Bible and not others. Examining these discursive practices that construct particular Bible versions as solely representative reveal that the answer lies not as much within particular translations but in the perceived ability of some language registers to convey the sacred over others and in the contexts within which these "sacred registers" of language are developed and used. While such diverse claims on language registers challenge the notion of a homogenous community, pointing to competing social formations and cultural identifications, they also indicate how religious faith is discursively experienced, categorized, and consumed in and through language.

In this context, taking into account the social power of different speaker groups to make rhetorical claims on behalf of different language registers is especially important. While it has been argued that language mirrors the status of its various speaker groups (Ghosh 2006), it is worthwhile to examine how far speaker groups have the power to lay claims on particular language registers in order to differentiate themselves from their "others." As I will demonstrate in the discussion that follows, conflicting notions of which Tamil translation is the more sacred version calls attention to the social histories of speaker groups within the community and related differences in language practices in colonial South India over and above disputes over doctrinal disagreements. The history of competing language claims among Protestant Tamils is, for this reason, a key to unraveling how for Protestant Tamils, language becomes a bearer of religious difference from non-Protestants but equally a marker of social difference internally along lines of caste, class, and region. Significantly, the attempt to establish one "correct" standard of language for all by claiming linguistically "pure" registers as "sacred" is made most emphatically when Protestant

Tamils desire to self-consciously assert life as an identifiable religious community.

This chapter foregrounds two significant moments in the history of the Tamil Bible when sections of the Protestant Tamil community expressed critical dissent against the revision of their preferred versions, first in the nineteenth and then in the twentieth century. The first was the protest launched against Charles Rhenius's revision of the Tamil Bible in the early nineteenth century by the Evangelical congregations of Tancavur (Tanjore) led by the Protestant Tamil poet Vedanayaka Sastri (1774–1864).[2] Similarly, Protestant Tamil protest in the twentieth century occurred in response to the *Revised Version* (1956) and the *Tiruviviliyam* (1995). In both cases, disagreements over language use occur between different groups of Protestant Tamils. Unfortunately, there is little surviving evidence from the eighteenth century of Protestant Tamil opinion on language registers, choice of vocabulary, or the style of the then-extant versions of the Tamil Bible. Eighteenth-century Lutheran missionary translators leave no record of the responses of their catechists or congregations to the language register of the translated Bible. The few surviving letters written by early to mid-eighteenth-century Tamil catechists (Aaron, Ambrosio, Diogo, Rayanaikken, and Rayappen) to Gotthilf Auguste Francke in Halle are formal and conventional pieces of Tamil writing, meant to display their devotion and loyalty to their new faith. Apart from reporting occasional tension with Catholic catechists or between members of different castes converted into the Lutheran fold, these letters, disappointingly, include no comment on missionary language use or the translated Bible.

However, within the next hundred years there was a growing perception of a distinct Protestant Tamil register as coterminous with Protestant discourse in South India. This register is often referred to as "missionary Tamil." As early as 1825, a letter written by a Protestant Tamil priest Vicuvaca Nadan solicits the support of "his fellow Native Priests and Superiors" for the revision of the existing Tamil Bible in order to remove the "missionary Tamil" used in it (my translation).[3] This label continues to be used, somewhat disparagingly, along with others such as "padre" or "Christian Tamil," among Tamil speakers till today to identify Protestant (and Catholic) use. Tamil's strict diglossia, with two distinct registers—the spoken (kotcai Tamil) and the more formal written style governed by rigorous grammatical rules—has meant that any mingling of the two is either frowned upon or ridiculed. “Missionary Tamil” can be defined broadly as a combination of these two registers, with spoken registers entering the written form and the written not following grammatical strictures at all times (e.g., Tamil sentences spoken or written in Western syntax). The discussion that follows traces Protestant Tamil attitudes to this “missionary” or “Christian Tamil” as well as discursive claims made on different Tamil registers as “correct” for Protestant use in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Responses to Bible Revision: Language, Caste, and Religious Polemics in the Early Nineteenth Century

> I the general Poet of all the congregations examined and found in one page 10 or 20 . . . mistakes and with great sorrow wrote the first book Wedaviautchiapatram against their corrections [of the Tamil Bible] and sent it to the Revd Mr Haubroe. But notwithstanding I earnestly begged him to consider that this deed was not good and that it was a great obstacle and infinite injury to Christianity[;] he did not regard it, but rejected my advice . . . (Vedanayaka Sastri (1828), catalogued as VPC-VNS 42)

Such statements of protest written in criticism of an early nineteenth-century project to revise the existing Tamil Bible are the earliest surviving records of dissent between some Protestant Tamil congregations and Protestant missionaries. The controversy began as a result of the appointment of Charles Rhenius by the BFBS in 1814 to revise Fabricius’s version of the Old and New Testaments. Between 1823 and 1833, Vedanayaka Sastri, representing several members of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran churches in Tancavur and Madras, wrote letters and petitions of protest, which have survived as part of the Vedanayaka Sastri Collection at United Theological College, Bangalore. Opposition reached a peak around 1825 when Rhenius’s revision committee circulated parts of the revised New Testament for opinion. Despite this opposition, BFBS published Rhenius’s New Testament in 1833 and the entire revised Bible in 1840.

Evidence of this first moment of Protestant Tamil dissent has survived in the form of a number of unpublished manuscript versions of pamphlets and petitions written by Vedanayaka Sastri, some of these as he claims composed by him on behalf of the Tancavur

Evangelical Church. In *Sadipedaga sambaveney* or "Dialogue on the Distinction of Caste" (hereafter *Dialogue*) surviving in both Tamil and in English, dated 1828,[4] Sastri names the other texts in which "the unnatural language and confusions" of Bible revision were dealt with: "They have been shewn in our books viz. *Vedaviatchiaupatram* [Letter on the Dispute over the Bible], *Kuttravilackam* [Explanation of Mistakes], *Puduthiruttalin Kukkural* [Noise of New Corrections] and *Pudutiruttalin Chodeney* [Tribulation of the Revision]." All except "Explanation of Mistakes" have survived as manuscript copies. He states in both *Dialogue* and *Pututtiruttalin cotanai* [*Tribulation of New Corrections*] that *Vedaviatchiaupatram* was the first he wrote, followed by the others after the missionaries ignored it. Sastri reveals in his English preface to *Vedaviatchiaupatram* (hereafter *Letter*) that it was written in 1820 to "expose an unjust correction and to protect the holy religion."

Noise of New Corrections (hereafter *Noise*) elaborating on the "first cruelty," that is, the revising of the Tamil Bible, was written jointly by the congregation of the Tancavur Evangelical Church in 1825 in response to a letter (written in Tamil) received from Vicuvaca Nadan, "a Native Priest at Combaconum," dated September 3, 1823. Written in Tamil[5] (with an English preface), in eight chapters, *Noise* is a detailed refutation of every accusation or claim made by Vicuvaca Nadan[6] in support of Rhenius's revisions. It ends with a detailed textual analysis of the differences in translation of the Lord's Prayer in the Fabricius and Rhenius' versions. Written in Tamil after *Noise*, "*Tribulation of the New Corrections*," (hereafter *Tribulation*) may have also had a preface and been dated originally, but the preface has not survived with the rest of the document. The main body of *Tribulation* is a close textual comparison of the first chapters of the book of Genesis and the Gospel of Matthew in Fabricius's version with that of Rhenius's, by which Sastri attempts to prove that Fabricius's translation was superior to Rhenius's revision. To this, Sastri appended letters of petition written by the congregations of Madras and Tancavur to the "new missionaries who have created the new revision" (dated 1819 and 1827) and a letter (dated 1833) addressed to Sastri from John Devasahayam, a Protestant Tamil who was heading missionary schools in Tranquebar from about 1817.[7] In the Tamil and English prefaces to a treatise entitled *Jāti-tiruttaliṉ payittiyam* ("The Foolishness of Amending Caste"), Sastri addresses John Devasahayam directly stating that he was writing in response to Devasahayam's letters to David Pilley,[8] dated September 18, 1828, in which Devasahayam defends the new policies on caste introduced by the "junior" missionaries.

Sastri and other Tamil Evangelical Lutherans launched a spirited critique of the Bible revision undertaken by Rhenius (missionary in Madras from 1814) and L. P. Haubroe (missionary in Tancavur from 1819) dubbed "junior" or "new missionaries," but included others assisting them. Sastri contrasts these with the "previous missionaries," referring to Ziegenbalg and Fabricius. The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran argument in brief was first, Fabricius's translation was in excellent Tamil: Fabricius's knowledge of Tamil philology had resulted in a Tamil Bible that "could be plainly understood by the learned and unlearned and put...in a most agreeable Tamil,...like the joys of the garden of Eden..." (*Dialogue* 1828). Second, they argued that the present efforts at revision only corrupted previous translations: Rhenius altered the first Book of Moses, the Gospels, Epistles, the Common prayer and hymn Book "so materially that they are now neither Eleckanam [grammatical] nor common Tamil both dialects being mixed and spoiled..." (*Dialogue* 1828). Finally, the revision was an imposition by the missionaries on Protestant Tamils who had not demanded a revision of the Tamil Bible they used: Sastri accused the new missionaries of revising the Bible under the guise of friendship, pretending it was an act of goodwill, when they were only spoiling and destroying their entire Bible and prayers (*Noise* 1825).

Significantly, in almost all these treatises, Sastri links the issue of Bible translation with other differences that he and his fellow Evangelical congregations had with the "new" missionaries regarding observing caste distinctions in the church. In *Dialogue* and the English preface to *Saditeratoo* ("Explaining Caste") dated January 28, 1829, Sastri focuses on controversial issues of caste between the congregations and missionaries of the Tancavur Evangelical Church.[9] But while doing so, he repeatedly connects the caste dispute with disagreement over Bible revision; in his mind, at least, the two are linked as twin "cruelties" imposed by the new missionaries on the Lutheran congregations. Copley (1997) points out that the SPG missionary records do not show any evidence of the correspondence from Sastri on issues of caste; similarly, there is no evidence in BFBS records of this discontent expressed by Sastri or the Tamil Evangelical Lutherans on recent Bible revisions. Placed beside each other, the two sets of records may as well be speaking two different histories of Tamil Bible translation in the same period. Absent from the missionary archives, Sastri's written protest is a tantalizing presence that questions decisions regarding language use within the Protestant context and the ways in which early nineteenth-century Protestant Tamils were self-consciously debating issues of language and translation to construct religious identities.

A brief outline of the wider contexts within which Sastri's attempts to demarcate boundaries of acceptable language use can be located would be a useful starting point. The impulse behind the protest launched by Sastri and other Vellala[10] Lutheran Evangelical Tamils against the revision of Fabricius's version becomes apparent when placed within the context of several political and cultural shifts in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century South India and Tancavur in particular. Tancavur, ruled in succession by non-Tamil dynasties, the Telugu Nayaks (independent from Vijayanagar from 1565), the Marathas (from 1676), and then the British (from 1855 but first ceded in 1799), was in a period of transition. While both the Nayak and Maratha rulers patronized the arts, especially literature and music, the Tancavur royal court developed into a multilingual center of excellence in Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi.[11] Further, within Protestant missions in South India in this period, there was a marked transition in missionary presence and influence from Lutheran to Anglican. An important effect of these shifts for the Lutheran Evangelical Tamils is that it becomes necessary to clearly define matters of linguistic "purity" and literary "taste," in order to be able to speak of a "Protestant tradition" for Tamils.

Not possessing a significant local history (as compared to Hindu, Islamic, or even Catholic traditions) at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and aware of the derisive gaze of these rival religious groups, possessing the Bible in a highly regarded Tamil register thus acquires greater importance. Moreover, preserving linguistic purity within the community becomes a matter of significant concern when there are perceived to be overwhelming influxes from other languages. Sastri and his contemporaries are highly conscious of the kind of Tamil in use in the Bible at a time when there were strong linguistic and literary influences from Telugu and Marathi (besides Sanskrit) on Tamil. This mixing of languages is also recorded among earlier generations of Protestant congregations in Tamil-speaking areas of the previous century. In 1738, M. Geister had found that "the language spoken by those who principally attended the Cuddalore churches was a mixture of Portuguese, Tamul, Teloogoo, with some Dutch, English, and French; and this confusion rendered it very difficult for him to make himself understood" (Hough 1845: 476–7). However, it is only at this point in the community's history in the first half of the nineteenth century when a singular collective identity is first articulated by a section of Protestant Tamils that there is a parallel claim to a unique tradition of language use and translated scripture.

Moreover, this is also a period when besides missionaries, non-missionary British scholars had begun to study Indian languages in Madras. The study of language, central to both missionary and imperial projects, was one of the primary undertakings of the scholars at the College of Fort St. George (founded in 1812). Set up primarily to facilitate governance and imperial command, the College provided a unique environment for language study by bringing together in one place some of the foremost scholars of Tamil available in early nineteenth-century South India. From the second decade of the nineteenth century, language dictionaries and grammars for Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit using a combination of Indian and European traditions of grammar and phonological analysis were compiled for print. Thomas Trautmann (2006, 2009) has argued that Francis Ellis, a central figure in this intellectual and institutional engagement with languages, and Tamil pundits at the college were undertaking a comparative philological study of the South Indian languages as a "Dravidian family." They were compiling dictionaries and grammars that were concerned with the relations between Tamil and Sanskrit as "original languages" and the other Dravidian languages as mixtures of the two. Equally important at this point was the transition in attitudes to languages during this period; as Lisa Mitchell's (2009) study of Telugu in the early nineteenth century indicates, languages began to be viewed as separate and "parallel objects," which also influenced ideas about what constituted "knowing" a language and how one might relate to it.

Sastri's attempts to set recognizable boundaries that would determine the inclusion and exclusion of terms and language registers from the translated Bible must also be seen against this backdrop of contemporary scholarship on the relationship between languages. As we will see, Sastri's quarrel was not over theological or denominational differences or even conflicting doctrinal interpretations of the biblical text. The focus instead was on the use of the Tamil language, in particular, whether or not an appropriate register of Tamil was being used in the revisions of the Tamil Bible. This concern of Sastri and his fellow protesters to identify an appropriate language register indicates their self-consciousness regarding the close link between language use and their social status within Tamil society. Three main points can be summarized from Sastri's writings in support of Fabricius: first, that Fabricius was assisted by "right" or good-quality Tamil scholars while Rhenius by unscholarly Tamils; second, that while Fabricius translated the Bible into "pure," "literary" Tamil, Rhenius translated into "corrupt" Tamil; and third, in offering a comparative analysis of several translations of the Bible, Sastri sets up rules of Tamil grammar as the appropriate arbiter of good translation.

Pure Tamil versus *Cutchēry* Tamil

Sastri sets up an important opposition between "pure" Tamil and what he calls "*cutchēry*" Tamil.[12] "*Cutchēry*" was a term referring to the land revenue collector's offices and the courts and the vocabulary associated with these (Trautmann 2001) but Sastri used the term generically to indicate a Tamil mixed with Telugu, replete with colloquialisms, region-specific words, and low-caste registers. For want of "mature knowledge of the Tamil language," Sastri maintained, the new missionaries "changed the translations of our invaluable Bible etc into Cutchery Tamil, Telingu Tamil and a comical and barbarous language" (*Dialogue* 1828). He rhetorically questions whether the Protestant Tamil community could possibly be expected to reject their golden version in favor of a translation that mixes high and low, old and new, and *cutchēry* Tamil and Telugu, which was "hateful to their souls" (*Noise*). Does his use of "hateful" have a double-meaning here: could he merely be saying that Protestant Tamils dislike the *cutchēry* Tamil used in the Bible or that this *cutchēry* Tamil was harmful to their souls? The latter would be in keeping with his wider claim that good religion requires good language.

Significantly, several Protestant missionaries, including Ziegenbalg and Fabricius, had grappled with the task of developing a language register in Tamil that could mediate between the high (poetic) and low (common) Tamil registers for the purposes of Protestant writing and translations. Charles Rhenius (1836: ii) was the most recent of these, writing "a grammar of the vernacular Tamil, as it is spoken and written by well-bred Tamulians, yet so as to avoid the errors against grammar which are found among them. It steers between the high and vulgar Tamil, avoids the intricacies of the former, and the barbarism of the latter." His intention is to keep "vulgarisms" out of this register, precisely what Sastri thinks Rhenius is unable to do in his version of the New Testament.

When Sastri analyzes the merits of individual words over others, he opposes "*ilakkaṇa col*," that is, grammatically correct words, to "*vaḻakka col*," or colloquial, "customary," and regional Tamil words. In *Noise*, for instance, he cites forty-six words from the first chapter of Fabricius's Gospel of Matthew as evidence that they were all literary words used according to grammatical rules. He points out that all forty-six were found in dictionaries and *nikanṭukaḷ*,[13] and were neither colloquial nor words of an "ugly, improper" nature, spoken by lower castes or hunter tribes of the forests and mountains; nor were they the "blabbering of foreigners" who could not speak the language. By implication, the new versions in his opinion did just that. The new revisions, according to Sastri, use colloquial Tamil and destroy the meaning and grammar of the original texts found in the previous translations. The present revisers rendered the work of the previous missionaries "detestable and inelegant," and "filled them with words not only ungrammatical, unmeaning and unsystimatical [*sic*], but also irreligious, perverting the Word of God, and . . . made those books to be laughed at by all who hear them altering them and mixing in them all the Cutchery [mixed] Tamil and Gentoo [Telugu] words" (*Dialogue* 1828). Moreover, he alleges that Rhenius had altered the revisions "so materially that they are now neither *Elachanam* [grammatical] nor *Common* Tamil, both dialects being mixed and spoiled" ("Humble Address," *Explaining Caste* 1829; emphasis added). Sastri also claims that the new revisions had made the earlier translations defective (the Tamil word used, *paḻutu*, also means rotten, ruin, a lie) and had completely spoilt them (*Tribulation*). We begin to glimpse here Sastri's apprehension regarding maintaining boundaries between Tamil and Telugu, and between common and high registers within Tamil. It is this mixing of "proper" and "improper" Tamil that Sastri finds most offensive, arguing for the separation of a distinctly higher, literary register of Tamil for the translated Bible, which is in keeping with his desire to maintain caste distinctions within the Protestant community, a point I will return to later in the chapter.

It is important to mention at this point that Sastri also compares the use of terms in the Tamil Bible with Catholic, Hindu, and Muslim usages. For instance, he objects to the change from *nāmam* (name) to *tiru nāmam* (holy name) in the Lord's Prayer because the latter was used to refer to the mark worn by Tamil Vaiṣṇavism on their foreheads. Similarly, in his analyses of passages in *Noise* and *Tribulation*, Sastri points out that various terms introduced by the revisers are not customarily in use in all Tamil regions. He also indicates that the customary understanding of a certain term could be in conflict with its dictionary meaning.

It is significant that in his criticism of the older translations, Vicuvaca Nadan had offered similar arguments against previous translators: in his opinion, it was *their* ungrammatical Tamil that was now being corrected by the present revisers. However, the one point both Sastri and Vicuvaca Nadan seem agreed upon is that a recognizably different register of language *had* developed among Protestant Tamils as a result of the missionary use of Tamil: the "missionary Tamil." This label, "missionary Tamil," is usually used with reference to a range of formal and informal missionary discourses in Tamil, both written (the Bible, tracts, letters, histories, etc.) and oral (sermons, preaching, prayers, and conversations). In his letter, Vicuvaca Nadan claims that the present missionaries were revising the earlier translations in order to correct the peculiarities of "missionary Tamil." Sastri, conscious that the term had been used to refer to the Tamil used in the existing translations of the Bible, attributes this to the jealous attempts by "heathens," Catholics, and "others" to defile the Protestant scriptures. He points out that because the "white man" had brought their religion to Protestant Tamils, the latter were despised as those who followed the "white man's religion" or the "padre's (missionary) religion" (*Noise* 1825). It is worth mentioning here that Sastri expresses rhetorical disdain at such name-calling but does not argue that such a difference in language use does not exist. He categorically states in *Noise* that Protestant Tamils would not forsake the true Veda (i.e., the Bible in Fabricius's translation) merely because they were unable to bear the ridicule of its being termed "the white man's Veda."

"Heathen *Munshi*s" versus "Learned" Tamil Scholars

Sastri sets up this second opposition apparently to account for the ungrammatical mixing of language registers by claiming that while the "previous missionaries" were assisted by "learned" Tamil scholars, the "junior missionaries" had gone to "heathen *munshi*s," that is, inappropriate language scholars,[14] whom he perceived as unsympathetic to the Bible.[15] Importantly, in this category of inappropriate scholars, he includes Catholic, whom he usually refers to as "Papists," with Hindu or "heathen" scholars (Tamil preface to *Letter*): "Papists who are enemies to the Christian religion and quite ignorant of its Mysteries…frustrated the intention and labours of the Honorable Societies" (*Dialogue* 1828). Sastri proceeds by offering the standard argument that these heathen and papist scholars "spoil" the Bible because both "worship images"; and he criticizes the new missionaries for not seeking assistance from "God's people," that is, Protestant Tamils. This allows Sastri to attack both, who in assisting to revise the existing version "ridiculed" the "most respectable translation of the late Rev. Mr. Fabricius" out of ignorance (English preface to *Letter*). Using a colorful metaphor, "milk mingled with arsenick" for Rhenius's revisions, he even compares Rhenius's distribution of "perverted" scriptures to the "Romish Popes" who refuse to distribute scripture: clearly both equally unconstructive.

By making a case for limiting biblical interpretation and translation to fellow Protestants, Sastri views non-Protestant Tamil scholars as religious opponents looking to deliberately "corrupt" the registers of Tamil in the Bible. In including Catholic Tamils in this category of inappropriate scholars, Sastri makes a claim for a special Protestant hermeneutics. Significantly, he is making a case for distinguishing Protestant expression from Catholic and Hindu facility in Tamil, where the former produces a "golden version" of the Bible, the latter can only corrupt and destroy. The difference in the positions taken by Sastri and Vicuvaca Nadan is worth mentioning. While Sastri emphasized the importance of assistance from *Protestant* Tamil scholars, Vicuvaca Nadan stressed *Tamil* scholarship regardless of the religious persuasion of the assisting scholars. Clearly, not all Protestant Tamils in this period agreed with the opposition set up by Sastri, signaling to us that Sastri's arguments were shared by only a section of the Protestant Tamils in Tamil-speaking South India.

It is significant that Sastri frames his disapproval of rival religious persuasions in terms of language use. He complains, as mentioned in the previous section, that these scholars were mixing different languages (Tamil and Telugu) and different registers of Tamil (grammatical and *cutchēry*). The critics of Fabricius had alleged exactly the opposite: Vicuvaca Nadan in his letter to the Tancavur Evangelical Church had accused the earlier missionaries of not having used appropriate teachers (*sāstri*s) but of seeking assistance from those who had no knowledge of the Tamil *castrā*s. In answer, Sastri quotes passages from Ziegenbalg and Gruendler's preface to the Tamil Bible of 1717[16] to prove that the missionaries had made considerable efforts to learn Tamil from the right sources (*Noise*) and had translated the Bible only after they had adequately studied the books and manners of the people of the country. Later in the pamphlet, however, he acknowledges that the early Tamil translations printed by Protestant missionaries might not have been entirely accurate but that Fabricius's Tamil was, however, faultless. Sastri explains this by claiming that Ziegenbalg did not have adequate help but that since Christianity and "learning and wisdom" spread through mission schools in Tranquebar and Madras, by the time Fabricius began translating the Bible, there were Tamil scholars who were also Protestants and could therefore help in the process of Bible translation better than non-Protestant Tamil scholars.

But it is in his final complaint against the unacceptable scholars that there is an indication of there being more than religious affiliation or competence in Tamil at stake here. Woven into the long diatribe against the present ungrammatical scholars, we begin to glimpse contradictory references to their deceptive eloquence: the "Heathenish Moonshees" had "thought they might well deceive the Europeans by their eloquence...in which they are well skilled" ("Humble Address," *Saditeratoo*). While claiming in the *Letter* that "they have entirely corrupted the Holy Scriptures, put them in Cutchery and Telunga [=Telugu] Tamul and filled them with many words which are against religious language and the very principles of Grammar" he also accuses them of covering up with elegant writing this dilution of "Divine truth" with "worldly ideas" (*Letter* 1820). Implicit in these several charges lies the question of economics. References to their "eloquence" is also usually accompanied by resentment that Rhenius and Haubroe paid considerable sums of money to the heathen *munshi*s who "blasphemed" Christ (*Dialogue* 1828).

Sastri proceeds to name these heathen "*munshi*s," in particular "Ramachandra Poet" (Ramachandara Kavirayar)[17] and "Tandevaraya Mudaliar" (c. 1790–1850),[18] who "deceived" the Europeans with their "eloquence and art." Their skill in writing books that were "entirely corrupting," rendered them unsuitable for the translation of the Bible (*Dialogue* 1828). Both *munshi*s,[19] considered among the best scholars of the College at Fort St. George in Madras in the early nineteenth century, wrote several non-Christian plays and poetry in Tamil and other languages. Tandevaraya Mudaliar had translated the Panchatantra stories in 1826 from Marathi into Tamil and "having been well versed both in the Tamil and Maharatta languages enjoyed much reputation on that account" (Chitty 1859: 114). Sastri implies that it was bad enough that Tandevaraya had been allowed to revise and edit the first three parts of Beschi's *Sadur Agarathi* (Chitty 1859), without also being given a free hand with the Bible. We must place in context his allegation that the Moonshees engaged the missionaries in "vain business" so that "the high wages which are paid to them might be continued permanently" (*Saditeratoo* 1829). It is true these Tamil scholars were already in established paid posts at the College and may have very probably been offered wages for their Tamil expertise in assisting with Bible translation, a rather bitter pill for Sastri when he was having regular clashes with the missionaries and at the time of writing these petitions had himself been removed from missionary employment.[20]

In a period when new opportunities were opening up for Tamils to compete over, Sastri might have a point here. There were in fact several Protestant Tamils who could have satisfactorily filled the role of Tamil scholar to aid Bible translation. Sastri himself may have been quite suitable for the task and, later in the century, the poet H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827–1900)[21] for the translation project that followed Rhenius's. Both missionaries and Protestant Tamils acknowledged that Sastri and Krishna Pillai had excellent command of the high literary style of the Tamil language, along with a good grasp of the basic tenets of Christianity. However, it is significant that Sastri was not invited to help in any of the Bible translation projects either at a formal or informal level. Although Krishna Pillai was appointed Tamil *munshi* to Henry Bower to assist in revising the Tamil translation of the Bible in 1858, this appointment lasted only three weeks.[22] Surviving as he often did on patronage from the king of Tancavur, the Nawab of Arcot and other wealthy landowners, it is not surprising that Sastri should weave economic considerations into his argument against the eloquence of the Heathen *munshi*s. Ironically, while the *munshi*s were now supported by the College and its colonial investment (supposedly favorable to Christianity) *and* were in missionary employ, Sastri was dependent on the Hindu Serfoji II, ruler of Tancavur, after the former's dismissal from missionary service in 1829. In this mobile and competitive world, Sastri uses his pamphlets and public letters as a new means of self-representation in attempts to negotiate support against the more successful "heathen" *munshi*s. Hence, it is important to see Sastri's criticism of rival *munshi*s within this context of competing and unstable systems of patronage in this period.[23]

Interestingly, one of the few surviving early documentations of Tamil representations of missionaries, these letters and pamphlets are framed within the discourse of knowledge and facility with Tamil language in the context of translating the Bible. For in foregrounding the role played by "heathen moonshies" in the new revisions of the Tamil Bible, Sastri also represents the "junior missionaries" as dupes in the religious and linguistic rivalries between Tamil sects. Positions are reversed as he sits in judgment over the younger generation of missionaries, and pronounces on their lack of Tamil expertise: "before he [Rhenius] could learn accurately the Tamil for at least ten years fondly persuaded himself that he was a perfect scholar in Tamil" (*Dialogue* 1828).

Sastri's Methodology: Comparative Analysis of Translations

Sastri's methodology for assessing a translation is self-consciously new in that he engages in a comparative study of different Tamil versions of the Bible to evaluate their "accuracy." In Tamil poetics, translations were not evaluated according to their real or supposed accuracy in relation to their source texts, rather on the translation's relationship to the Tamil literary and aesthetic landscape; thus, Sastri's methodology has a distinctly European slant. Comparing different translations of the same biblical passages allows Sastri to identify "slips" in translation and so he examines Tamil translations against the English KJV and compares several Tamil versions. He highlights apparent discrepancies between the English and the new Tamil revision by providing close textual analysis to support his point. By implication these differences did not exist between the English and the older Tamil versions. While analyzing the differences in the "Lord's Prayer" in the old and new Tamil versions in the second half of *Noise*, he compares the latest revision with not only previous Tamil Protestant and Catholic versions from South India and Sri Lanka, but also points out that the Prayer as translated in the English, German, Portuguese, and Dutch[24] versions match the older Tamil translations but not the new. As we have seen, Sastri's main attack of the new revisions has been their "mixture" of non-

Tamil and Tamil words and ultimately, therefore, he is making a case for the use of “pure,” “high” literary registers of Tamil. By asking whether the English (he includes the government, the Bible Society, and other persons of importance in this category) would have been happy to accept such tampering with *their* “Lord’s Prayer,” in the English Bible, Sastri is claiming for himself and fellow-Protestant Tamils the right to make significant language choices rather than have them made by unreliable translators who are neither able to extract pure forms of Tamil for Protestant use nor construct them grammatically.

He gives significant space to whether the sense remains the same across several Tamil versions, an evaluative question based on the hypothesis that the “pure” form of each language will generate identical meanings across languages. For instance, in order to argue that the previous missionaries had translated without deviating from the sense of the original, he points out in *Noise* that though the Tamil Gospels of Tranquebar (1758), Colombo (1754), and Madras (1771)[25] were translated by different missionaries at different times and places, there were differences only in the use of words but not in the *sense* they conveyed. If it is not the use of identical terms in each of the translations he approves of, how then is identical meaning created? His answer lies in the “grammatical” use of Tamil. Rules of Tamil grammar or *ilakkaṇam* dictate which terms are high, literary, or “pure” and how they should be used.

Tamil grammars have traditionally emphasized the systematic study of word structures; so, for instance, the *Naṉṉūl*[26] identifies the roots of words and sets rules for the division and combination (*caṉdi*) of words. There are also strict grammatical rules for combining words from other languages, including combining Sanskrit words (*vaṭamoḻicaṉdi*) with Tamil words. Within Tamil scholarship on language then, there is recognition that there will inevitably occur a flow from other languages into the Tamil but there is a clear attempt to monitor and systematize the entry of new words by controlling how words foreign to Tamil are to be “Tamilized” grammatically. It is when non-Tamil words are used in the grammatically correct combination that they become acceptable as literary whereas the loose, ungrammatical combinations of non-Tamil words in colloquial speech, for instance, would render that speech unliterary. David Shulman (2001) has indicated the centrality of grammar to Tamil poetics and I believe it is feasible to broaden the scope of “Tamil poetics" to include translation practices. Sastri certainly measures missionary translation practices against rules of Tamil grammar. In *Noise* and *Tribulation*, Sastri repeatedly makes the claim that Fabricius and the older Lutherans, having studied the *Naṉṉūl*, had translated the Bible according to rules of Tamil grammar, always following correct principles of word combinations and conjugations. He contrasts them with the junior missionaries' "ungrammatical," hence unliterary use of Tamil. I suggest that although Sastri does not altogether approve of the use of non-Tamil words, the grammatical use of these words would just about make them acceptable. Similarly, it is right grammar that provides the foundational structure that cuts across superficial differences in Tamil-language registers between the translations he approves of. Conversely, it is the lack of *ilakkaṇam* that sets the new revisions so dramatically apart. In Sastri's analysis, Tamil grammar then functions as a principal device that underlies the art of translation into Tamil and is the only reliable frame of reference with which to identify a good translation. Significantly, he is indicating that Protestant textual practices must maintain the high standards set by rules of Tamil grammar in order to effectively compete with rival religious and textual practices.

Sastri thus employs a combination of evaluative criteria from Tamil poetics and the newer comparative analyses of translations to the recently introduced translation practices. By comparing the same passage in multiple translations, Sastri shows a shift from established attitudes to translation as original re-creations of source texts to one that is modeled on missionary and Orientalist textual practices in South India. Sastri's evaluations of biblical translations draw attention to how attitudes to language use and translation in particular are becoming important constitutive elements in Protestant self-representation. Concurrently, as the following section demonstrates, such methods of textual analyses could be deployed to maintain traditional social ordering within the Protestant community.

Locating the "Pure" in Nineteenth-century Protestant Tamil: Custom, Tradition, and Social Hierarchy

Besides intertextual analyses, Sastri's comparative methodology attempts to take into account the linguistic abilities of the various Tamil speaker groups. Unlike contemporary Protestant missionary discourse that referred to the needs of Christian and non-Christian audiences in a single translation, Sastri tackles the issue of target readership by narrowing his focus to the various sections within the Protestant Tamil community alone. In fact, he dismisses the judgment of "heathen" readers who in his view would not recognize the difference between previous and present, good and bad translations, anyway. In contrast, those brought up within the Protestant tradition alone could best recognize the superiority of one translation over another (*Noise* 1825). Sastri is arguing here evaluated by a Protestant Bible exclusively evaluated by Protestant Tamils. Furthermore, his discussion of the Protestant Tamil readership addresses pertinent links between language use and social position and as Hudson (2000) points out, raises two important questions: (1) Who are the "common people"? (2) What is the standard for Tamil prose written across all the dialects that might constitute sacred registers in Tamil? I suggest that Sastri's arguments on Bible revision in the light of these questions must be viewed within the context of his caste politics. In offering contradictory arguments on language use and translation, as we shall see, his thesis serves as an excellent reminder of the potency of language in attempts to legitimize social division and hierarchy.

Sastri refers to the social position of the reader within Tamil caste hierarchy and existing levels of literacy, which split the community; but, instead of arguing for social equality to form a cohesive whole, he deploys an emerging rhetoric of "custom" and "tradition" as an alternative means by which to unite the Protestant Tamil community. Sastri exploits the traditional binary opposition recognized between grammatical and ungrammatical Tamil to classify not just the different versions of the Tamil Bible but also different sections of the Protestant Tamil community. Although Sastri does not name his caste, it is clear that he positions himself and his fellow-petitioners with the highest Tamil non-Brahmin Vellala caste. He does, however, name some Protestant Tamil low-caste groups (*paḷḷar, pariar, shānār, cakkiliyar*) and hunting tribes in order to examine relations between Bible translation, language use, and social position. Sastri makes a clear connection between the first two "cruelties" imposed on the Evangelical churches: the taking away of the precious translations and directions for high-caste Tamils "to unite with Pallar and Paryar, eat and intermarry with them" (*Saditeratoo* 1829). By linking the question of translation and caste, Sastri uses the "problems" he identifies in the newer translation practices as a metaphor for expressing discomfort against complex shifts in traditional social hierarchy.

On the one hand, he thinks that the Bible must be translated into a Tamil equally accessible to Protestant Tamils of all castes, a feat that Fabricius apparently achieved but was missing in the recent revisions. Fabricius, according to Sastri, had used a level of Tamil that satisfied the literate high castes as well as the semiliterate and illiterate low castes. While this claim is difficult to accept at face value, he also asserts, on the other hand, that lower caste Protestants are illiterate and therefore unable to understand or judge the merits of Tamil texts for themselves. With his dismissal of Vicuvaca Nadan's argument that the new revisions were meant to serve both those with sense (i.e., the literate) and those without (the illiterate) for the spread of Christianity among all, Sastri's attack of the new revision because of its inaccessibility to lower castes loses further credibility. Since he thinks them incapable of critical analysis in any case, the claims he appears to be making on behalf of lower-caste Protestant Tamils rings rather hollow. While making such rhetorical claims on their behalf, what Sastri is really suggesting is that the high, literary Tamil registers for the translated Bible should be preserved for the aesthetic pleasure of the higher castes.

Further, Sastri's linking of print, publishing, and distribution of the new versions and missionary schools open to lower-caste Tamils is in response to new technologies of Bible production and distribution introduced by BFBS auxiliaries set up in the early nineteenth century.[27] Sastri is furious that despite knowing these translations to be "against their conscience and erroneous" they still "put them in print again and again and published them incessantly…" (Humble Address, *Saditeratoo*, 1829). That the missionaries should be using schools with larger numbers of lower-caste pupils to promote the new revision among Protestant youth strikes Sastri and his fellow-protestors as worse still: when they found that their "unjust translations" were not liked by anyone, "they not only introduced them into all the Schools and forcibly made it a rule that these books alone should be learned, but also have thus brought it about, that none of the true and well translated religious books are to be had among the poor Tamil Christians" (*Dialogue* 1828).

Sastri clearly views the act of translation not just as textual practice, but rather as linked to a wider combination of changing reading practices and social positions that together have serious implications for the different castes that comprise the Protestant Tamil community.

In the context of new modes of cultural production and distribution, Sastri responds by connecting the erasure of Fabricius's Tamil with the erasure of the older missionaries from the collective memory of the community:

> By introducing them, forcibly in the Congregations and Schools making the children from their infancy to practise this new Tamil, they...took away therefore, the precious translations of the ancient Missionaries from the use of all schools, and made them not only to forget them entirely, but endeavoured to eradicate the remembrance of the former Missionaries from our minds and that of our children. (*Dialogue* 1828)

For Sastri, a tradition established for more than a hundred years is being threatened. Though his emphasis here is on the loss of a textual tradition, elsewhere he connects this with the loss of other church traditions and rituals, established by the older Lutheran missionaries but interfered with by newer ones. This repeated opposition of past and present, previous and recent in the arguments of the pamphlets discussed deflects attention from the immediate crisis of social change[28] by attempting to instate previous missionary-translators to a quasi-sacred status. Revising the previous translation, and by implication unsettling existing social orderings, is in Sastri's analysis challenging the sacred authority invested in the older missionaries and the religious "tradition" established by them.

By the same token, any competing translation that threatens the special place a previous biblical version has had in the community also threatens the status of the entire Protestant community. His conviction that the nonliterary, lower forms of Tamil spoken by lower castes should be kept out of the Tamil Bible stems from a desire to check censure from rival religious groups, revealing an anxiety about the status of the Protestant Tamil community. For instance, he fears that because Rhenius had distributed his revisions, "every where, these two kind of books being put in use for the Congregation and schools gives room to the Unitarians and Papists to laugh, and to alledge [*sic*] that our Religion [...] differs one from another, and caused an inexpressible confusion in religion among [...] the people" (*Dialogue* 1828). Certainly, the prestige of the Protestant Tamil community is brought into question. In *Noise* he warns that Protestant Tamils should be aware that "Papist scholars could hardly refrain from ridiculing them when they see books translated in several different ways" (*Noise* 1825). Thus, while on the one hand, Hindu scholars could not be trusted to provide accurate translations for biblical passages, perhaps even deliberately mistranslate in order to undermine the authority of the Bible, on the other hand, he is equally conscious of the rival gaze of Tamil Catholics ready to denounce Protestant methods as crude and ineffective. Revising a well-established and satisfactory Tamil translation provides the perfect occasion in Sastri's eyes for either rival religious party to attack or humiliate Protestant Tamils.

In this context, Sastri's repeated references to "custom" and "tradition" for evaluating translations takes on added significance. Sastri claims that the earlier translations were accepted and customary versions for the present generation of Protestant Tamils; the question that begs to be asked is whose custom or tradition is Sastri speaking for? In defending Fabricius's translation as the single, uniform version accepted by all the Tamil churches for several years, "these books were accepted by all the congregations and its Missionaries with the greatest esteem and are read and used by us, our fathers and our children..." (*Dialogue* 1828), Sastri is choosing to present particular traditions of language use and textual practice as collectively representing all Protestant Tamils. But if, as by his own admission, lower-caste Protestant Tamils are semiliterate or illiterate, then it is difficult to see how such an uncontested common tradition of high, literary biblical Tamil might have been shared between high- and low-caste Protestant Tamils. This, in fact, is the argument of twentieth-century Protestant Dalit ideologues of the twentieth century. Theophilus Appavoo (1940–2005), a twentieth-century Dalit theologian, for instance, was very critical of Sastri's advocacy of elitist Tamil aesthetics and literary conventions in music (Appavoo 1994; Sherinian 2002).

From what we have seen so far, language use, translation practices, social ordering, and religious identities were constructed as linked issues in this period of Protestant Tamil history. Sastri's response is complex: as a practitioner, he himself would have had to choose on a daily basis between the various language registers available to him. As a self-conscious Protestant *poet*, he is concerned with writing in a Tamil that is not "mixed" with parallel Dravidian languages and this may have provoked some of the rhetorical arguments he advances against the new translations of the Tamil Bible. As a *Protestant* practitioner, Sastri would have also been conscious of the overlap between his potential audience and the audience of the translated Bible. Herein might also lie some clues to his high-caste anxieties about preserving what was considered as "pure" or high Tamil linguistic registers. With missionary schools opening up access to literacy to castes traditionally denied it, the Protestant audience that he is speaking to and for is increasingly a mixed bag of literate and semiliterate, elite and folk, high-caste and low-caste Tamils. Sastri is neither only an intellectual poet writing for fellow-intellectuals nor only a popular, folk poet composing songs in the oral traditions but a poet who attempts to draw these disparate sections into an unifying umbrella that is "Protestant"—through his poetry and through his intellectual engagement with Bible translation.

Responses to the *Union Version*: Revision, Resistance, and Co-option in the Twentieth Century

> We of the Bible Society are always anxious that the opinion of those speaking their mother tongue have full weight in the various versions. (Kilgour, Letter to Rev. E. S. Carr, May 14, 1929, BFBS Tamil File 5: 1929–33)

I see twentieth-century Protestant Tamil responses to the *Revised Version* (1956) and the *Tiruvivlium* (1995) as the second significant moment in the quarrel over language registers. Twentieth-century Protestant Tamil opinion on the Tamil Bible is much better documented than the previous centuries and substantial records have survived to indicate differences in opinion within the community. The BFBS (and later the Bible Society of India), increasingly committed to Bible revisions and translations with the support of their target audience, faced a dilemma: the response of the community was split between limited support for revision and severe opposition to revisions or new translation projects. Individuals who opposed revision were often labeled conservative and uninformed by those supporting revision but it is apparent from BFBS' records that it had not developed a reliable method for gathering opinion from a vast and diverse readership. Its main source of information was the clergy from a few Protestant denominations (predominantly Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist) and not much effort seems to have been made to gather information direct from congregations especially from the rural areas. Tamil Pentecostal congregations, which until the 1970s consisted largely of lower-class and caste populations from rural and urban areas, did not participate conspicuously in the debate; and despite their changing demography since then, have continued to cite doctrinal reasons for endorsing the *Union Version* as the only true version of the Bible in Tamil. What we have is a set of dramatically different opinions on the best version of the Tamil Bible with contesting voices speaking from different positions along the theological, denominational, caste, and linguistic spectrum. The following analysis is based on both printed sources as well as interviews of Protestant Tamil clergy and laity conducted at several points between 2000 and 2010.

In the twentieth century, two main features of the Tamil Bible were identified as needing revision by BFBS. One was to revise the Tamil Bible in line with the English Revised Version (1881–85), which had been prepared after the publication of more up-to-date and critical editions of the Greek New Testament and the Old Testament.[29] This resulted in significant changes as one of the "original" texts of the Tamil *Revised Version*, Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament, differed considerably from the English KJV's *Textus Receptus* used until the late nineteenth century. The second was to reshape the language of the Tamil Bible in line with changes that were introduced to Tamil in the public domain by proponents of the Pure Tamil Movement.[30] By the beginning of the twentieth century Protestant Tamils mostly accepted that the Tamil of the *Union Version* contained the "peculiarities" of a missionary or Christian Tamil. To many self-conscious Protestant Tamils, using this Tamil, which included a large number of Sanskrit words, was becoming unpopular and offensive in the context of the Dravidian politics of the Tamil-speaking areas.

I will first discuss in brief a tangential but relevant point regarding predictions for the growth of "Christian Tamil" in the previous century. Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century who were either translators of the Bible or Tamil scholars had assumed that the special Protestant vocabulary and style of Christian Tamil that had developed in the context of Bible translation would become central to Tamil literary expression in the following years just as the English of the KJV had gained status as a literary register of English in subsequent centuries. Drawing parallels with the English situation, where literary echoes of the KJV in English literature had supposedly helped to establish the version as a highly literary one,[31] Protestant missionaries in South India hoped that Protestant Tamils in time would produce literature in the language and style of the *Union Version* and thus establish it as a respectable, literary register of Tamil. In the preface to his translation of the *Tiruvacakam* (1900) G. U. Pope (1820–1908), a missionary scholar of Tamil, had envisaged the creation of such a Protestant Tamil literature as a triumphant literary fruition of the Christian Tamil produced by the combined efforts of several missionaries:

> There exists now much of what is called Christian Tamil, a dialect created by the Danish missionaries of Tranquebar; enriched by generations of Tanjore, German, and other missionaries; modified, purified, and *refrigerated* by the Swiss Rhenius and very composite Tinnevelly school; expanded and harmonised by Englishmen, amongst whom Bower (a Eurasian) was foremost in his day; and, finally, waiting now for the touch of some heaven-born genius among the Tamil community to make it sweet and effective as any language on earth, living or dead. (Pope 1900: xii; emphasis in the original)

This sentiment was often repeated: it was anticipated that such a body of Protestant literature in Christian Tamil would both establish the Protestant Tamils as a community and mould wider Tamil use in new directions. However, on the contrary, writers recognized as having produced the best Protestant or Catholic literature in Tamil were not those who wrote in the new Christian Tamil but in the established language and style of Tamil religious and literary traditions. Significantly, the elements of Protestant Tamil literature, which have been acclaimed as a "contribution" to Tamil literature and granted a place in Tamil literary history, were not written in Christian Tamil but in the language and style that was predominant in each period. Thus, contrary to Pope's optimistic expectations, works using Christian Tamil were not praised for being written in a special language register but instead ignored.

Returning to our discussion of the twentieth century, it was partly this failure of Christian Tamil in acquiring literary status that encouraged revision of the Bible in keeping with the Tamil that had gained currency in the Tamil public sphere since the 1920s. Divested of Sanskrit it was a "purified" Tamil or *taṉittamiḻ* that was rhetorically called upon as the language register that most closely approximated an authentic Tamil identity.[32] In the context of these changed perceptions regarding Tamil use, the argument put forward was that if Protestant Tamils were to engage with (or at least be seen as engaging with) the changing concerns of early twentieth-century Tamil society, they must share the "common" language, that is, *ta̱ṉittamiḻ* propagated by the Dravidian Movement as the language that represented equally their Protestant and Tamil identities.

Some feared that unless they did so, Protestant Tamils as a religious community would be marginalized from Tamil mainstream society. L. P. Larsen, appointed in 1924 to revise the Tamil Bible along with G. S. Doraiswamy and a "Consultative Committee," comments in one of the early editorial meetings for the revision of the *Union Version* in 1923: "The fact that the language spoken by Christians was largely influenced by the reading of a Bible, the style of which did not satisfy the standards of Tamil literature, was one of the causes which tended to isolate the Christian community" [Proceedings of a Meeting of the Editorial Sub-committee of the "Revision of the Tamil Bible." October 6, 1923 (BFBS Tamil File 3: 1923–26)]. While Christian Tamil had been criticized for not following standards of grammatical Tamil in the previous century, the *standards* of Tamil language and literature themselves were now undergoing radical change. Thus, retranslating the Bible to make it consonant as far as possible with *taṉittamiḻ* became a central focus of the twentieth-century translation projects.

However, once revision of the *Union Version* began in the 1920s, there was widespread discontent in most Protestant Tamil churches. Letters and petitions against the revision were sent to the Bible Society offices in Madras. Some detractors published book-length critiques of the revision process and warned Protestant Tamils of the dangers (mainly spiritual) of reading the revisions. One such critique was Edward Jesudian's *The Revised Tamil Bible*: *An Appeal against its Publication and Use*, published by the South India Bible Colportage Association in 1945. Another was *Arguments for the Prohibition of the Modern Version of the Holy Bible* by P. T. Bhaktavatsalam from Martandam in 1974.[33] In the same year Bhaktavatsalam also printed a twenty-three-page pamphlet titled, "Christians! Wake up!! Fight against the Destroyers of the Holy Faith!!!" Resolutions against the revision of the *Union Version* were passed by the Madras Indian Ministers' Conference and the Tirunelveli Diocesan Council, with the Tirunelveli Church refusing to send elected representatives to sit on the Revision Committee appointed by the Society (Jesudian 1945:

5–6). Individual translators and the Bible Society became targets of attack; while others described, "the feelings of horror and helplessness of the Indian Christians of South India who fear that their Holy Bible is being wrenched from their hands by the very Society that gave it to them at first."[34] Besides these, Protestant Tamil journals and magazines were utilized to mobilize popular support against both the *Revised Version* and later the *Tiruviviliyam*. On occasion, links were established with Protestant journals in other parts of the world that supported the use of the English KJV exclusively.

Protest against the translation and publishing of the *Tiruviviliyam*, from the 1980s until after its publication in 1995, was as sharp as the criticism against the *Revised Version* in the first half of the twentieth century.[35] Father Jacob Thekkanath, former director of NBCLC (National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre), Bangalore, recalled: "Until the printing of the new version, there had been sporadic opposition to the version but once it [the printing] began in 1995, the Bible Society of India was flooded with letters and telegrams with opposition to the CL [the *Tiruviviliyam*]" (interview, June 30, 2000). Faced with widespread opposition from Protestant Tamils, the Bible Society withdrew as one of the copublishers of the *Tiruviviliyam* and it was the United Bible Societies, the parent society, that provided the imprimatur for this version.

Opposition to the revision targeted three important points as posing a significant threat to the entire community. The first was the change from the Sanskrit-based terminology of the *Union Version* to terms with Tamil roots encouraged by the Pure Tamil Movement. Second, the move to the new scholarly editions of the Old and New Testament source texts meant that the content of the new version would be different from the *Union Version*. Third, the tools of literary and textual criticism that had developed in the twentieth century were suspect when applied to the Bible for purposes of interpretation and translation. Together, these three changes were perceived as a threat—by displacing the *Union Version*, the new translations would lead to "confusion" in the Protestant Tamil churches, and ultimately therefore, initiate an attack on "true" Christianity itself.

The Authority of Sacralized Language: Changes in Terminology

The new terminology introduced to the *Revised Version* and later the *Tiruviviliyam* was considerably influenced by the radical shifts in

Tamil initiated by the Pure Tamil Movement. The Report of a C.L.S. Committee on Tamil theological terms (1950) states in its foreword:

> The committees on [pure Tamil] terminology appointed in Madras and other Provinces by the Provincial Governments have restricted themselves to deciding the technical terms necessary for scientific and political text-books, and have left the corresponding task in the fields of religion, philosophy and theology to private enterprise. The intercourse and intellectual fellowship and in some respects possible rivalry that exist between Hinduism, Islam and Christianity in India offer to theological writers a circle of readers belonging to different faiths. It has therefore become necessary that the theological terms employed by Christians should not only be correct but should also be intelligent to readers of other religions. (*Tamil Theological Terms* 1950: iii)

Father Mariadasan, one of the translators of the *Tiruviviliyam*, also saw the change to "pure" Tamil terms in the Bible as part of a larger trend in the Tamil language: "Tamil is trying to introduce technical terms in all fields—science, industry and philosophy, for example; the CL [the *Tiruviviliyam*] too tries to use new 'technical' terms: *aruḷ cātaṉam* for sacraments and *amaiti* for *camātāṉam*" (interview, July 4, 2000). However, the Protestant Tamil laity is determined to retain in practice words that have been identified by these translators as archaic or obsolete in the *Union Version*. Of several controversial terms, as discussed in the previous chapter, the most contentious has been the use of *kaṭavuḷ*, instead of the previous *tēvaṉ*, for God. While I analyzed the case put forward in favor of the term by translators or those advising translation committees in chapter two, here I focus on the reception of the term and the arguments offered by Protestant Tamils.

Jesudian gives a vigorous defense of *tēvaṉ* basing his arguments on the Madras University Tamil Lexicon. He points out that the Lexicon gives thirty cognates of *tēvaṉ* and only ten for *kaṭavuḷ* and uses this as sufficient reason to claim that *tēvaṉ* did not mean "anything less than katavul." Jesudian (1945: 24) cites David Devadoss, son of Muthiah Pillai, the Tamil referee for the *Union Version*, as further "objective" proof that *tēvaṉ* was the most appropriate term for God:

> During one of my conversations with him [Muthiah Pillai] he told me that... after a great deal of argument, the word "devan"

> was chosen as the one which best expressed what we mean by "God." The word katavul now used in the Revised Version connotes something which is not strictly what the Christian conception of God is.

The response of Protestant Tamils I interviewed in 2000 and 2002 in Madras, Madurai, Palayamcottai, and Tiruchirapalli echoed such earlier resistance to *kaṭavuḷ*. Both clergy and laity identified the use of *kaṭavuḷ* and the language register it represented as their reason for not using the *Tiruviviliyam*. In their opinion, *tēvaṉ* was the unique, even "peculiar" name for the Christian God, and what added value to the term was that it was not used by any other Tamil religious community to refer to a particular god. They claimed they were aware that "Hindus" used *tēvā* or *tēvar*, but that they thought *tēvaṉ*, in the masculine singular, functioned as a special Protestant term for the Christian God emphasizing what they termed a "personal element." *Kaṭavuḷ*, on the other hand, commonly used as it was by other religious communities seemed too impersonal. By implication, if Protestant Tamils were to use *kaṭavuḷ*, there would be no difference between them and members of other religious groups. Supporters of the term *kaṭavuḷ* were equally convinced that much of this attitude stemmed from ignorance of the meaning and usage of the two terms but were optimistic that the Protestant Tamil laity would be willing to make the transition once the connotations of the terms are explained to them. However, most Protestant clergymen and women who have supported the change to the *Tiruviviliyam* complained that their congregations were unwilling to give up using *tēvaṉ* in spite of continued efforts to inform them of the etymological superiority of *kaṭavuḷ* over *tēvaṉ*.[36] Very few, like the Rev. R. Joseph of Christ Church, Palayamcottai, were able to say that 85 percent of their congregation supported the change to *kaṭavuḷ* (interview, February 22, 2002). Thus, popular Protestant Tamil opinion against the change in terminology has continued unabated. In fact, the dominant segments of the Protestant Tamil community continue to regard the use of pure Tamil terms in the revisions of the *Union Version* with suspicion. Questionnaires completed by the members of All Saints Church, Vellore, in early 2010 to check if there had been any significant change in attitude since 2002 confirmed that despite their church ministers advocating the use of *kaṭavuḷ* Protestant Tamils continue to regard and use *tēvaṉ* as a "Protestant" term, preferring it to *kaṭavuḷ*.

Significantly, the language register of the *Union Version* has survived mainly in the churches and private devotional domains of the Protestant Tamil community. Both they themselves and non-Protestant communities in Tamilnad identify its language as "Christian Tamil." Indeed, most Protestant Tamils lead a double life in terms of language use: although accepting the politically correct "pure" Tamil in the public domain, they slip into "Christian Tamil" with ease in the private spheres of the family and worship. For instance, Rev. Jayahanan, teaching social analysis at the Tamil Theological Seminary at Madurai, recalled that he had not been critical of the Tamil used in the Bible or the church as a child: the Christian and the public were two different spheres, and there had been no "outside influence," as he termed it, to make him critical of this dichotomy (interview, February 15, 2002). Father Hieronymus, one of the coordinators of the New Testament translators for the *Tiruviviliyam*, observed, "When it comes to worship and religion, there is a definite difference between Christians and non-Christians in their language use, but there is no difference in civil life" (interview, February 19, 2002). Several lecturers, including those teaching Tamil literature, at Sarah Tucker College, a Protestant undergraduate college in Palayamcottai, acknowledged using *ta̱ṉittamiḻ* at college for purposes of teaching, setting examination papers, and other official work but using Protestant Tamil at home and in the church. Further, of the twelve lecturers interviewed at the college, four of them admitted to using *taṉittamiḻ* in the classroom but Christian Tamil with their Christian students during prayers, devotions, and in Bible classes held on college premises: "We never use the Tamil from Bower's version in Tamil lectures or any other classes" (interview, February 27, 2002). One of them felt that if she were to speak "pure" Tamil in Christian circles, she would either not be understood or seen as lecturing at others. However, when lecturers addressed a mixed group of Protestant and non-Protestant students, in their experience non-Protestant students were receptive to the *Tiruviviliyam* but Protestant students were more resistant, demanding clarification of the new terms used.

While some Protestant Tamils claimed to be unaware that the Tamil they used was termed "Christian Tamil," most Protestant Tamils self-consciously view Christian Tamil as a special, "biblical" language, which they explain is the only language register appropriate for the Tamil Bible. Those who seem unaware of using Christian Tamil have internalized it and see it as the norm while others view it as a special sacred register. A Tamil lecturer at the Sarah Tucker College, who was otherwise able to appreciate the "high" claims of *taṉittamiḻ*, maintained that she enjoyed the Christian Tamil of the *Union Version* for the spiritual satisfaction (*bhakti uṇarvu*) it offered, unlike the Tamil of the *Tiruviviliyam*, which presented literary satisfaction (interview, February 23, 2002). Another lecturer, who had read both the *Union Version* and the *Tirviviliyam*, claimed that though the Tamil of the latter work was good, it was the old Bower version that evoked a "spiritual feeling" (interview, February 27, 2002). A woman, Protestant for ten years, was surprised at the mention of revising the language of the Bible: she had assumed that Christ had spoken in the Tamil used in the *Union Version* and that these were sacred words that could not be changed (interview, March 2002). Hence, the language register and religious vocabulary of the *Union Version* had become the "authorized" language of Tamil Protestantism.

Many prefer the Sanskrit-based terms of the *Union Version* because they believe that it is the Sanskrit that adds a sacred quality to the language register of the Tamil Bible. Most, preferring a special language register for the Bible that can be differentiated from the secular language registers of the public domain that they use in nonsacred contexts, have embraced the Sanskritized Tamil of the *Union Version*. Dr. Dayanandan Carr, principal of the Tamil Theological Seminary, observed that Protestant Tamils gave much importance to archaic words as they made their scriptures sound "different" and by implication more "sacred." For instance, G. Packiaraj, invited by the Bible Society to edit obsolete words from the *Union Version* in the 1990s, argued against this project on the grounds that the language used in the version was the "religious mother tongue" of the Protestant Tamils: "As we have seen, replacing the so-called Sanskrit words or obsolete words has no spiritual advantage. Moreover, it poses a threat to the consistency of the Words of the Book" (Letter to Bible Society of India, June 3, 1995). In view of such opinions expressed by several Protestant Tamils, I agree with Bergunder's (2002: 230) reading that "this kind of Sanskritized Christian language became an explicit socio-religious marker that is often considered to be part of the Tamil Christian identity."

A further reason the new language register of the *Revised Version* and the *Tiruviviliyam* has not become popular among Protestant Tamils is that almost the entire body of Protestant literature that accompanies the Tamil Bible continues to use the language of the *Union Version*. Jesudian (1945: 4) praises the "priceless gift" of the *Union Version*: "Its [the *Union Version*'s] beautiful and appealing language is enshrined, not only in the hearts and minds of millions of Tamil Christians, but also in their sacred literature of Liturgy, Hymns, Lyrics and other compositions." Most Church of South India dioceses continue to quote scripture from the *Union Version* in the church calendar, "Sunday School" books for children, and devotional material for adults. Since Protestant literature persists in using the text of the *Union Version*, its language register has survived in practice despite several revision attempts.[37] For the terminology of the revisions to be established in the manner of the nineteenth-century version, accompanying devotional literature, including hymns and liturgy, will need to be revised accordingly. There have been a few attempts to do so, of which Theophilus Appavoo's (1940–2005) composition of an alternative liturgy using *taṉittamiḻ* terms and inclusion of oral folk musical traditions is significant. However, such attempts to construct a new liturgical language register have not enjoyed wide popularity across all Protestant denominations but are perceived as "experiments" rather than a real alternative.

The Authority of Originals: Change in Source Text

The second important source for dissent has been the result of difference in source texts between those used for translating the *Union Version* and those used for the *Revised Version* and *Tiruvivliyam*. The claim of a more accurate source text undermined the perceived authority of the translation. This problem of multiple biblical source texts was partly remedied by adoption of the English KJV as the best textual referent for Indian language translations in the nineteenth century.[38] Not all translators however had been comfortable with this shift in source text. Rhenius (1841: 255–6) was one of the few translators, for instance, who had objected to using the KJV as a standard for the Tamil Bible and his account of his difficulty in dissuading the others from such practice shows the strong bias in favor of the KJV as an appropriate "original":

> I...was sorry to find that...[the general Committee] wish to adopt the English as the standard according to which a translation should be made. Against this I, as well as the Translation Committee, protested, as the originals ought to be our standard;

> and the question ought to be, not whether a translation agrees with the English, but whether it agrees with the original…

Copeland's (1991) proposition for studying medieval European literary translations as "secondary translations" that call attention to their own status as "vernacular substitutes for the original" and so advance their "claims to displace their sources" can be extended to some degree to the way the English KJV has functioned. As I pointed out in chapter one, the standard practice in the nineteenth century was for British Protestant missionaries to accord "originary discursive status" to the English KJV. Repeated claims were made on behalf of the English KJV in colonial translation practices outside Europe: it was invested with a canonical authority of its own, which served to supersede its source. As a result, for many Protestant Tamils, it is a Tamil version's textual proximity to the KJV that legitimizes it as authoritative.

It is not surprising then that Jesudian (1945: 49–50) questioned the revisers' choice of Nestle's Greek Edition[39] as the source text for the Tamil *Revised Version.* Likewise, Bhaktavatsalam's entire treatise was a diatribe on the change of the source text and the resulting "inconsistencies" between the *Union Version* and its revisions. His aim was to prove the authenticity and adequacy of the *Textus Receptus* and the corruptions of the reconstructed new Greek testaments. Using the latter according to him had produced "Satan's Bible" (*cāttāṉiṉ vētākamam*). *The Good Samaritan*, a monthly Protestant magazine, took up the argument in the 1930s and published several articles against the revision on the grounds that the source text of the *Revised Version* was a "corruption" of the Received Text. The editor, Y. Samuel, reprinted several articles from American and British Protestant journals, which attacked the English Revised Version for the same reason. Hoping to create support among Protestant Tamils against the revision of the *Union Version*, Samuel took his campaign further to counteract this danger: he helped to found the South India Bible Colportage Association in 1939 "for the sole purpose of distributing for sale, at important Christian centres, copies of the Union Version…" (Jesudian 1945: 9). Hence, the *Union Version* (1871) continued to be favored because of its closeness to the KJV and the *Revised Version* (1956) and *Tiruviviliyam* (1995) rejected because of their difference from it. Significantly, in this discourse, the shift in language register functions as "evidence" of the change in source text.

This history of protest points to the importance of studying the processes by which translated scripture can function as an "original" for its community of believers and the purpose it serves. Popular Protestant Tamil opinion that viewed the *Union Version* as a Tamil "original" based on an English "original" translated from the "original" *Textus Receptus* points to how the concept of "original" functions within some religious traditions. Apparently, the authority and status conferred on sacred "originals" can never be displaced entirely: it is *replaced* by a translation that stands in as an "original." At least in the Protestant Tamil context these translations acquire sacred status when the same sacred power and authority of the original is invested in them: "...translation in all Christendom replaced the source text, and effectively became...the original" (Barnstone 1993: 186). In becoming the "original" each translation is supposed to bring the reader closer to the authentic, originary voice of God. This covert relationship between the original and its translations is also revealed in the way translation has functioned for communities to create the idea of a universal community of believers. The unstable and unfixed nature of the Christian scriptures in translation can function to create apparently stable communities of faith by assuming the authority and efficacy of the original for the communities who have no access to the original. Ironically, when this occurs, revisions or retranslations within the same language from one register to another become suspect as heretical acts of tampering.

Inspiration and Authority: Change in Methods of Interpretation for Translation

Twinned with fears regarding changes in source text was discomfort with the use of textual criticism to interpret the Bible for translation. As much as suspicion of human interpretation in translating sacred texts underscores the tension between the original and its translation, the claims to inspiration (i.e., inspired translation) reinstate divine authority over both the sacred original and its translation. Here the necessities of human interpretation are disguised as direct inspiration from God, supposedly resulting in a translation that is equal in status to its original. Allert's (in Porter and Hess 1999) examination of how and why claims to inspired translations function for a religious community is a useful starting point. He argues that if scripture is viewed as the product of a community, then inspiration is not an a priori assumption about the text or located in an individual author, but must be seen as a functioning criterion for the community that produces it. He proposes that claims to inspiration can be seen as part of the response of a community to new situations that represent threats to the community. According to him, Bible translations are viewed as inspired because "the community views them as accurately reflecting what the community as a whole believes" (Allert in Porter and Hess 1999: 112). Although Allert's theory is instructive for understanding inspiration as a possible solution to perceived threats to the community, it needs to be qualified and developed further. What happens, for instance, where there is lack of consensus within a community on what can be considered inspired since different groups may experience conflicting threats or needs at a given moment in time. Moreover, some of these needs may change radically with time and a translation may continue to fulfill the needs of some members of the community but not of others. The shifts in Protestant Tamil perceptions from the early nineteenth to the twentieth centuries regarding which translations are inspired are a good case in point.

While Sastri claimed that Fabricius's eighteenth-century translation was a "golden version" and argued against nineteenth-century revisions, it is one of these revisions, the *Union Version*, which is claimed as a truly inspired translation in the twentieth century. This was made possible partly by the editorial decision, following the tradition of the English KJV, to publish the *Union Version* with no accompanying marginal notes, leaving close textual interpretation to the individual denominations within the Protestant Tamil church. For many Protestant Tamils, a translation with no notes, offering a "transparent" scriptural text, has come to represent the unmediated voice of God. The introduction of marginal notes and prefaces to individual books in the twentieth-century versions, on the contrary, made visible the "unreliable" interventions of human interpretation. Y. Samuel, the editor of *The Good Samaritan* brings this point up:

> The chief reviser engaged for this work is a well known modernist and his marginal notes are the most damaging ones bringing out his private personal views, whereas King James commanded that no marginal notes of this kind should be found in the Bible...Hence this Revised Tamil Testament cannot and should not become the accepted and popular Bible of the Tamil country. (1933: 3)

The *Union Version* (or "Bower's Version" as it is popularly known among its readers), has acquired iconic status in the community as an "authorized" version based on the popular belief in it as an inspired translation. This includes a wide range of attitudes, from thinking that the *Union Version* was the Tamil "King James Version," that it is the only existing translation of the Bible in Tamil, to the belief that the Protestant God "spoke" in the Tamil of the *Union Version*. A typical example is a pamphlet printed in the mid-twentieth century against the *Revised Version* claiming, "The old Version (i.e.) King James Version of the Bible is still the favourite one for Bible Lovers" (John J. Raj, "To all our Lord's Children" n.d.). The writer of this pamphlet conflates the Tamil *Union Version* with the English KJV, a common practice among Protestant Tamil laity in the twentieth century. Large numbers of the community, including several lecturers at the Sarah Tucker College, had never heard of any other Tamil translation besides the *Union Version* and referred to it as the "James Version" in conversation.

In effect, the "inspired" KJV is believed to have produced an equally "inspired" Tamil *Union Version*. As long as the finer details of the translation process were unavailable, popular belief that the translation was inspired directly by God could be held comfortably. Reinforcing this belief are popular Protestant legends sacralizing the translation methodology of Henry Bower (chief reviser, *Union Version*): he is believed to have fasted and prayed throughout the entire period of translation, which (miraculously) resulted in the *Union Version*; or, "special prayers were offered in all the Churches and in all the Christian Homes that the Spirit of God may guide him in this sacred work…" (Jesudian 1945: 3). Unaware of the debates and conflicts between the nineteenth-century translators of the *Union Version*, Protestant Tamils, a hundred and fifty years later, can claim divine sanction, authority, and inspiration on behalf of the translation. Rt. Rev. Devasahayam, the bishop of CSI, Madras, identified this as one of the reasons for the rejection of the later revisions: "The doctrine of inspiration has unfortunately and without thinking been identified with the translation of Scriptures, and especially to the existing one [*the Union Version*]. This contributes to the negative attitudes to the new translation" (interview, April 15, 2002).

In contrast, the processes by which the Bible Society produces a revision or translation of the Bible in the twentieth century are more visible. Any conflicts over the use of terms or the mere debating of translation methods signal human intervention in a sacred text, corrupting the infallibility of the divine author. In these circumstances, changing allegiance to another version becomes a "sin" to be avoided at all cost. Underpinning these fears of spiritual loss for the individual Protestant is the anxiety that revising the *Union Version* would cause doubt and confusion in the entire Protestant Tamil community. Jesudian's (1945: 6) concern regarding the "possible effect on the faith" of future generations of Protestant Tamils is representative of a widespread apprehension concerning Bible revisions. A lay Protestant in Madurai was certain that revision or new translations created opportunities for religious opponents to attack Christianity (interview, February 15, 2002). When the BFBS Committee had introduced the *Union Version* in the nineteenth century as the "standard" version, they had meant to end the controversy over the number of translations in use among Protestant Tamils until then in an effort to unify the church. However, although they anticipated the vital role the version would play in the Protestant Tamil community, it is unlikely that they meant this version to be a definitive translation of the Bible in Tamil for all time. However, most Protestant Tamils have certainly come to view it as such.

Locating the "Pure" in Twentieth-century Protestant Tamil: Tradition, Familiarity, and Devotion

Two terms, tradition and familiarity, are repeated to justify the continued use of the *Union Version*. The tradition and authority of the different denominations are upheld as equally inviolable by each. Whether the Church of South India with its roots in nineteenth-century Anglican mission policy or the Tamil Lutheran Church, which claims descent from the German Pietist missionaries of the eighteenth century, tradition is invested with authority to safeguard the sacred. Despite interdenominational rivalry, the *Union Version* is claimed as representing the tradition of all Protestant Tamils—Anglican, Lutheran, and Pentecostal.

"Familiarity" with a particular language register has similarly played a crucial role in the attachment to the *Union Version*. Among those (clergy and lay Protestant Tamils) interviewed, individuals who claimed to like the literary registers of *Tiruviviliyam* admitted to using the *Union Version* for personal study or devotions. Most acknowledged great affection for a translation they had read since childhood. The practice of memorizing passages from the Bible, a principal part of childhood training as a Protestant, meant that one version would have to be erased from Protestant Tamil consciousness to make way for another and this is partly where the difficulty lies. Some who have tried it as a conscious act of will confess failure. Dr. M. Ravindran, head of the Tamil Department at Sarah Tucker College in 2002, admitted that though she was a proponent of *taṉittamiḻ*, and had made a point of reading and quoting only the *Tiruviviliyam*, she unconsciously slipped to the terminology of the *Union Version* (the examples she gave were *ñāṉasnāṉam*, *karttar*, and *caṅkītam* instead of *tirumuḻuku*, *kaṭavuḷ*, and *tirupāṭal*) while discussing the Bible. Some others like her, especially members of the clergy, who have attempted rememorizing the new translation, experienced the same difficulty. Other Protestant clergy, who said they admired the new translation, approved of the language changes that had been made, and used it to preach sermons, also admitted to reading the *Union Version* for "personal devotion" because the familiarity of the passage evoked a familiar religious experience. Most Protestant Tamils in this category were self-conscious in their assessment of their use of the Tamil Bible and attempted to explain what they saw as an anomaly in their reading practices in terms of "familiarity."

By and large, it is significant that though most Protestant Tamils were prepared to make the change to *taṉittamiḻ* in the secular areas of their life, the majority have opposed a similar move in the sacred domain. The sacred terminology of the *Union Version*, by shaping the sacred domain of Protestant Tamils, had come to be understood as the correct language register with which to speak of things sacred; so much so that, rather than viewing the heavily Sanskrit-oriented "Christian Tamil" as a handicap, the majority see it as marking their identity. However, reasons behind the unpopularity of Tamil Bible translations using "pure Tamil" terminology can also be traced to some failings inherent in the Pure Tamil Movement. As Bergunder (2002) points out, there were linguistic shortcomings in the Pure Tamil project. Since Tamil classical literature was their preferred model, proponents of the Movement often introduced strange archaisms into modern Tamil. Besides, the leaders of the movement failed to adequately take into account the problem of diglossia and different levels of language but unreflectively propagated the idea that "pure" Tamil was always "good" Tamil. The Movement concentrated mainly on erasing Sanskrit terms from Tamil and did not pay sufficient attention to other aspects of the language such as developing appropriate grammatical rules for a modern Tamil prose style (217). Further, Bate (2009) points out that despite deploying a rhetoric of democratic equality of castes, the new use of Tamil in political propaganda served to protect privileged non-Brahmin castes and classes, such that "literariness in speech, the written model of oral discourse,...became the gatekeeper in Tamil politics, ensuring that no one without the necessary class position and training could participate" (37). Thus, the promotion of *taṉittamiḻ* by political parties was done at symbolic levels rather than by addressing how this language would become a viable socioeconomic option in the Tamil state (Ramaswamy 1997). This has meant that though there may have been points of consensus, an entirely homogenous notion of what "pure" Tamil is has not developed even among supporters of *taṉittamiḻ*.

Twentieth-century translators of the Tamil Bible have similarly focused mainly on replacing Sanskrit-based words with Tamil-based terms. Further, they not only shared the idea that "pure" Tamil was "good" Tamil but also that it was "common" Tamil, accessible to all speakers of the language. A point for significant criticism against their translation has been that some passages and terms used can only be understood by scholars of Tamil literature. In fact, *taṉittamiḻ* never quite became a "people's Tamil." It was an artificial construct that served the exigencies of a political movement in Tamilnad in the early to mid-twentieth century. Projects such as the revision of the Tamil Bible using *taṉittamiḻ* expose the deficiencies of the very language they seek to support. The *Tiruviviliyam*'s lack of success in Protestant circles has demonstrated that merely using "pure" Tamil terms does not make the Bible common to all Tamil speakers.

Despite this reevaluation of Pure Tamil, radical Protestant Tamil scholars, theologians, and clergy have been critical of what they view as the insularity and conservatism of the dominant sections of the Protestant Tamil community in rejecting Pure Tamil. In their opinion, introducing Pure Tamil terms in the Bible need not detract from the religious connotations and symbolism of its language register and argue that given an opportunity the new vocabulary could come to signify an equally special and sacred meaning. However, convinced that it is "Christian Tamil" that represents them as a religious community, most Protestant Tamils are unwilling to make the transition to Pure Tamil. Bergunder (2002: 215) concludes that this Christian Tamil "began to serve as a socio-religious marker that helped to reaffirm the identity of denominational Tamil Christian communities through their own dialect or 'branch language' (*kalaimoḻi*), which clearly distinguished them from other religious groups." Elsewhere I too have argued along similar lines,[40] except that I have made a distinction between the socially and economically dominant Nadar castes among Protestant Tamils who have identified overtly with the language of the *Union Version* as *kalaimoḻi* and nonelite Protestant Dalit intellectuals who have not. That is, sharing in the political ideology of the Dravidian Movement that was bringing about a revival of "pure" Tamil and supposedly a more equal society, Protestant (and Catholic) Dalit intellectuals saw the political strategy of Tamil purism as a means for social mobility under a new political dispensation; but such moves were perceived as a threat by the socially and economically dominant Protestant Nadars, expressed as concerns regarding breaking the "unity" of the community. However, I wish to push this argument further: in the case of resistance to *taṉittamiḻ* as a biblical language register, I suggest that the social processes we have considered so far ought to be extended to allow a further dimension.

Much of the standard debate in Protestant circles until the twentieth century relying heavily as it does on the literary merits of high, Sanskritized registers of Tamil, has been to appropriate this "ideal" literary Tamil for Protestant use. Proponents of *taṉittamiḻ* likewise have spoken of incorporating the high, literary merits of a de-Sanskritized "pure" Tamil into Protestant vocabulary. In the several discursive Protestant claims made on Tamil is the presupposition that it is its literary merit, derived either from Sanskrit or from its "purity" (i.e., cleansed of Sanskrit), that rendered each Tamil register fit for use in the Bible. But between these parallel language claims lies a third powerful discourse on Tamil that developed from the early twentieth century.

I build on Sumathy Ramaswamy's (1997) presentation of the complex and, at times, contradictory discursive history of Tamil in this period to analyze the dominant Protestant rejection of *taṉittamiḻ*. Examining the history of non-Brahmin separatism and linguistic revivalism, Ramaswamy has shown how a movement for collective political and social empowerment was imagined through the transformation of the Tamil language into a goddess (*Tamiḻttāy*) deserving of pious devotion (*tamiḻpaṟṟu*).[41] She has pointed out that while *tamiḻpaṟṟu* is the recurrent unifying trope, Tamil is constituted variously—in religious terms (as divine), in civilizational terms (as classical), and in ethnic terms (as mother/tongue). Of these, I will focus on the conceptualization of Tamil as divine for our purpose here, as I see the crux of the Protestant issue lying here. Ramaswamy has argued that from the late nineteenth century onward, Tamil was divinized in a sustained and prolific manner using modern technologies of print and communication to counter the power of Sanskrit. What is more, she points out that

> (Re)assertions of Tamil's divinity (*teyvattan̲mai*) accompanied a wave of religious revivalism which surfaced in the Madras Presidency in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, primarily centered around a reworking of Shaivism, declared the most ancient and authentic religion of those Tamilians who were not Aryan Brahmans. (25)

Besides its close association with a reworked Śaivism (an aspect Protestant Tamils would not be wholly comfortable with), it is this *deification* of *tan̲ittamil̲* and not its *purification* from Sanskrit that poses a greater challenge to Protestant Tamil adoption of it.

The claims made on behalf of *tan̲ittamil̲* is not only that it is the purest and most literary and authentic form of Tamil language but that *tan̲ittamil̲* is divine in its own right. *Tan̲ittamil̲* by this definition does not "become" sacred by virtue of being used in a sacred (con)text (for instance, in its close links with Tamil Śaivism), instead it *is* sacred in any context in which it is encountered. This conceptualization of *tan̲ittamil̲* as intrinsically divine whether used in sacred and devotional or secular and political contexts has blurred distinctions between the language of religious expression and the language of political commitment. Such a notion of a *divine* Tamil has the ability to challenge the authority of sacred texts; for those who accept this formulation, *tan̲ittamil̲* is not just a language that gives form to a sacred text, but points to a divine authority that lies beyond the text, in the very language that gives it form. It is itself the source of divine authority and worthy of devotion. This conceptualization of Tamil thus claims equal devotional status with the text. It is this compelling, public, political mobilization in favor of divinizing *tan̲ittamil̲* to the goddess *Tamil̲ttāy* for *all* Tamils that is salient in the rejection of the twentieth-century revisions of the Tamil Bible by most Protestant Tamils. Devotion to Tamil implies a radical move that deflects attention away from the sacred "message" of the Bible to the sacred medium carrying its message. Nevertheless, those Protestants who have supported the use of *ta̱ṉittamiḻ* in the Tamil Bible have largely bought into the Dravidianist ideology of a certain type of Tamil register as "good" Tamil and have wanted to harness the status and power it has enjoyed in contemporary Tamil public domain until recently. In contrast, Protestants who have rejected *taṉittamiḻ* have done so because they see it as part of a political propaganda that is perceived to have little to offer Protestant Tamils.

Drawing a contrast in conclusion with the other "sacred" languages available in the Tamil context, such as Sanskrit or Arabic, is pertinent here. Although Sanskrit and Arabic are considered "sacred" in the sense of being the only appropriate medium for communication of the sacred, they have not themselves become *objects* of devotion. Neither language is deified and worshipped in Tamil-speaking South India the way Tamil has been in the twentieth century. Moreover, by way of comparison to twentieth-century Protestant attitudes to language, the Tamil Muslim community too was split between those who supported Tamil and those who preferred either Arabic or Arabi-Tamil (or *arapu-tamiḻ*, i.e., a dialect of Tamil written in the Arabic script). Abdul Khader Fakhri (2008: 68–71), delineating the social and political discourses that constructed Tamil Muslim identity during this period, points out that those like P. Daud Shah (1885–1969) who favored the use of Tamil over Arabi-Tamil and Arabic in sacred and liturgical contexts were vehemently opposed by the orthodox *ulama*. Despite this, Fakhri's central argument is that the Dravidian movement promoted a composite Tamil ethnicity that accommodated and molded diverse caste and religious identities to which Tamil Muslims responded by asserting their "Tamilness" and Islamic identity in equal measure. However, judging from his own evidence of tension within the Tamil Muslim community and my research of Protestant Tamil disputes regarding language, I am inclined to think that the pan-Tamil identity offered by the Dravidian movement and *taṉittamiḻ* did not satisfactorily answer all sections of the Tamil community.

Conclusions

What common ground can we glimpse in the two instances of protest against Bible revision separated as they are by a century? Despite the particularities of historical contexts as well as the fact that two entirely different translations are being claimed as the Bible properly able to represent the entire Protestant community, there are two broad areas of consonance. First, both instances of protest rise out of historical contexts when Tamil was undergoing important and fundamental changes. Second, in both instances, the location of the right register of language use becomes central to the wider discourse on Protestant identity in Tamil-speaking South India. In other words, the traditional binary opposition between pure, grammatical Tamil and impure, ungrammatical Tamil is used as an index to classify Protestant translations, Protestant social groups, and to some extent Protestant Christianity itself. The desire to map boundaries of linguistic "purity" through continually correcting, excluding, and revising translations of the Bible signal the equally urgent desire to maintain the boundaries of "religion" as opposed to "secular" and "Protestant," as opposed to "non-Protestant."

Sastri and his fellow-Lutheran Evangelicals take up the cause of suitable registers of Tamil for the Bible in the context of a heightened interest in the study of South Indian languages in what Trautmann (2006, 2009) calls "the Madras School of Orientalism." The repercussions of developing suitable registers of Tamil for new Orientalist, imperial, and administrative purposes are experienced in related areas such as identifying a suitable *sacred* register for Protestant use. In attempting to locate an indisputable sacred, Sastri's discussion of language use shows a highly self-conscious awareness of the division of language registers: as literary, as colloquial, as regional, as particular to castes, and as the language of multiple religious communities. This is also a period when maintaining or removing "caste distinctions" had become a topic for public debate with justifications provided from the sacred domain in support of arguments both for and against. In this scenario, Sastri makes narrative attempts to organize the various speaker groups among nineteenth-century Protestant Tamils using elite notions of linguistic and literary aesthetics. Writing decades before Caldwell's systematic enquiry into Dravidian linguistics and ethnicity, Sastri brings into the contemporary discourse on Bible translation an awareness of the internal fractures within Tamil between what is written and what is spoken, and between several social groups within the community. This issue of language in practice is of course central to Sastri as the foremost Protestant poet, writer, and intellectual of the period. Sastri's many references to "purity" in Tamil translations are not yet attacks against Sanskrit as they will be by the end of the century. Instead, they seem to be consonant with a growing interest in standardizing South Indian languages as distinct. In his analysis of translations, it is the application of right grammar that will maintain the hierarchies of language registers and social positions and ultimately test the sacred *and* literary merits of any Tamil translation of the Bible. In essence, locating a high literary "Protestant" register in Tamil equals locating a Protestant sacred and is a crucial component of his identity as Protestant in early nineteenth-century South India.

Likewise, protest against the two twentieth-century translations of the Bible occurs soon after the fundamental shift in the collective understanding of Tamil as a "Dravidian" language meant to represent an authentic "Tamilness," inextricably connecting language with being so that speaking in "pure" Tamil becomes the primary indicator of individual and collective identities. This register of Tamil, cleansed of unwelcome Sanskrit influences, was hailed in the twentieth-century Tamil public domain as the only viable language for anyone who declares himself or herself as truly Tamil. However, such claims made on behalf of *taṉittamiḻ* did not stop with secular issues of race, ethnicity, or caste. As discussed earlier, its linguistic "purity" also makes serious self-referential claims regarding its status as sacred. Important for our analysis of the Tamil Bible is the conceptualization of *taṉittamiḻ* with unsettling overlaps between the sacred, the literary, and the linguistic. Because the sacred is judged by the linguistic and literary excellence of the Tamil used, there appears to be a tension, even tussle for power, between the sacred *contents* and the sacred *register* of language used in twentieth-century Tamil Bibles. In this context, the language debate in the twentieth-century Protestant Tamil community acquires center stage in their conceptualization of collective identity. The power that different sections attribute to entirely different language registers is maintained however, not by an intrinsic unique sacredness vested in that language but by a collective belief in its sacred legitimacy. The "symbolic power" ascribed to the *Union Version*'s language register lies buried within Protestant Tamil contests over right translations since it "can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (Bourdieu 1991: 164). Judgments on language and versions of the Bible, here as in the nineteenth-century disputes, point to concerns beyond language use and the sacred to how different classes of people perceive their identities and their ability to articulate them.

4

Prose Truth versus Poetic Fiction: Sacred Translations in Competing Genres

To begin with, the significance of generic choices in the translation history of the Tamil Bible may not seem as apparent as the types of language choices we have been examining so far. But it is important to remember that translated texts generate new meanings in target cultures not only through content and language but also by their choice of particular genres and formal conventions. By mobilizing particular sets of conventions and imposing recognized constraints, genres can, as Frow (2006) argues, create effects of reality and truth by structuring the "meanings" circulated by texts in particular ways. The choice of genre in the translation of sacred texts then plays a considerable part in invoking, producing, or reinscribing "sacred meanings" in target cultures in specific ways. If in the use of a particular genre there is an implicit assumption of shared conventions and expectations that links texts with their readers, what happens when in the context of translation a genre thought appropriate in a source language culture does not enjoy the same status in the target culture? How is this incommensurability in the perceived role and function of a particular genre bridged in translation, or a more valid question is: *Can* this incommensurability be bridged in and through translation?

Given this complex, and often unstable, relationship between texts and their genres in translation and the potential lack of shared expectation between different readers, how precisely the Bible in translation introduces new sacred meanings or reorganizes existing meanings through the *genres* it employs is a question that needs much further investigation in the South Asian context. Although, as I will highlight in this chapter, genre was an important discursive site in the development of Tamil literature and, in particular, Tamil religious literature in the nineteenth century, so far there has been little scholarly attention on genre in the context of Protestant translations in South India. Thus, genre is the third important lens through which we will examine Protestant translations in Tamil in this chapter. Here I am primarily concerned with the discursive interventions that generic choices have made in Protestant translations; and further, how and why at specific historical junctures, specific genres are perceived by different religious communities to be appropriate conveyers of sacred truths. Further, disagreements over the use of suitable genres for Protestant scripture and devotional literature serve as useful points of entry from which to analyze the construction of Protestant Tamil "traditions" and how it relates to group identifications.

I will first examine the Protestant and Catholic discourses on the use of prose and poetic genres in translations of sacred texts from the early eighteenth century onward. I begin with Protestant and Catholic missionary attitudes to Tamil poetry and arguments offered in favor of either Tamil prose or verse genres in the context of Bible translation. I will then investigate the choice of genres in Catholic and Protestant translations. At the risk of generalizing, Catholic missionary "translations" of scripture favored existing Tamil poetic genres[1] while Protestant missionary translations patronized the newly developing discursive prose genres in Tamil. However, both make use of prose in doctrinal expositions and disputes conducted through polemical pamphlets (Asher 1972: 12–13; Blackburn 2003: 26–72). Next, I examine how despite this Protestant preference for prose in translating the Bible, Protestant and non-Protestant Tamils made several efforts to translate the Bible into Tamil verse until the early decades of the twentieth century. Last, as intriguing counterpoints to this battle over ascribed values to genres, I consider the mobilization of Tamil verse to showcase early nineteenth-century "Protestant" identities. Since acts of translation amplify and make visible the politics of selection by various players—translators, publishers, and readers—these alternative translation projects offer an excellent opportunity to approach the construction of religious identity with different, exploratory questions regarding the relationship between genres, ways of knowing the sacred, and self-naming.

What is worth noting in many of the examples I take up later is the continued tension between designating texts as either sacred or literary, scripture or literature: so that in the process of translation, a source-language sacred text may become a target-language nonsacred text, not because of the change in language or content but because of a change in genre. Since, as we will see, translated texts are at times designated sacred or profane simply because certain genres are perceived by the receiving community to be more appropriate than others for sacred use, I will demonstrate the significance of studying genre in translating the sacred and in processes of identity construction. Significantly, within the religious context in South India, there has been a long-standing tradition of religious rivalry expressed in terms of the ability of respective adherents to appropriate and use particular genres to showcase their own religious sect. Tamil religious communities have attempted to claim superior status in their use of a particular genre for expressing religious devotion: "writing a counter-poem in a shared genre was one way to declare equal or superior status in relation to the rival sect, and a good way to subvert the influence or challenge the authority of the rival's text" (Peterson 2004: 42). The following sections examine how at different historical moments either Tamil poetic or prose genres were harnessed by three different sections of the Tamil community—Protestant, Catholic, and Śaivite—to construct their religious identities in response to changing attitudes to literary and sacred texts.

Protestant Attitudes to Tamil Verse and Prose

The Tamil Bible is distinct from other religious scriptures in Tamil in its predominant use of prose genres. Unlike Tamil Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite sacred texts and some Catholic translations into Tamil, the Protestant translation of the Bible in Tamil was in a discursive prose that hitherto had not been ascribed high place in Tamil literary and religious cultures. Prose genres had not developed literary or sacred merit in Tamil, viewed as they were as mere commentaries on sophisticated Tamil verse.[2] Prose commentaries, or "*urai*," had developed into different types, from simple annotations to more complex dissections and criticism of poetic texts and at times they even functioned as critical commentaries on other commentaries. But despite the importance placed on this tradition of prose commentaries as essential accompaniments to poetry, they remained just that, critical accessories to literature. Thus, prose was not considered an appropriate genre for secular or sacred literature until the last decades of the nineteenth century.[3] Nevertheless, from the beginning, Protestant translators of the Bible made considerable efforts to develop discursive prose genres in Tamil to carry their translation. Prose genres were molded out of existing Tamil commentarial traditions and the works of Catholic missionaries of the previous centuries for Protestant translations of the Bible. This is despite Protestant missionaries being aware that existing scriptures in Tamil were composed in verse and that prose did not traditionally enjoy equal literary or sacred status.

This translation practice, requiring the introduction of new types of prose genres, must first be located within the framework of the Protestant missionary discourse on Tamil sacred literatures and their genres. In this discourse, different sets of terms were used to distinguish "Hindu" from "Protestant" scriptures: terms broadly defining differences in genres also covertly indicate the "truth" status of the texts discussed. So, for instance, terms usually used to define Hindu texts emphasized the literary and, therefore, *fictional* nature of the texts—poetry, histories (i.e., as legend rather than as "fact"), fables, and magical; whereas terms referring to the Bible categorized it as sacred and as scripture, with the use of phrases such as "Gospel," "sacred," and "Word of God". The following early dialogue between Ziegenbalg and a Hindu Tamil is just one of many encounters where such labeling is disputed:

> I saw a Priest reading to a great Concourse of Merchants, who heard him very attentively; and…, I asked what Book 'twas he read? He answered, " 'tis *Kandapuranu*"; or *an History–Book*. "So you believe for Truth all the Contents of that Book," said I unto him? Yes, reply'd he; for tis a Treatise explicatory of *our Sacred Law*…Then I took him to task, and shew'd, that 'twas but a continued *Poetic Fiction* from the Beginning to the End,…and destructive of good Morals in all the Youth who assist at the reading thereof." (Ziegenbalg, 1719, Conference 20: 209–10; emphasis added)

The adjectives used by some missionaries to describe Tamil Hindu poetry—a flowery style, poetical fiction, "Wildest Extravagancies" "ridiculous whimsies," (Ziegenbalg 1719: 210, 242) and so on—accentuate early Protestant representations of Hindu texts as fabrications meant to mislead the reader (Ziegenbalg 1719, Conference 20: 209–10). While the authors of "Hindu" texts are usually referred to as "lying poets," false Historians, or Brahmins, "who have made it their Business to impose upon too credulous Posterity" (Ziegenbalg 1719: 242), the author of the Bible is always "God," with prophets figuring as the faithful human mediators of divine revelation. In his *Genealogie*, Ziegenbalg writes of his plan to "examine the heathen foolishness" to demonstrate what the South Indian had known about the Word of God, "how some of their teachings agree with the creed [of the Christians] and how they were [later] distorted and spoiled by the craftiness of the devil and their *poets*" (Jeyaraj 2005: 39; emphasis added).

This inclination to dismiss rival texts as literary and, in particular, poetic in nature continues through the nineteenth century. In the *Morning Star* (April 9, 1846), a letter to the editor criticizes the poetic preoccupations of "high Tamil scholars" contrasting these to the *useful* and resilient sciences. The writer questions the very basis on which a Tamil scholar is known as "scholar": it is not "useful" knowledges but knowledge of poetry that qualifies a Tamil scholar. There are repeated efforts to distinguish Śaiva from Protestant scripture in the journal on grounds of both content and genre. Featuring in a series "Hinduism Unmasked," the author of an article entitled "Cause of Eclipses" (1848) declares the Śaiva *Skanda Purana* an "obscene fable" and a "piece of foolish and hurtful romance" (*Morning Star*, September 14, 1848: 76), thereby underscoring the literary, fictional, and immoral nature of the text. Such labeling plays a crucial part in categorizing one set of sacred texts as "scripture" and another set perceived as mere "literature."

Moreover, since Tamil grammars did not attempt to control the subject matter of poetry but focused more on style, Protestant missionaries were often incensed that "good poetry" in Tamil conceptualization, that is, written according to grammatical rules, was allowed to mask "immoral" and "obscene" subjects. Murdoch's (1865) introduction to the catalogue of Tamil printed books includes an important mid-nineteenth-century statement on the state of Tamil language and literature. He too distinguishes Tamil prose literature, having "received its principal impulse from Europeans," from Tamil poetry, some of the latter too obscene to print or even include in his catalogue. Viewing Tamil poetry within the context of the "act against obscene books" passed by the colonial government in 1860,[4] Murdoch is astounded not so much at the existence of "obscene" literature but that they were entirely acceptable to the Tamil audience as they were deemed to have been written according to existing rules of Tamil poetry: "In a Tamil poem,...there is glowing description of what cannot be named...Strange as it may seem, this is only in accordance with the rules laid down in the division of Tamil Grammar treating of poetry" (lxx–lxxi). This close linking of genres of poetry with the "immorality" and "obscenity" of "Hindu" texts meant that Tamil poetic genres could not be viewed as appropriate vehicles for Protestant translations. As much as borrowing the use of sacred terms from other religious traditions was suspect, borrowing generic conventions blurred perceived distinctions between rival faiths.

Significantly, this Protestant attitude to Tamil Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva texts extended to Tamil Catholic works as will become clear in the Protestant reception of Beschi's poetry and of Abbe Dubois's assessment of the "state of Christianity" in early nineteenth-century India. Catholic writings in Tamil, mainly that of Nobili and Constantin Beschi (1680–1747) appeared both in prose—religious treatises, sermons, catechisms, and grammars—and verse. And, despite theological differences, Ziegenbalg had found the prose diction and style of these Catholic works useful, but unlike the Catholics, primarily for his translation of the *New Testament*.[5] In contrast to the Protestant focus on translating the Bible into Tamil prose, Catholic missionaries did not translate the Bible in the strict sense of the word but rewrote (or "creatively" translated) sections of the Bible into Tamil and certainly seem more open to exploiting Tamil verse conventions.

Unlike contemporary Protestants, Beschi ([1822] 1917), an eighteenth-century Catholic missionary, for instance, advocates Tamil poetry in the introduction to his *Grammar* as an effective instrument to proselytize, drawing parallels with St. Jerome to legitimize the strategy he promotes:

> But since almost all the Tamil works in this dialect are in verse, I trust you will not deem it improper, if I venture to draw your attention to heathen poets, and to the study of poetry. Since all their writings are in verse, they have reduced to metre their rules of art, and even the rudiments of their language: whence, they naturally suppose, that he who does not understand their poetry, is totally ignorant...in this country especially, it is highly proper

> in a minster of the gospel to read the poets, and to apply himself to the study of poetry. (viii)

This recommendation recognizes the cultural power of Tamil poetry. Along with his advice to new Catholic missionaries to "turn their own weapons against themselves" he also encourages a mastery of the higher dialect of Tamil. He had noticed the admiration Tamils had for those with merely a rudimentary acquaintance with the higher dialect and so asks "what praise, then, would they not bestow on a foreigner, whom they should find deeply versed in a science which they themselves consider scarcely attainable?" (vii). Despite Beschi's use of discursive prose, it is for this endorsement of Tamil poetry and for his own poetic compositions that he is best known among Tamils; in sharp contrast, while the Lutherans borrowed his prose style, they were dismissive of his poetry. It is not so much that his Protestant contemporaries disagreed with his assessment of Tamil poetry or high language registers, as we will see, but it is precisely the cultural power of such poetry, with its deep roots in rival religious faiths, that they mistrusted.

The best known of Catholic translations is Beschi's Catholic epic *Tēmpāvaṇi* (composed 1726–29?),[6] "translating" portions of the Old and New Testament into Tamil verse with Christ, the Virgin Mary, and Joseph as central protagonists, resembling heroes from the *Kamparāmāyaṇa*.[7] For his efforts, Beschi was given the title "*Vīramāmuṉivar*" (heroic devotee) by his Tamil admirers, thus comparing his writing with Tamil devotional or bhakti poets. Further, although Beschi composed several original prose works explaining Catholic doctrines or attacking Lutheran principles, it is for his *Tēmpāvaṇi* that he is repeatedly placed in the list of "great" Tamil poets by modern Tamil literary historians. However, the *Tēmpāvaṇi*'s significance lies also in the part it played in nineteenth-century polemical exchanges between Catholic and Protestant missionaries on the subject of appropriate genres for religious translation in the South Indian context. Protestant missionaries were suspicious of such Catholic recommendations of poetry or translation efforts since they often successfully reemployed poetic genres from Tamil sacred literature in the Catholic context. This particular quarrel over genres began when Abbé Dubois (1823), a nineteenth-century Catholic missionary in South India, early in the century, called attention to the importance of Tamil verse for Bible translation. Attacking Protestant prose translations of the Bible he advocated translations into verse to make it more effective in India:

> In fact, a translation of the Holy Scriptures, in order to awaken the curiosity, and fix the attention of the learned Hindoo, at least as a literary production, ought to be on a level with the Indian performances of the same kind among them, and be composed in fine poetry, a flowery style, and a high stream of eloquence, this being universally the mode in which all Indian performances of any worth are written. As long as the versions are executed in the low style in which we find these, you may rest assured that they will only excite contempt, and tend to increase the aversion already entertained by the natives against the Christian religion. (22)

Dubois criticizes Protestant prose translations as ludicrous, vulgar, and almost unintelligible, the Holy Scriptures in "contemptible shape." In addressing the specific issue of genre Dubois argues in favor of "domesticating" the Bible to fulfil the cultural expectations of the target audience.

Protestant attacks of Dubois were immediate and vigorous, linking Dubois's statement with Beschi's *Tēmpāvaṇi*. A year after Dubois's book was published, there were two book-length defenses of Protestant strategies in India, which included a discussion of Dubois's criticism of Protestant translations. Unlike Caldwell's praise of Beschi later in the century,[8] these attack Beschi as an example of Catholic excess to be avoided at all cost. Henry Townley's *Answer to The Abbé Dubois* (1824: 50) attacks Dubois in response to the passage given earlier: "There is now to be noticed a . . . principle maintained by the Abbé, of so strange as well as erroneous a nature, . . . " In the shock expressed by Townley, it is possible to glimpse Protestant disassociation of Tamil verse and sacred truth. James Hough (1824: 143) too refers to Dubois's passage given earlier to challenge the Catholic claim: "As a Tamil Scholar, [Beschi] was little inferior to many of the Learned Natives . . . Why then did he not undertake such a Translation of the Scriptures as the Abbe describes? . . . " Hough then paradoxically proceeds to attack Beschi by complimenting him on his poetic skill.

Hough recognizes that the *Tēmpāvaṇi* "is composed in poetic language, 'a flowery style, and a fine stream of eloquence'; freely renders to it that tribute of commendation, to which, *as a literary performance*, it is entitled" (143–4; emphasis added). Crucially Hough contrasts the high-flown, abstruse verse of the *Tēmpāvaṇi* and the plainness of the Tamil prose in the translated Bible: "the metaphysical style, and the classical language, in which the Author has clothed his Lessons, have rendered them quite unintelligible to any but the most Learned Hindoos . . . the lowest Translation of the plain Text of Scripture is more likely to convert the Hindoos to Christianity than such a substitute as this" (144). His final indictment is that he does not doubt that

> the Christian [i.e., Protestant] Reader will concur with me in opinion, that the Translations of the Scriptures already made by Protestants into the Languages of the East, . . . are likely to prove one-hundred-fold more beneficial to the Hindoos than such Versions, or Paraphrases, or fictions, or whatever it be called, as the Heroic Poem of Beschi. (149)

This virtual slide from "version," conceptually closest to translation to the literary fictionality of "heroic poem," clearly of least sacred value, displays how far the Catholics were deemed to be from any valuable contribution to Bible translation. Like Hough, Elijah Hoole (1829: 113, 116), attacking Beschi's "poetic license" in accommodating "every doctrine" to the "notions of the Hindoos," is willing to grant the literary quality of the poem but argues its inadequacy as a scriptural text.

Thus, significantly, Protestant detractors use the same logic of argument in their attacks of Catholic religious poetry in Tamil as they had done against Hindu poetry in Tamil: while the early nineteenth-century Protestant critique of Catholic Tamil poetry admits that Beschi's poem was one of the best in Tamil on a Christian subject, its argument is that the poem's sacred status was questionable precisely because it was such a good *poem*. It is the *Tēmpāvaṇi*'s ability to satisfy Tamil literary aesthetics by sharing poetic verse genres and conventions that set it at such odds with the Protestant claim on behalf of plain prose for biblical translations. Clearly, neither language choice nor subject matter is at issue here; it is the translator's choice of *genre* that frames the translation as either deceptive literature or reliable scripture. In fact, what is clearest in these Protestant attacks is that they do not consider the *Tēmpāvaṇi* a translation of biblical narrative at all.

Hence, in this case, high literariness does not equate to high sacredness. Instead, on various occasions, Tamil non-Protestant religious poetry (both Hindu and Catholic) was labeled lying, distorting, or immoral and was contrasted unfavorably with the supposedly rational, coherent, and perspicuous prose of the Protestant Tamil Bible. Protestant prose genres—sermons, catechisms, letters, biblical history, religious treatises, pamphlets, tracts, novels,[9] newspaper articles—were introduced into Tamil religious and literary culture, as elsewhere in India, as the form that carried truth—historical, scientific, and moral. Prose, therefore, served as the most reliable representational frame through which Protestant truth and authoritative religious meanings could be translated and circulated.[10]

However, rather paradoxically, despite this preference for prose in Protestant discourse and translation practice there was simultaneously reference to the greater "effectiveness" of Tamil verse within the Tamil religious context. Protestant missionaries knew very well that when Hindu scriptures were translated creatively between Indian languages, they were translated into verse, and a well-known Tamil example often recurring in Protestant missionary discourse was the *Irāmāvatāram*,[11] Kampaṉ's Tamil version of Valmiki's Sanskrit *Ramayana*. They apprehended that this cultural partiality for verse in religious expression existed both at the level of the erudite and the popular: Charles Rhenius (1841) had observed that popular Hindu commentaries on gods and goddesses were usually sung. Later in the nineteenth century, Robert Caldwell Jr. (1872) pointed to the wide appeal of the *Kamparāmāyaṇam*: despite its highly polished diction, it was the most popular poem among Tamil Hindus as it was sung almost daily on the streets by wandering minstrels. Thus, the effectiveness of verse in Tamil religious culture, particularly, the poetic *Kamparāmāyaṇam* in verse in preprint Tamil culture, where recitation and aurality played a vital role in creating popular knowledge of religious texts, was well-known to Protestant missionaries.

Drawing on this awareness that poetry worked best in the Tamil sacred domain, a few nineteenth-century missionaries did call for Protestant literature in Tamil verse. By way of support, they quoted Protestant converts—catechists or clergy who suggest that the Protestant message in Tamil verse would be most successful for the evangelical purposes of the missionaries. Poetry as the most effective means by which to persuade Tamils to convert in the Tamil bazaars is suggested by Reverend Winfred, "Handbills in poetry will be more acceptable to the Hindus than those in prose" (*MRTBS* 1869: 23). The 1879 Annual Report of the MRTBS mentions the publication of a new tract titled "The Everlasting Way," drawing attention to its successful use of poetry and compares it with recitals from the *Kamparāmāyaṇam*:

> It contains a selection of popular lyrics, well adapted to convey a good idea of the Gospel message. It has been sung, with much effect, at various gatherings. The attention of missionaries is invited to this mode of disseminating truth. In all parts of the country, groups may be seen listening to recitals from the Ramayana. The people, accustomed to this, will readily give a hearing to a far nobler theme. (*MRTBS* 1880: 1)

Similarly, another tract *Kuruṭṭu vaḻi* (Blind Way) written in Tamil by Vedanayaka Sastri to explain Protestant Christianity to non-Protestants was supported by Protestant Tamil clergy as one of the most effective tracts available.[12] Although written mainly in prose, the tract ends with three hymns or *kīrttaṉai*[13] inviting the reader to salvation and protection in Christ. *Kuruṭṭu vaḻi* was therefore "especially recommended" by Caldwell according to Murdoch (1865: xl), "on account of the poetical quotations, and the Hindu religious technical terms with which it abounds." Moreover, John Nullathumby, a Protestant Tamil clergyman, suggested in 1874 that sections of a collection of devotional poetry, *Jebamālei* (Garland of Prayers), written by Sastri would serve better as a tract than the prose tracts available and "prove of great advantage to the spread of the Gospel" (*MRTBS* 1880: 29). However, these positive references to verse recommend Tamil verse in the main for composing secondary literature such as tracts and not for translating the Bible.

There is evidently a curious mismatch between suspicion of the aesthetic power of Hindu poetry and the desire of some Protestant missionaries to harness the persuasive form of Tamil poetic genres to showcase a higher Protestant truth. It is therefore instructive to examine Protestant translations of the Bible into Tamil prose and verse genres in the light of this ambivalence in the nineteenth-century discourse on genre seen so far. Importantly, there is a countertranslation enterprise offering verse translations of the Bible suggesting that Protestant and Hindu Tamils were indeed keen on engaging in generic experiments, albeit in an unorganized fashion.[14] My aim in discussing these translations is not to comment on the quality of the translations but to examine the circumstances in which they were published, the claims made by the translators and, where possible, how they were received by contemporaries in order to demonstrate that the parallel endeavor on translating the Bible using poetic genres emerging from the mid-nineteenth-century onward indicates a desire to relink the Tamil aesthetic with the sacred, which the dominant Protestant discourse on translation had made efforts to separate.

Issues of Genre: Translating the Bible

John Murdoch's section on Tamil prose in his catalogue of Tamil printed books places the Madras Bible Society and its revision of the Bible as central to the development of Tamil prose.[15] He contends that the Bible Society played a vital role in the shift from initial applications of elaborate rules meant for Tamil poetry in prose compositions to developing an independent prose style as demonstrated in the translation of the Bible that it supported: "The version of the Scriptures now in progress is an excellent model of style. Simplicity, combined with elegance, is the aim. It will be increasingly imitated and admired, as more correct ideas of style are diffused" (Murdoch 1865: xxxiii). In the Protestant discourse on Tamil prose, *biblical* prose is increasingly recommended as a *standard* for all prose composition in Tamil. Asserting that the "classic writings of the Hindus are chiefly poetical" and "so unlike that of ordinary prose composition, as to require a different grammar," a European writing to the *Morning Star* in 1853 recommends that "in view of the very great importance of having an *approved standard* for prose composition that shall be within the reach of all classes of students, we would with *earnestness* and *confidence* recommend to the Tamil community, the last revised edition of the *Tamil Bible*[16] *as the standard for prose composition* (italics in the original)."[17] His distinguishing of "Hindu poetry" only accessible to a few Tamil scholars from the prose Tamil Bible, "a light that shineth in a dark place," is representative of the Protestant defense of prose as the democratic idiom for all classes of Tamil society.

This notion that the Tamil Bible was, so to speak, launching prose as a respectable genre for both elite and popular use in Tamil literary practice meant that the attention of both Protestant translators and critics was focused principally on developing a better standard for discursive prose in Tamil. Henceforth, it is the Bible in Tamil prose that is to be further imitated to generate a whole spectrum of Protestant prose texts: articles for journals such as the *Morning Star* prepared, tracts and essays written, sermons preached and school-books composed (D.P. 1853). Consequently, suggestions for poetic translations of the Bible or Protestant literature are not seriously engaged with and are not taken up as a *translation* "issue" to be debated. This is despite the elaborate and in-depth discussions examined in chapter one reviewing all other principles and processes governing the translation of the Bible that carried on throughout the nineteenth century, both within the parameters of individual languages and across the spectrum of Indian languages.

It is clear from Protestant missionary translation practices that the Bible was always to be translated into Tamil discursive prose. It is here that the overlap with the discussion on language registers becomes visible. High registers of Tamil associated with sophisticated poetry inaccessible to all were to make way for a lower, more accessible register of Tamil far more suited to developing discursive prose genres. Despite missionary desire to make the Bible attractive to all sections of their Tamil audience, there is an intriguing reticence in the matter of translating into culturally familiar genres. Even the obviously poetical books such as the Psalms and Song of Solomon were not translated into Tamil verse until the mid-twentieth century. Until then, songs in such books were translated into Tamil prose rather than verse. The late twentieth-century translation committee of the Common Language Tamil Bible was the first to discuss translation strategies for poetic sections of the Bible as a separate issue. In a document entitled, "Translating the Poetry of the Bible" they state that in order to effectively communicate the message of the original document they must pay attention not only to the content but to "the *form* in which the original message was conveyed" (BSI Editorial Correspondence, Tamil file 11: 1965–73). However, even here, the translators are really concerned about translating biblical verse into Tamil verse and do not contemplate translating biblical prose into Tamil verse.

Two considerations may have been behind this favoring of prose both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, it is quite possible, as I pointed out in the case of Protestant attacks of Beschi's poetry, it is precisely the greater aesthetic effectiveness of poetic genres in the Tamil Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Catholic contexts that seems to have encouraged Protestant dismissal of it. Second, the Protestant assertion of egalitarianism—that it made itself readily available to individuals of all castes, classes, and nationalities—had a vital part to play in the choice of genres. Protestant missionaries had contrasted existing cultural practices that limited access to Hindu scriptures to a select few with the Protestant emphasis on making scripture available to all. If the Bible was to be presented as scripture open to all sections of Tamil society, it could not be translated into elite genres of Tamil poetry, and as the argument ran, render it inaccessible to the majority who were not highly educated in literary Tamil. In fact, this was the challenge they repeatedly posed to Hindu apologetics: if they believed that their scriptures contained truth why were the Hindu elite unwilling to make them available to all members of their community through simpler prose translations? Incidentally, a Śaiva Tamil does answer this challenge in the second half of the nineteenth century: Arumukam Pillai's adoption of discursive prose for translating (medieval Śaiva Tamil poetry into "modern" Tamil prose) and writing Śaiva texts developed a form of Tamil prose that became increasingly popular as a medium for literary communication from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

With this background in mind, investigating all translations of the Tamil Bible in print reveals that apart from listening to, catechizing, and reading the Tamil Bible, Protestant Tamil engagement extended to retranslating the Bible into culturally familiar verse genres. These traces of numerous verse translations by nineteenth-century Protestants point to underlying cultural factors that are often ignored in the grand narrative on Bible translation in the nineteenth-century South Indian context. My argument is that although these may not have been "equivalent" verse translations by nineteenth-century missionary standards of the Tamil prose Bible, such efforts reveal a popular interest in attempting to convert biblical passages already available in Tamil prose into Tamil verse. Though these were allowed to fade into obscurity with little encouragement from editors or missionary printing presses, it is worthwhile to retrieve them from the margins of the official project of translating the Bible in South India.

Let us first investigate a few noteworthy attempts at translating parts of the Bible into Tamil verse, undertaken by Tamils, either Protestant converts or non-Protestants. None of these translations were published by BFBS. The first is a poetical version in Tamil of the first two books of the Old Testament published first in one volume in Jaffna in 1866.[18] Its title*, Tiruvākkuppurāṇam* (very loosely translated, a history of holy words/subject), comes with an English subtitle: *A Poetical Version in Tamil of the Holy Scriptures*. It is a translation effort by a Jaffna Protestant convert, J. Evarts Kanagasabai Pillai, and attempts to approximate target-language scriptures through its use of Tamil verse genres. Evarts Kanagasabai had first sent his manuscript to the *Morning Star* in 1849 to be printed in parts. On January 10, 1850 [X (1):1], under the title "Poetical Version of Bible History," Evarts Kanagasabai's letter to the editor is published informing the reader why he has chosen to write "a poetical version of the history in Genesis in the form of Tamil Puranahs":

> It is the duty of Christians to contrive means to make the heathens wish to read the Bible. Tamil Poetry being very attractive to the Tamulians, it appears to me desirable to give the facts of the Bible in Tamil poetry, first publishing it in the Morning Star, and then, if approved, using it as a Classical Reader for Tamil youths and as a Christian Puranah.

Although Evarts Kanagasabai uses the standard metaphor, viewing "the Holy Bible as a light for removing the darkness of heathenism," in his opinion it is the "poetical" Bible that will achieve this effect. His claim that "many Christians who have read them, have approved of them and urged me to give them to you for publication" suggests that he had the support of other Jaffna Tamils in this matter.

Four installments of *Tiruvākkuppurāṇam* were published from January to March of the same year in the Tamil section of the journal, under the Tamil heading, *maṉitacātikku mōṭcānanta vaḻiyaik kāṭṭiya tiruvākkuppurāṇam* (the holy purana that reveals the path to the bliss of salvation to humankind), clearly indicating that this was not to be considered secondary literature such as a "tract," an article, or even a sermon. Unfortunately, however, the installments stop after March 1850 without any explanation from the editors and neither is there any response from readers published in subsequent issues. However, since the entire Book of Genesis and part of Exodus, with specimen translations of the New Testament, were published sixteen years later as Part I of the *tiruvākkuppurāṇam* we can assume that Kanagasabai's translation effort did enjoy some support. This publication names Rev. C. C. Macarthar of the Church Missionary Society as its editor[19] and the Tamil subtitle states the purpose behind the translation—that such a version, in the form of a *purāṇam*, would assist the students at Christian seminaries and others to memorize the Bible.

Kanagasabai's translation attempts to approximate target-language scriptures at several levels. The main title, *Tiruvākkuppurāṇam*, combines three terms: *tiru* (holy), *vākku* (word or speech), and *purāṇam* (history). The significant change in the title is the use of the term *purāṇam* instead of the standard nineteenth-century use of *vētam* and *ākamam* in the translated Tamil Bible. *Purāṇam* or the Puranas (in Sanskrit) literally means "stories of old."[20] There are eighteen chief Puranas that go back to Vedic times, written mainly in verse form that contain legendary and mythological versions of history and of the creation and destruction of the universe. The Puranas are given sacred status although most Hindus would acknowledge that Puranic texts are sacred in ways different to that of the Vedas. In the Tamil context, the *Civa-purāṇam* and *Periyapurāṇam*, in particular, enjoy high sacred and ritual status among Śaivites. Did Kanagasabai use the term *purāṇam* because he realized that in the Jaffna context, large numbers of Protestant Tamils had converted from the elite Śaiva Vellala caste and would have held the *Civa-purāṇam* as their most sacred text? Did he, therefore, wish to signal to them that it was not the *Civa-purāṇam* but this biblical *purāṇam* that was in reality able to show "the way to the bliss of salvation"?

Unlike all other prose Tamil translations of the Bible, the *Tiruvākkuppurāṇam* begins with invocatory songs in praise of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thus following established rules of Tamil poetry that demanded that poems commence with invocations to the gods. This is followed by a preface in about a hundred and ten stanzas introducing the poem. Once the translation of the Book of Genesis begins, the poem follows the prose Bible chapter by chapter and the translation comes with chapter breakdown and titles in both Tamil and English at the top of each page to allow the reader to follow the events of the Books of Genesis and Exodus with greater ease and perhaps, more importantly, to indicate to the reader that this was a close verse *translation* of the original and not to be mistaken for a creative *paraphrase*. The translation ends rather abruptly halfway through Exodus, with the giving of the Ten Commandments in Chapter 20 suggesting that there was more to follow in future publications. The eight pages that follow corroborate this as the specimen stanzas of the Gospels with the subtitle, "Part II, the Gospels and Acts will shortly be published" (*Tiruvākkuppurāṇam* 1866: 193), indicate Kanagasabai's translation plans. However, there is no evidence that he ever did manage to publish his verse translations of subsequent portions of the Bible. There is certainly no proof that this version was distributed as one of the approved translations by BFBS in South India or Sri Lanka.

The second half of the nineteenth century is peppered with several more such efforts to translate parts of the Bible into Tamil verse. Although not as long as Kanagasabai's, these attempts should not be ignored as they indicate a wider interest in translating biblical prose into Tamil verse. Some were published as little booklets, inexpensive and perhaps easier to distribute, while shorter efforts were printed in the *Morning Star* in the second half of the nineteenth century. For instance, a verse translation of the Book of Ruth, also with the title *Tiruvākkuppurāṇam*, by a Cinnatampi Pillai was printed in 1914 in Madurai by the Tamilccankam Power Press. In his preface, the author hopes that other Protestant Tamils will show a similar zeal in translating the Bible into Tamil verse in the future. Composed in 69 stanzas, the text starts with the symbol of the cross on the first page and the text: "tiriyēkar tuṉai" (i.e., [with the] "Trinity's help"). This invocation of the Trinity echoes popular religious print in Tamil that usually began with "pillaiyar tunai" (with the help of Lord Ganesha).[21] Apart from this, Murdoch's *Catalogue of Christian Vernacular Literature* (1870: 186) lists a *Poetical Version of the Book of Genesis* by Narasimullu Kavirayar published in Madras in 1849 in 106 pages. Philip de Melho apparently translated the Psalms, published in 1760, as *Metrical Version of the Psalms of David*. Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace copies of either translation. The *Morning Star* printed several translation efforts under the title "Versification of certain scripture passages in the Bible" in 1842.[22] Apart from these, verse translations of Psalms 1–9 appear in separate issues from January to August 1842.[23] In Part III of his *Catalogue* (1870) listing Christian literature in the Madras Presidency, Murdoch gives a separate category of Tamil texts "published by Natives" (185–8), which he introduces explicitly with "The following have both been *prepared* and *published* by natives. They indicate more fully native tastes and feelings. It will be observed that, except in the first list, poetical works bear a large proportion" (185). Of the several collections of devotional lyrics he lists there are several that are verse renderings of smaller sections of the Bible.[24] Significantly, as none of these efforts, including Kanagasabai's, are listed by Murdoch as Tamil "scripture" but as "miscellaneous" literature, it is evident that these were not categorized as "translations" of the Bible at all.

The value of such translations akin to Tamil cultural aesthetics is borne out in this next verse translation from the twentieth century. S. Saminatha Pillai's translation of the "Gospel of St. Matthew" in Tamil verse was published in Madras in 1908. Carrying the Tamil title *Mattēyu cuvicēṭa veṇpa*, it was a translation of the entire Gospel into the *veṇpa*, one of four principal Tamil stanza forms and a popular but difficult Tamil meter. Saminatha Pillai was not a Protestant Tamil and there is no evidence of his conversion to Christianity at a later point. Significantly, his preface in Tamil provides a rationale for his translation by addressing the uneasy relationship between Protestant prose and verse. Saminatha Pillai claims he decided to translate Matthew's Gospel into Tamil verse because he had noticed while a student at a missionary school that fellow Hindu students did not read Christian books (that were required reading) because Christian books were not available in poetic form. Having read and appreciated their moral precepts, he was convinced that Christian books in verse would appeal to Tamil Hindus at least for their moral value. More importantly, he had also noticed that his Christian friends were eager to recite (the Tamil words he uses are *pārāyana ceyya*, a term used for the ceremonial recitation of the Vedas according to set rules) their books in verse rather than prose. His explicit aim was to assist Tamil Christians who desired to quote the Gospels in verse. And last, perhaps anticipating criticism on the grounds that Tamil verse would be accessible to very few, he emphasizes that he had written in as easy a verse as possible so that even those who had attained a basic level of literacy in Tamil could understand it.

Translating as a non-Protestant, Saminatha Pillai (1908) reveals some anxiety about how his motives might be construed by others. For instance, he stresses that he had not deliberately written anything against the Christian religion, nor had he added to the Gospel text. However, he admits to having exercised some poetic license in imaginatively re-creating at places what might have occurred in reality and "according to circumstances" (7–8; my translation). He also assures the reader that for the 1071 verses in Matthew's Gospel, he had, excluding the invocatory verses (*kappu veṇpa*), 1029 *veṇpa*, thus making it approximately a *veṇpa* for each Bible verse. By this he indicates that although he may have changed the genre, he is *translating* rather than re-creating the original in Tamil, emphasizing that this too is a "faithful" translation of the original. In his careful efforts to reassure his Christian reader that his translation is accurate, Saminatha Pillai shows awareness of Western norms of translation that were introduced to Tamil literary culture. That he thinks it necessary to affirm there were no additions, deletions, or changes to the source text, and this in the literary context of translations between Indian languages where such considerations had not been a point of contention, shows that the new rules of translation, which had been introduced by contact with Western translation practices, had gained greater weight.

Appreciation from contemporary Protestant Tamils he includes, which commend him for his "faithful rendering," confirm that this is now increasingly recognized as a crucial requirement in translation. In all, Saminatha Pillai (1908) attaches extracts from eleven "opinions" and two dedicatory verses sent in by Protestant Tamils and missionaries, which function as a "paratext" mediating between its reader and the translation by indicating how the translation ought to be received. These Protestant comments emphasize the "Christian" nature of the translation despite the "Hindu" translator-poet, as though anticipating resistance on this count; advocate that "every Tamil Christian ought to encourage the author by buying a copy of the book themselves and recommend the same to their friends" (16); and propose it as an excellent example of Tamil poetry for high-school and college syllabi. J. Lazarus's "Introductory Note" echoes parallels drawn between oral performances of Hindu poetry and similar Christian effort mentioned earlier in this chapter: "If like the wayside bards who recite to listening crowds the stories and adventures of Hindu heroes, Christian preachers could make use of this work in their street preaching and even Christian gatherings, they would find their work gaining in attractiveness among all classes of hearers" (12). Since he prefaces his translation with several contemporary responses to his translation, clearly Saminatha Pillai felt compelled to defend his decision to translate into Tamil verse, suggesting that he anticipated considerable censure for his efforts. Nonetheless, Saminatha Pillai's prefatory comments reveal an understanding of an aspect of his audience's needs that is largely missing from official biblical translation projects in South India. His translation effort reaches out to a potential non-Protestant audience used to reading sacred works in the high Tamil poetic style. He was equally perceptive about the needs of his Protestant audience: quoting from scriptures was more effective when they were in verse especially in the religious culture of Tamil society where poetry was given preeminence and the possession of religious poetry represented or added merit to each religious group.

Saminatha Pillai ends his preface with an offer of his services as verse translator for the three remaining Gospels if his first effort were to prove a success. Unfortunately, there is no way of assessing the success of his translation as there is no information on how many copies were sold, whether a second edition was ever printed, or who (Protestant or non-Protestant) his readers were. There is no evidence that he did manage to publish any of the other Gospels in Tamil *veṇpa*. Saminatha Pillai's translation appeared just before the first twentieth-century revision committee of the Tamil Bible was set up in 1913, but is not referred to by the "official" translation committee.

Despite lack of direct evidence of how popular such verse translations may have been, the evidence from other Indian-language verse translations of the Bible indicates that interest was certainly more widespread than one might at first think it to be. Elsewhere in India, another non-Protestant named Rajah Bhujanga Rao had translated the New Testament into Telugu verse, which was published in parts between 1913 and 1920. In 1883, Mukunda Das completed an Oriya verse translation of the Gospel of Matthew and later, completed verse translations of the remaining Gospels, the Psalms, and Proverbs (Hooper 1963: 94, 129). None of these efforts at verse translation were encouraged or published by BFBS, the official publishers of the Bible in India who continued to back only prose translations for publication. An exception is a joint effort earlier in the nineteenth century by William Hodge Mill and Ramachandra Valyabhushana who worked on a Sanskrit poetic version of Christ's life put together from the four Gospels. Published first in 1831, *The Christa-Sangita or the Sacred History of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Sanscrit Verse* contains an English preface by Mill that was reprinted with the second edition in 1842. In it Mill attempts to justify why such a translation was necessary and makes a point of distinguishing the translation from established Sanskrit religious poetry despite the shared genre.

Mill (1842: vi) informs us that the idea to compose such a poem was first advanced by the Bengali pandit, who conceived "the design of making, in his own words, a Purana of this history, by a metrical translation of it into the sacred language of his tribe…" and showed Mill an introductory canto he had composed. However, the rest of the work was composed by Mill. Significantly, despite the fact that "[a] poem of this nature, has, if tolerably executed, an access to many of the higher orders of Hindus which no tracts or scriptural versions in any of the ordinary spoken languages can, in the present state of their feelings and prejudices, possibly attain . . . ” (xxxvi), Mills insists he has “not *conceded* any thing, either in taste or expression, to the Hindus; but merely sought among them the *material* of language and measure, in which these Christian sentiments might be expressed” (note 5: xxxii; emphasis in the original).

Although Mill is very clearly arguing in favor of Christian material in meter, he also takes care to distinguish this translation from Hindu texts, making a special point of claiming that the “plainness” of Sanskrit verse makes it preferable to the Tamil verse of Beschi to convey the “simple” message of the Bible:

> To give to the historical truths of Christianity a dress borrowed from the metrical legends of the Hindus is no novel idea; but the attempt to do this without violating, either in the facts or the spirit of the narrative, the chaste simplicity of Scripture, may have greater pretensions to originality. Such is the present undertaking: for which the plain style and easy versification of the standard Sanscrit mythological epics of Vyasa and Valmiki afford far greater facilities than are presented by the vernacular Muses of Southern India, in whose most meretricious forms the same sacred history has been before conveyed, *but with singular adulteration*, by the genius of the Jesuit Father Beschi. (iii; emphasis added)

That Mill finds it necessary to emphasize his use of the “plain” style of Sanskrit verse indicates that he is very well aware of the perceived danger of placing Protestant content in verse [non-Protestant?] genres. While there is evidence that the verse translations of the Bible discussed so far were published, limited records survive as to how these were received by Protestant or non-Protestant communities. The overall impact of these versions on its immediate readers is therefore difficult to judge. Nevertheless, the very existence of these verse translations in Tamil and other Indian languages underscores the importance of drawing genre into discussions on Protestant translation in the South Indian context. Competing aesthetic and moral values associated with particular genres brought to the surface in the discourse and practice of Protestant translations highlight the significant role played by literary genres in controlling, structuring, and circulating religious “meaning” and “truth.”

Finally, retrieving the issue of genre from the margins of nineteenth-century translation practices points not only to the range of values ascribed by competing attitudes to genres or how generic considerations influenced communicative practices between the different religious communities in Tamil-speaking South India; it also reveals how the development of new communicative practices (translation, writing in prose genres, print) encouraged the reuse of known genres to shape existing or new knowledges (religious, literary, ethical) in changing contexts. Responding to the generic challenges introduced by Protestant missionary translation practices in a radically different way, Kanta Arumukam Pillai (1822–79), the Tamil Śaiva writer and intellectual based in Jaffna, further developed Tamil prose in the cause of Śaivism. He had assisted the missionary Peter Percival in Jaffna in translating the Bible into Tamil between 1842 and 1850,[25] after which he sought to develop a new form for Śaiva texts that would attract Śaivites back to the worship of the true God, Śiva. What is most unusual and relevant to our discussion is that while most of his Śaiva contemporaries were still writing religious polemics in verse, Arumuka Navalar switched to prose genres when translating and writing Tamil Śaiva literature, a change that was not immediately welcomed by contemporary Śaiva orthodoxy. He saw himself as a reformer of Śaivism in Jaffna and the Madras Presidency and as Hudson (1992a, 1992b, 1995) points out developed discursive Tamil *prose* to re-"evangelize" his own threatened community with the aim of preserving Śaivism from the onslaught of Protestant proselytizing. He did so through three main activities: translating medieval Śaiva poetry into prose and preaching from these translated Śaiva texts; second, setting up a Śaiva school (the School of Shaiva Splendour) after the Protestant model for schooling to educate the next generation in Śaivism; and third, setting up in 1850 a printing press (The Preservation of Knowledge Press) for the publication of Śaiva texts.

Arumuka Navalar's translations of medieval Śaiva texts into Tamil discursive prose and his decision to "preach" at Śaiva temples can be linked to Protestant mobilization of prose as the primary genre of rational truth. But while doing so, Navalar is credited in modern Tamil literary history with improving the literary profile of Tamil prose for Śaivite purposes. Although Protestant missionaries had represented prose as synonymous with Protestant truth, by redeploying prose within Śaiva contexts, Navalar is able to harness the power of prose to safeguard Śaivism from Protestant attack. By reorganizing Protestant models of discursive interaction in order to translate Śaivite poetry into prose, Navalar transformed Śaivite communicative genres, and gave Tamil Śaivites new ways of asserting collective notions of the sacred text, religious community, and identity, which by the end of the nineteenth century developed into a twinning of Tamil Śaivism and Tamil ethnicity. This contributed to the new social and later political movements that dominated Tamil politics and public debate for most of the twentieth century. It has thus been worthwhile to analyze what the use of different genres meant to these translators and the religious groups they translated for, and further, what these genres came to signify to and about their communities—Catholic, Protestant and Śaivite. From what we have seen so far, each selected a set of genres they perceived as most effective in discursively communicating the core values of their religious faith but had to contend with shifting values attached to each genre in nineteenth-century colonial South India. Further, in both cases, whether the choice was Tamil verse or prose genres, there is a clear effort to associate literariness with sacredness, so that collective religious identities are reinforced by claiming high literariness in translation (as opposed to the "literalness" or "faithfulness" to original emphasized in the missionary discourse on translation), where the literary best helps to reinstate the sacred within new contexts.

Issues of Genre: Protestant Devotion in Verse

I analyze in detail the implications of one final Protestant choice of genre from outside the specific context of Bible translation as a counterpoint to the translation history we have considered so far. This contest over generic choice in the early nineteenth century demonstrates the extent to which the employment of specific genres became twinned with the representation of religious identity at specific historical moments. I examine Vedanayaka Sastri's choice of Tamil Bhakti from the wide variety of Tamil poetic genres available to him for writing Protestant devotional hymns. What makes this specific generic choice particularly interesting is that in this case there is some evidence of how the wider Protestant community perceived the link between generic choice and re-presentations of Protestant beliefs. There were, of course, many other Protestant and Catholic poets in nineteenth-century South India who made similar choices as Sastri (a notable example being Henry Alfred Krishnapillai

[1827–1900] who composed a verse translation of existing Tamil prose translations of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*[26] and along with *Tēmpāvaṇi* is always referred to as one of the best examples of Christian literature in Tamil) but it will be difficult to do them all justice in one chapter. Sastri also presents an unusual case in that unlike the other poets, he did not only write poetry, but organized public performances of his own poetry and engaged actively with Protestant missionaries to remap the boundaries of acceptability in the singing and performance of Protestant poetry. In examining issues of choice and conflict in the case of Sastri, I wish to indicate new perspectives for reviewing how different Protestants might have responded to the generic challenges introduced by Protestant translation practices and why. As we will see, these several points of generic contestation further open up our examination of issues of translation in the Protestant context and provide a valuable counterpoint to the translation history specific to the Tamil Bible.

Before we examine Sastri's engagement with poetry, we must consider two parallel contexts within which to place his work: the first is the two types of Protestant Tamil hymns that had developed from the early eighteenth century and the second, very briefly, the traditions of Tamil bhakti, a generic framework for devotion readily available to Protestant poets. Let us first consider Protestant hymns. Before the establishment of Protestant mission in South India, there is evidence of a long tradition of Catholic use of Tamil folk forms for expressing popular Christian devotion.[27] Baskaran (1986: 86) believes that early Protestant missionaries, including Ziegenbalg in the eighteenth century, initially used such folk songs to reach Tamils in the Tranquebar area: "in the cultural life of the converts, these folk songs acted as the much needed thread of continuity." Further, Susan Bayly (1989) points to the importance of patronage provided by South Indian rulers who perceived Christian shrines, symbols, and personalities as repositories of power, and played an important part in the local religious landscape, an aspect we will also see in the case of Sastri. Significant for our analysis here, she argues that the sacred landscape of the three religions—Christian, Hindu, and Islamic—intersected on the ground of devotional expression through the mode of bhakti.

Ziegenbalg's translations of German hymns into Tamil commenced a new phase in the formal history of the Protestant Tamil hymn. By the early eighteenth century, we begin to see a distinction between English and German hymns translated into Tamil by the missionaries and Tamil songs composed by Protestant Tamils. In the Tamil-speaking areas of South India, apart from translating the Bible and prayer books, German and British missionaries were eager to translate English and German hymns into Tamil and publish them for use in church services. Translated hymns appeared in print from the early eighteenth century[28], and there is evidence of original compositions from the same period subsequently growing in number through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the late eighteenth century, the Lutheran church in Tamilnad possessed at least three hundred Tamil hymns. In the nineteenth century, the Christian Literature Society continued to publish several such collections of hymns translated mainly from the German and English.

The hymns translated directly from European hymns followed in Tamil, the rhythm, meter, and tune of the original. The translations of German and English hymns were written in a rhythmic Tamil prose that was sometimes “lineated” in a manner resembling poetry, but as Peterson (2004) points out, they do not conform to the metrical, prosodic, or musical criteria of a Tamil song. There were no attempts at rhyme through alliteration and assonance, fundamental elements in Tamil verse. Instead, sung to European melodies, there were frequent attempts at giving end-rhyme to the hymns although this was unnatural to Tamil poetry. Often words were either split ungrammatically for the sake of fitting a particular meter or tune; or, vowels were lengthened, thus distorting the meaning of the word (Selvamony 1999). Further, as Selvamony (1999) observes, Western musical instruments such as the organ or piano mostly accompanied the hymns, molding congregational singing to patterns that were unnatural to Tamil poetry or singing. Even Sastri, who otherwise greatly admired Fabricius’s translations, is said to have recomposed his translated hymns so that they fit Tamil poetic conventions better.

Besides this body of translated hymns, a parallel tradition of Protestant Tamil songs evolved, which, composed by Tamils, drew on the patterns of rhythm and sound from the musical traditions of Tamil. Evidence of early compositions by Protestant Tamils comes from manuscripts collected by James Hough in the nineteenth century of songs composed by the eighteenth-century Ganapathy Vathiyar, one of Ziegenbalg’s converts, who wrote the story of Christ and other biblical episodes in song, which were then used in Tranquebar to attract crowds as a prelude to street preaching

(Baskaran 1986: 86). By the late eighteenth century, hymns composed by Protestant Tamils began to be sung as part of church worship. Sastri's early nineteenth-century documents reveal that devotional songs composed by himself and other Protestant Tamils were sung by Tancavur congregations: he mentions Rahel Naick, Gabriel catechist, and Raphael Naick, three generations of a family who "have made tolerable and various Pathams [a kind of musical composition] and Pulembles [*pulampal*, song of lamentation] according to Tamil tunes."[29] Songs composed by Catholics[30] were also available to the Lutheran church but not very welcome: "We did not at all make use of Popish songs on such occasions: for though part of them are of an excellent metre and systematical structure, yet they contain many errors with regard to the principles of Religion" (*Pandegey Perasdabam* 1828).

Although devotional folk songs were not included in church hymnals, they have continued to be sung at festive occasions and have influenced the style and form of hymns composed for church worship. However, as Bayly (1989) rightly points out, this began to decline from the Tamil popular with the onset of the nineteenth century with the increased formalization of Hinduism, South Indian Islam, and Christianity in the period of British rule (429). Despite this process, it is possible to trace links between popular Protestant Tamil songs from before the nineteenth century and developments in Protestant devotional practices in the nineteenth century. One of the strongest links is the continued Protestant Tamil harnessing of the bhakti genres as a means to articulate Protestant devotion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But we will return to the subject of Tamil bhakti a little later in this section.

Despite evidence of this body of Protestant hymns composed by Protestant Tamils growing, it is only in the middle of the nineteenth century that songs composed by them began to be printed as part of the church hymnals of various mission societies. The reverend E. Webb (1819–98) of the American Madurai Mission seems to have advanced the cause of introducing "native metres" into public worship. He spent some time in Tancavur studying Tamil music and in 1853 a volume containing the hymns he selected was printed at Madras for the Madura Mission.[31] Until then, according to Murdoch (1865: 11), there had been resistance to Tamil hymns from the missionaries: "Their use in public worship was at first opposed by many Missionaries. The associations were said to be bad in many cases;

the absence of a devotional spirit was alleged; the music was said to be tame and wanting in character." However, going by Murdoch's documentation, this first collection of hymns was so popular that a competition was held to invite more Tamil hymns on Christian subjects; Webb made selections from the 400 entries and along with the previous collection, printed a new volume containing 281 Tamil hymns in 1860.

Webb's publication certainly did not put to rest the issue of whether European or Tamil hymns should be encouraged to develop as part of Protestant worship in Tamil churches. A series of articles exchanged on the issue of singing Tamil hymns, which appeared in the *Morning Star* the year following the publication of Webb's collection of hymns, is one of many mid-nineteenth-century public discussions that occurred on the subject. Whether Protestant "natives" should be allowed to compose and sing their own Tamil hymns was increasingly becoming the subject of wide debate. It is clear from these articles that not only was the content of Tamil hymns disputed but also the performance of these hymns was in question. "Good singing" associated with "European" hymns is repeatedly contrasted with the "bad singing" of Tamil songs (described as chants, undecided tone, strumming, lack of harmony, and associated with Tamil instruments) that prevented "carrying out the great purpose of Christianising the people."[32] Tracing the contours of this particular debate is not possible here[33] but disagreements such as these point once again to the unease with which Tamil devotional poetry was viewed within the Protestant devotional space in South India.

There is evidence from later in the century that not all Protestant missionaries favored translations or compositions using Western rules. Murdoch (1865: 11) records that some were open to Tamil hymns believing that "soon the associations would be Christianized...and that...the taste of people should be consulted." An important link is drawn by others between attitudes to Tamil terms in Protestant translations and Protestant Tamil songs: "a century and less ago the attitude of Christian scholars in India toward a strictly Hindu terminology was practically the same as their attitude toward Hindu music. To touch and use either was pollution"; as a consequence, no mission deigned to use "native" music. Instead, "it was all western music—heavy, clumsy and utterly foreign to the life and spirit of the people" (Jones 1895: 50). Others advocated the use of Tamil songs over translated ones: "how ridiculous it looks that Tamil churches should be singing hymns…which are such poor translations of the originals" (Kingsbury 1927: 166). H. A. Popley, an early twentieth-century missionary, engaged in what he terms "musical evangelism," maintains that "there is very little in Tamil Christian literature to compare with the wonderful devotional literature of the Saivites and Vaishnavites of South India. The best of our Tamil Christian literature has drunk deep of these Hindu works and is often consciously modelled upon them" for depth of feeling, power of appeal, and beauty of expression (Popley and Stephen 1914: 3). However, this support for original Protestant compositions in Tamil in the style of Śaivite or Vaiṣṇavite Tamil devotional hymns or for non-Western practices of singing devotional music was rare. As we will see later on, both the writing as well as performance of Protestant Tamil hymns using alternative traditions became points of considerable disagreement on occasion.

Perhaps in response to such wide differences in opinion the MRTBS initiated a formal debate on the kinds of hymns that were to be published in the Tamil hymnbook, extending the debate on Bible translation that took place around the last quarter of the century in South India. It is apparent that the hymns were perceived as playing a vital supportive role, reinforcing acceptable Protestant concepts that the Protestant Tamil community was to be grounded in. In keeping with trends in issuing "uniform" translations of the Bible, the MRTBS in the 1870s planned a common hymnbook for all churches in the Tamil area: a "Union Tamil Hymn Book" to complement the "Union Version" of the Bible. Response to an appeal for suggestions acknowledged that Tamil hymns were more popular than translations of European ones but nevertheless advised that the collection should include only one-third or half the number of translated hymns (Annual Reports, MRTBS, 1874–77). This organizational scheme, of dividing the hymn book into two sections—the first entitled "hymns," comprising German and English hymns in Tamil translations, and the second entitled "lyrics," containing original Tamil compositions—is still apparent in twenty-first-century Tamil church hymnals. Lyrics are still half the number of hymns in a standard Tamil Anglican or Lutheran anthology and the Tamil titles for the two sections continue as *pāmālai* (garland of hymns) and *kīrttaṉai*[34] in the current church hymnal of the Church of South India.

Comparing the print history of official hymnals with those of popular Tamil hymn collections offers further insight into the development of an independent Protestant hymn tradition in Tamil. Baskaran's (1986) research into Christian folk songs reveals that in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, a large number of song and ballad books on Christian themes were published. He found that the format of the Christian songbooks was very similar to that of popular Hindu devotional books and the manner in which they were printed: "The words *Yesu thunai* (with Jesus' help) were printed on top of the opening page, in the place of *Pillaiyar suzhi* (the sign of Ganesa). A small picture of a cross, flanked by two kneeling angels, was printed below this sentence" (88). According to him, these books were priced very low and were popular enough to make their publication a viable commercial proposition for small presses in Madras. However, there is much that is as yet unknown about the nature of popular nineteenth-century Protestant hymns in Tamil and this is a rich area deserving scholarly attention.

What we do know more about is what has survived as part of mainstream Protestant Tamil hymns sung in worship services. For instance, Vedanayaka Sastri's *kīrttaṉai*, which have featured prominently in Lutheran and Anglican hymnals, are much better documented. Sastri's *kīrttaṉai* were songs in a new genre that was developed and perfected in Tancavur in the eighteenth century (Peterson 2002, 2004). The adoption of South Indian music and bhakti traditions to express Protestant and Catholic faith came mostly from singer poets who converted to Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Apart from Sastri in Tamilnad, the Telugu Purushothama Chaudhari (1803–90) and the Malayali Mosavalsalam Sastrikal (1847–1916) are the better-known vernacular poets who created a vast corpus of Christian poetic literature in Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam: they composed poems following the *kīrttaṉai* of Carnatak classical music, using the tripartite structure—pallavi, anupallavi, and caranam (Sadie 2001: 234). Their poems have continued to feature prominently in church worship until the present despite critiques offered by twentieth-century Protestant Dalit theologians such as Theophilus Appavoo (Sherinian 2002) of this particular genre as performance art controlled by class and caste elites that participate in Tamil high culture.

We will now consider the second important context mentioned earlier—the tradition of bhakti that had developed into a popular and effective generic vehicle for expressing sacred devotion. Tamil bhakti or devotional poetry was written by Tamil Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava poet-saints from the sixth to the ninth centuries. This devotional poetry in Tamil was composed contemporaneously with Buddhist and Jain literature for some time and was written at a time of intense Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava revival in Tamil society to counter Buddhist and Jain claims in South India. The bhakti poetry of the Śaiva sect is a large body of heterogeneous literature held by tradition to have been produced by sixty-three *nāyanmārs* [Tamil Śaiva saints] and is known as the *Tirumaṟai*, that is, the "Holy Book." The bhakti poetry of the Vaiṣṇava sect is believed to have been composed by twelve *ālvārs* [Vaiṣṇava saints] and two other poets. According to Zvelebil, the earliest of these poet-saints, Poykai, Putam, and Pey probably belonged to 650–700 C.E. While Manikkavacakar's *Tiruvācakam* [the Holy Verses; ca. ninth century] is the most popular of the Śaiva bhakti tradition, its Vaiṣṇava counterpart is the *Tiruvāymoḻi* [sacred word], one of the four works of Nammalar.[35] The second significant phase of Tamil bhakti occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of another "revival" within Hinduism, attributed to its encounter with Western Christianity.

The religious context within which Tamil bhakti traditions developed clarifies why it became such a powerful instrument for Protestant poets as well. Much bhakti poetry was written in a competitive vein in which, as Snell argues, "the superiority of one sect, tradition or lineage over another [was] strongly asserted" as offering a uniquely correct perception of divine truth (Callewaert and Snell 1994: 5, 6). In fact, most histories of Tamil literature, as Richard Davis (in Cort 1998) has shown, present the encounter between Buddhism or Jainism on the one hand, and medieval Tamil Śaiva philosophy, Śaiva Siddhantism, on the other in confrontational terms: as a Hindu revival after the threat posed by the two heterodox faiths. However, the conflict was both intrasectarian, between Tamil Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and the Sanskritic tradition of Vedantic Hinduism, as well as intersectarian between Tamil Śaivism and their Buddhist and Jain rivals in medieval Tamil culture. Therefore, Bhakti poetry became a means to reassert a *Tamil* Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava identity and proved successful in suppressing rival religious movements on several fronts. However, there is an important qualification to bear in mind. Although these forms of poetic devotion were often presented as exclusive to one sect, there was an interchange of ideas between religious sects and Davis has argued convincingly that although Tamil bhakti poetry was presented in opposition to Buddhism and Jainism, it was more a case of Śaiva Siddhanta's borrowing and reformulation of the Buddhist and Jain notions of piety and devotion. By writing in Tamil poetic genres of bhakti, Sastri and other Protestant (and Catholic) poets were participating in these long-established networks of religious appropriation and competition. In appropriating elements of existing poetic genres from Tamil literary culture, Sastri and the others show an appreciation for the close relationship that had historically been accepted between writing poetry and defining one's religious identity in the Tamil context.

Further, both medieval Śaiva bhakti poetry and the *Tiruvāymoḻi* were canonized as the "fifth Veda" or the "Tamil"/"Drāvida Veda" within the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions in later centuries thus giving them equal status with the four Sanskrit ones.[36] This meant that these poems have been recited as part of ritual temple worship, and it is this body of medieval Tamil bhakti poetry that was powerfully deployed by the non-Brahmin high Vellala castes from the late nineteenth century, to assert a Tamil, non-Brahmin identity over Brahmanic Hinduism associated with the Sanskrit traditions. It is significant that the majority of nineteenth-century Protestant poets belonged to these same high, non-Brahmin castes who were predominantly responsible for the mobilization of different phases of the assertion of Tamil identity through the century. The close linking of Tamil bhakti with Tamil Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions meant that Protestant Tamil poets could engage with bhakti genres both to speak *to* rival religious traditions regarding their Protestant faith and speak *of* their Protestant and Tamil identities.

Vedanayaka Sastri: Song, Music, and Performance

Vedanayakam Pillai (known from 1815 as Vedanayaka Sastri) was born into the non-Brahmin Tamil Vellala high caste. The son of a Śaiva Vellala who had converted first to Catholicism and in 1785 to the Evangelical church of the German missionaries, Sastri was given traditional Tamil schooling in his early years (Jnanadikkam 1899). He was placed under the missionary Schwartz (1726–98) for instruction when he was eleven years old and spent the next four years in Tancavur, which in the eighteenth century was an important center of Tamil and South Indian literature and arts. In 1794, he was appointed head of the "Tanjore Mission School" set up by Schwartz to train Tamil catechists but lost this position in 1829. He was appointed court poet by Serfoji II, the king of Tancavur (d. 1832) in 1829 but was later dismissed by Serfoji's son after controversy over Sastri's refusal to compose poetry in honor of the king's deities. As mentioned previously, the Tancavur court in the late eighteenth century was multilingual, bringing together Tamil, Telugu, Maratha, and Sanskrit. Sastri's literary choices as a Protestant poet were thus directly influenced by the literary conventions he shared with the Tancavur poets and pundits of other faiths and he created a body of Protestant Tamil poetry that combined devotional genres and conventions hitherto shared by the other religious traditions with his Protestant belief and devotion.

Vedanayaka Sastri wrote several prose works, which were mainly polemical or philosophical treatises, but he is celebrated by the Protestant Tamil community most for his poetical compositions. The majority of his 120 Tamil works are in verse. He used various Tamil traditional as well as folk verse forms: the *pirapantam*, *antāti*, *kuravanci*, *kummi*, and the newly developed *kīrttaṉai*. He composed 500 devotional hymns popularizing the *kīrttaṉai*[37] in Protestant worship. He composed an alternative liturgy in Tamil for use in the church and for personal devotion: a combination of prayers and hymns for the morning and evening, called *Jepamālei*. He used his most elaborate dramatic composition in verse, *Bethlehem kuṟavañci*, as a platform to describe the histories of the Bible and the spread of Christianity, and a new cosmology in place of the Hindu cosmology (Peterson 2004).[38] Many of his songs or *kīrttaṉai* continue to figure prominently in Tamil Church hymnals today. Peterson (2002) rightly observes that Sastri was able to give Tamil congregations what the missionaries had not: "a body of comprehensive, wide-ranging, original sacred poetry in Tamil idioms which in their eyes surpassed the religious literature of the Hindus, especially the Saiva and Vaisnava Vellalas" (16). However, in adopting bhakti genres for Protestant devotion, Sastri's literary choice challenged some Protestant boundaries that led to several disputes with contemporary missionaries. His quarrels came to a head when in 1829 he was both removed from his teaching post at the Mission School and expelled from the Evangelical Church. As a result, he held his own church services at alternative venues. His disagreements with the missionaries, primarily over observation of caste distinctions and Bible translation, also included quarrels over the writing of hymns, the performance of Protestant songs, the musical instruments to accompany singing, and the organization of religious festivals. Of these, we will discuss three main points of contention between Sastri and his contemporary missionaries that might indicate why bhakti poetic genres—both bhakti as a genre for writing devotion and bhakti as a performance mode—had become sites of conflict.

The Emotive Contours of Bhakti

The intense emotion that is intrinsic to bhakti devotion was viewed with suspicion by mainstream Protestant missions in nineteenth-century South India.[39] J. P. Jones (1900) had misgivings toward the end of the century about the act of faith that was exalted by bhakti, such that it acquired "mystical potency." He thought Protestant Tamils "need to be weaned from this false view of faith, or piety…" (52). Bhakti's emphasis on the sufficiency and power of emotion seemed dangerous to missionaries who were aware of the skirmishes between the Anglican Church and dissenting groups in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain over religious "enthusiasm." Since the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, religious and poetic enthusiasm had already been linked rather negatively and had been the subject of debate in political and religious polemics and, as Timothy Morton and Nigel Smith (2002: 2) point out, there had also been a "persistent debate about the most appropriate form of Protestant worship" in this context.[40] Even missionaries in India who were themselves from dissenting or nonconformist traditions in Britain were not too keen on what was understood as poetry's encouragement of "enthusiasm" in the context of the intense devotional emotionalism of Tamil bhakti. The bhakti paradigm of the visceral experience of God, of unmediated relationship with him, and of the ability to give spontaneous, dramatic expression to emotional love (Peterson 1994: 224), when transferred into the Protestant context hints at the displacement of the authority of the church and clergy. Although nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries loved to distinguish themselves from their Catholic counterparts on the ground that every Protestant convert was encouraged to read and interpret the Bible for himself or herself, they also felt a paternal compulsion to curb the emotionalism of their Tamil flock. Having set up a contrast between "rational" missionary and "emotional," "high-strung" converts, the latter were viewed at times with indulgence but more often with dismay. This may have also been why Charles Rhenius sought to diminish the festival calendar and to reduce the "sensual aspects" of celebration, something that Sastri and fellow Evangelical Lutherans bitterly resented.

Moreover, the metaphor of erotic love in bhakti poetry, "the dark, dangerous side of the sacred as erotic" (ibid.), would have been considered inappropriate in Protestant devotion. Further, its performance as part of the temple ritual of worship and association with the *devadasi* (female temple dancers) performance tradition meant that bhakti was unfavorably linked in the missionary imagination to what they perceived as immoral and licentious sexual acts allowed by South Indian temple practices. Sastri avoided explicit sexual connotations in his poetry and Protestant literary critics from the nineteenth century onward have taken care to point out that there are no unseemly erotic references in Protestant Tamil poetry even though they followed bhakti patterns of devotion. In this they seem to be missing the point that it was not erotic *content* that was being objected to but bhakti as *form*, perceived as a devotional genre that by its very nature embodied the possibilities of erotic communion between the devotee and his or her god. Peterson (2004) has argued that Sastri was able to transform the eroticism implicit in the *kuṟavañci* (fortune-teller) genre through the use of allegory to present Christ's love for his church as bride. Through the allegorical mode, Sastri was able to draw on the erotic and love mysticism that was a part of classical and bhakti Tamil traditions and reuse them in a Protestant context to convey the mystical union envisaged between Christ and his church (ibid.). Despite this, according to new rules imposed by the SPG, in the 1820s, the Tamil congregations had to refrain from singing hymns in the Tamil performance forms since the modes and effects of these forms were considered too sensuous and too close to Hindu models to be fit for use in the Protestant Tamil church.

The Location of the Poet

Sastri self-consciously locates himself at two levels—first, he locates himself in terms of the figure of the "poet-saint" and second, he does so historically in the context of existing traditions of Protestant missions and churches in South India as well as within the systems of patronage available to him at different points in his career. In order to represent himself as a Protestant poet-(saint), Sastri exploits existing traditions within Bhakti where the poet and the poem become the medium of contact between the devotee and god, and the bhakti poem acts as a context for direct religious experience. In his landmark study of Tamil bhakti, Norman Cutler (1987: 112) has argued that "bhakti poems transmute the poet's experience into the devotee-audience's experience, and in this way the audience is brought into the kind of close proximity to divinity" such that basic to the poetics of bhakti is "the blurring of the boundary between saint and god and between devotee and saint." Cutler's (2003) observation that the poet's presence is central to the performance where devotion engenders divinity in the poet-devotee and the perfected devotee or saint is treated as a divine being (Cutler 1987: 51) is a rather touchy issue in the Protestant context. Performing in the bhakti mode certainly locates the Protestant poet in a position of preeminence over the object and act of devotion. The rejection of the power of the saint and clergy as mediator between congregation and deity had after all held a significant place in Protestant iconoclasm; bhakti performances, which at times rendered the poet devotee "divine" through the act of devotion, would be reinstating the figure of a divine "saint" through the bhakti poet.

Such elements in the bhakti tradition may have seemed to missionaries as a potential threat to the balance of power in the devotee-deity relationship within the Protestant paradigm. Sastri was asked to remove from his hymns all "signature verses" that carried his name.[41] Conflict arose between some missionaries and Sastri over this point as early as 1827[42] and came to a head in 1858. In his "Humble Address" (1827) Sastri protested, defending his practice as part of an established Tamil tradition of writing sacred poetry:

> As the names of David, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, Ethan, Eman, are mentioned in the beginning of the Psalms so the name of the author occurs in the end of every Padam or song notwithstanding this was done according to the rule of the ancient Sastrees and to the principles of religion, he [Mr. Haubroe] says that this is pride and blasphemy.

However, G. U. Pope and others thought that naming oneself in the context of church worship went against the ideal of glorifying none but God (Peterson 2004: 50). Although, Sastri attempts to counter missionary authority by citing customary Tamil literary practice as counterauthority, his hymns included in published anthologies were printed without his signature verse, revealing that missionary opposition to this practice was serious. During this period, Sastri also loses the patronage he had enjoyed from the Tamil Lutheran church.

It is worthwhile to analyze these disputes and how Sastri locates himself as a result in the context of shifting systems of patronage in this period. Lisa Mitchell (2009) sees a "crisis of patronage" in the Madras Presidency because colonial attitudes toward local languages and literary production were not as generous as precolonial patrons; colonial conditions had altered patterns of landownership and networks of economic exchange materially, so that there were fewer individuals powerful enough to sponsor poets. Although there is a shift in the nature and type of patronage, I think it is also possible to see this as a period when writers and poets in South India were able to negotiate with competing systems of patronage to their advantage. Apart from rulers and wealthy landowners, traditional patrons of the arts, it was now possible to gain various salaried appointments in the colonial administration. To this list can be added a third patron, especially for Protestant converts: Protestant missions. With their growing network of schools and churches, missionary societies employed large numbers of teachers, translators, interpreters, catechists, and even personal servants. But these were not always unconditional offers: while non-Christians had to be "sympathetic" to the mission's cause, much depended on Christians professing faith in the particular way a mission society thought appropriate. The history of conversions between mission societies in the south, especially between Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican, reveals that missionary patronage was as precarious as the other systems but could be lucrative if negotiated with equal care.

Sastri situates himself in relation to three distinct sources of authoritative patronage. Protestant missionaries, in particular the Evangelical Lutherans of the eighteenth century whom he refers to in his writings as the "old missionaries," remain a primary source of authoritative patronage. However, with the passing of power and influence from the "old" Pietist missionaries to the "new" Anglican missions,[43] he can only cite the former as symbolic patrons. For a prominent Protestant Tamil like Sastri, missionaries ought to have been a reliable source of patronage but the "new missionaries" are clearly not. Convinced that the Lutheran tradition is the right faith, Sastri does not "convert" to another Christian tradition (like his own father had). Instead, he turns to two alternative sources for patronage. The first, a familiar form of patronage in the Tamil context, comes from the court. Serfoji II (ruler of Tancavur from 1799 until his death in 1832) appointed Sastri as court poet in 1829 after the latter's expulsion from the church.[44] Dismissed by Serfoji's son later on, Sastri continued to receive sporadic patronage from Hindu and Muslim landowners and merchants in the following years.

The second alternative form of patronage is from a more unusual source in the early nineteenth-century Protestant Tamil context. Support and recognition come to Sastri from the Vellalla sections of the congregations of the Evangelical churches of Tancavur, Madras, Madurai, Palayamcottai, Tiruchirapalli, and Tranquebar. These congregations publicly awarded Sastri several testimonials for his contribution to Protestant Tamil literature.[45] The Tancavur and Tranquebar Protestant Tamil communities awarded him the title "cuvicēsha kavirāyar" or the "Evangelical Poet" in 1808. The Tamil congregation at Vepery felicitated him with several ceremonial honors and a testimonial signed by forty members of the congregation in 1809 (Devanesan 1956: 32). The Madras congregation recognized that Sastri had succeeded in expounding Christian doctrine in verse that outshone "all worldly poets" since it was written "according to the grammatical and poetical prosodical rules" (Gnanadickam 1987: 105). Their praise reveals how his poetry had proved advantageous to the community: "we are very much honoured and praised before the pagans, which is a great advantage to our children" (ibid.). The emphasis that the testimonials lay on Sastri as a poet underscores the significance attached to Sastri's Protestant poetry rather than to his prose works. I agree with Peterson's analysis that "the testimonials affirm that, in the early nineteenth century, the cultural identity of a Tamil religious community was intimately linked with its possession of a body of poetic works that shared in the common discourses of secular and sacred poetry in Tamil" (Peterson 2004: 32). Despite missionary disapproval of Sastri, the congregations were willing to lay claim on his poetry in order to speak their new religious persuasion to their non-Protestant, fellow-Tamils in the language and traditions of Tamil religious culture. Sastri was able to create poetic traditions of Protestant devotional literature that he and his fellow Protestant Tamils required in order to establish a Protestant place in the existing patterns of rivalry between various religious sects.

This collective patronage of the congregations reveals that they saw Sastri's *poetry* as a body of Protestant literature that successfully combined Tamil literary traditions with a laicized Protestant faith. It is significant that Sastri's Protestant patrons honor him in the same way that *pulavars* (poets) were traditionally honored in Tamil society—conferring elaborate titles with public display and ceremony (Peterson 2004). In consenting to the metaphorical translation of Protestant subject matter into Tamil verse, these high-caste Vellalas were signaling their allegiance to Tamil aesthetic conventions and literary traditions to counter the institutional authority claimed by Protestant missionaries. In doing so, they locate Sastri the poet as central to early nineteenth-century self-perceptions.

The Performative Context

As mentioned earlier, the performance of Tamil hymns and music as part of Protestant worship was as contentious an issue in the mid-nineteenth century as Bible translation. The publication in 1853 of E. Webb's collection of Tamil hymns *Ñāṉa kīrttaṉai* was a decisive but in some respects a divisive moment in the history of Protestant worship among Tamils. The first appearance in print of Tamil music formalized aspects of popular culture within the Protestant Tamil community that had hitherto existed in parallel to institutionalized Protestant worship within the Tamil church. The hymnal's immense popularity triggered discussion on what forms of music were to be performed as part of Protestant church worship. Sastri had of course already been raising this issue as one of the four "cruelties" discussed in the previous chapter and as we will see later, the type of performances he staged as well as the inclusion of his hymns in the printed collection led to further conflict with contemporary missionaries.

Sastri acquired status as the foremost Protestant Tamil poet because besides composing hymns he actively organized the performance of his hymns and poetry. During Sastri's lifetime, his poetry was sung within as well as outside the Tamil church services. Sastri held annual religious festivals and traveled to various Tamil cities to perform his poetry.[46] He held special Christmas and Lent services at his residence. He also held musical discourses that were Protestant events similar to the popular *kālatcēpam*, the Tamil equivalent to the *harikatha*.[47] Through his investment in oral performance and its staging outside the controlled environment of the traditional church service, Sastri creates a wider public space for Protestant poetry.

However, such performances did not enjoy missionary patronage in the nineteenth century.[48] From several of his letters of petition it is clear that modes of Tamil performance were a sensitive issue between the Evangelical churches and the new missionaries. It seems that the "new" missionaries (he names the reverends Rhenius and Haubroe here) were objecting to the presence of Tamil devotional practices, which they saw as "sensuous" and "heathen," in Protestant worship. It appears that these missionaries were attempting to curtail "feast days," that is, annual festivals in the Lutheran church calendar, both for its visual (decoration of the church with flowers) and aural (Tamil music) excesses. Terming it "The Third Cruelty: Corruption of Festivals," Sastri complains of how earlier ways of celebrating sacred occasions were no longer "permitted":

> The Rev. Mr Kohloff... prevented us from celebrating the festivals of our Lord gladly, according to our former custom and locked up the gates of the church on new years day of 1827 and directed the people to put up a prayer in the school and ordered to cut off the garlands of flowers which adorned the church saying that it was an heinous sin. ("A Humble Address," 1829)

However, it is the dispute over Tamil singing that concerns us more here. Sastri sets out in great detail his anxiety over the "Fourth Cruelty—Tamil Divine Song" where he recalls past Lutheran practices with nostalgia. Not only did the missionaries encourage Tamil singing but also listened to it "joyfully" and approved of the training of Tamil youth in singing. Composition of new Tamil songs was encouraged according to Sastri because "The former missionaries at the first commencement of their receiving gentiles into Christianity found that the Tamilians were offended at the tunes of the European Hymns and performed the divine service by singing a few divine songs composed by the Roman Catholics" and so "the Missionaries themselves gave them prose to versify, and used them always in the divine service" (ibid.). Sastri offers evidence of print history from the Lutheran almanacs "where 10 stanzas were composed and added to the end... and sent to the Tamilians every year" as proof that another system had existed previously.

In Sastri's understanding, Rev. Haubroe influenced Rev. Kohloff "in order that we should not use at all Tamil songs since 1827." First, the new missionaries had retranslated the "agreeable translations" of the former missionaries finding "faults captiously in the correct words of the Tamilsongs... [and] affixing... erroneous meanings to them." Second, and now Sastri moves to his main point: there is dispute over how these Tamil songs were to be sung and with what instruments. He argues that musical preferences were a matter of cultural not spiritual difference, speaking out compellingly in favor of not objecting "to the standing rules of the country":

> As Europeans like decent music such as organ, violin, flute etc harmoniously suiting the tunes of hymns and use them in divine service, so we like a decent musics which suits our Tamil songs such as Harp, Guitar, Timbral, Cymbal etc. and use them in such time thinking that it will be acceptable to God and agreeable to the tenor of the 150th Psalm [etc.?]. ("A Humble Address," 1829)

Once again, Sastri differentiates Lutheran from Catholic practice as a means to demonstrate the former's commitment to "praise the Lord by divine songs" in an appropriate manner. So he claims, for instance, that they never used the "riotous" instruments that the Roman Catholics use in their festivals but just the small cymbal. It is clear that even this restrained music was linked too closely to "heathen" practices by the new missionaries: "He [Rev. Kohloff] not only forbids us obstinately to use any decent instruments even Cymbal with our songs saying that it is heathenism, but also uses what device soever he can in order that we ourselves may put an end to the Tamil singing." However, "in rejecting even those musical instruments which we might use reasonably for fear of their loudness" and limiting the accompaniments to the small cymbal, Sastri does not take into account that the cymbal was also the standard instrument used in ritual singing at Śaiva temples. In Sastri's reading this kind of restraint not only "spoiled the pleasures of the Tamilians" since they were forced to sing without musical accompaniment but had more serious consequences such as being "a great obstacle to the propagation of true Christianity." Significantly, it is to the congregations that he appeals as the real arbiters of this issue: "The respected congregations and their superiors will consider according to their great wisdom and deliberately judge whether this my performance is unreasonable or not." This call to rally fellow Evangelicals points us toward the wider Tamil literary and religious contexts within which to view the circulation and performance of Sastri's devotional hymns.

The performance of devotional poetry played a significant part in Tamil religious culture. Norman Cutler (2003), while discussing the context in which T. Meenatcicuntaram Pillai (1815–76), a nineteenth-century Śaiva poet-scholar, composed and performed his poetry, points out that at least until the mid-nineteeth century, it is not so much the appearance of poems in print that marks their entry into the public sphere as their first official performance. Known as the *araṅkēṟṟam*, the official debut was the oral recitation of the text by the text's author, or one of his pupils before a public audience and Cutler argues that this is a cultural event that "casts light on the nature of literary composition, performance, and patronage" (283). Sastri, known to have first performed many of his lengthy compositions at his religious festivals, participates in this distinctive feature of Tamil literary tradition. For instance, the premiere of his Gnanath Thatcha Nadagam (Drama of the Divine Carpenter), completed in 1830, was held before Serfoji II who is mentioned in the tenth and seventeenth songs of the second section of the book entitled "Noah's Ark." Such public performances gave Sastri and his Protestant audience the opportunity to display Protestant flair and repertoire. Speaking of the nineteenth-century Śaiva context, Cutler has argued that public recitations provided a context for audience members to participate in the poet's genius: "It is an occasion for the poet's patron(s) to claim a position of prestige within the community" (284). It is most probable that until 1853 Sastri's hymns primarily circulated through the performances he held and as manuscript copies. These alternative performance modes for the transmission and consumption of Protestant songs (from those permitted by the institution of the nineteenth-century Anglican Church) reveal Sastri's skill in appropriating elements he considered useful for Protestant purposes. Ironically, despite his several disagreements with the new set of missionaries over composing and performing Protestant devotion, he shares with them the identical goals of "propagating Christianity."

I am not suggesting that Protestant and Catholic Tamils exclusively wrote in or translated into poetic genres but although a substantial body of Protestant prose by Tamils does exist, this is not valued as *literature* until the end of the nineteenth century. Concomitantly, when Protestant and Catholic literature in Tamil is written or spoken about, it is to the body of *verse* that reference is made. While they acknowledge that Catholic and Protestant missionary writings and Bible translation helped to develop Tamil prose, twentieth-century Tamil literary historians continue to list Protestant and Catholic *poetry* as examples of Christian literature or Christian "contributions"[49] to Tamil literature. T. P. Meenakshisundaran (1965: 175) praises Beschi's *Tēmpāvaṇi* and Krishnapillai's *Irakshanya yātrikam* as noteworthy Christian literature, but this is what he offers on prose: "The development of prose in the hands of Christians did not affect the main stream of literary prose." However, as prose genres progressively gain literary status in the Tamil imagination, and, from the early twentieth-century onward, acquire greater legitimacy in the sacred, literary, and political arenas, there are fewer attempts to translate the Bible using Tamil poetic genres. Hence it is possible to view nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Protestant preoccupation with Tamil poetic genres as a response to the anxieties caused by the shifting interface between sacred subjects and literary genres.

Finally, it is not Sastri's prose works but his poetry and its performance that became sites of contest between the missionaries and the Protestant Tamil congregations. It is clear that for the early nineteenth-century Lutheran congregations, Sastri's poetry effectively represented their religious identity as a Protestant community. His poetry, appropriating Tamil Bhakti genres for Protestant devotion, kept the community in touch with their Tamil devotional past in ways that the translated prose Bible and hymns could not do. It is through his poetry and its performance that the Protestant Tamil community was speaking to rival religious communities. Sastri's ability to translate Protestant tenets into the language and poetic conventions from contemporary Tamil bhakti traditions that enjoyed high ritual and literary status in Tamil cultural consciousness was an attempt to redraw the boundaries of distinction between the Tamil "Protestant" and "non-Protestant." However, it is also important to keep in mind that Sastri and his fellow Evangelical Lutherans who supported him belonged to elite social castes who were constructing a Protestant identity based on high-caste perceptions of Tamil cultural and religious symbols. Further, while Sastri shared the new missionary's evangelistic zeal and their commitment to separating Protestant from non-Protestant elements of faith, it is in the writing and performing of his poetry that one begins to see diverging views. Protestant poetry, when written according to the literary conventions and rules that governed Tamil literary practice in his day, was not so much following "heathen" religious rules but *literary* rules that could transform the very act of writing or translating into an appropriate act of Protestant devotion.

Conclusions

Two points remain to be made in conclusion. First, I have consciously chosen to regard the Tamil versions discussed in this chapter as "translations" because this allows me to reexamine the position of the translator. In calling a text a translation of another text, one must take the issue of equivalence into consideration, and as Theo Hermans (2007: 5–6) has argued persuasively, equivalence between texts is not something that is extrapolated from texts but is imposed upon them through performative speech acts. So, for instance, when translations of sacred texts are declared "authorized" or "authentic" by institutions of power, as was the case with the BFBS's nineteenth-century Tamil Bible, full equivalence was not so much achieved but pronounced and as a result the translation could function as an equivalent to the original. But this illusion of equivalence can only be maintained by rendering the translator invisible. Ironically, the lack of institutional support for these verse translations of the Bible (because their generic choices were perceived as an impediment to equivalence) can be used to good purpose. The absence of pronouncements of equivalence allows us to recover the presence of the translator so that we are able to retrieve these several translators from the margins, making them more present and audible in the gap between the "original" and its "translation". So by not circulating as authorized or authentic versions, these translations make visible the active agency behind translation choices as well as the subject positions of the translators. Thus, highlighting the shifts in genre in these translations and the discursive arguments that refused to designate them as "translations" precisely because of these generic choices has allowed us to encounter these translators in the very process of their reconstituting their subject positions as Protestants through translation. Importantly, as Frow (2006) reminds us, knowledges are shaped by the genres in which they arrive and so generic choices cannot be disassociated from exercises of power. These different discursive uses of genre suggests that, on the one hand, the use of new genres created new locations of power in the process of cultural translation, transforming the ways in which the Protestant Tamil community discursively interacted with its sacred texts. However, on the other hand, traditional uses of prose and poetic genres from within Tamil literary culture were equally invoked and engaged with in new contexts, thus serving to reinvent religious identities by laying claim on particular literary genres to represent the self.

Ongoing disagreements over translation choices emphasize that distinctions between sacred and secular or Protestant and non-Protestant as well as definitions of "literariness" or "scriptural" are shifting constructs made doubly visible in the translation context. These shifts in attitudes were often shaped by wider changes outside the Protestant Tamil community. For instance, as we saw earlier changing attitudes to what qualifies as "scripture" and how it functions for its community triggered new questions regarding "scripture" as one of several categories of Tamil textual production from the eighteenth century. Moreover, the rather porous boundaries between "scripture" and "literature" in Tamil had already been used to advantage by other groups: for instance, as I have mentioned before, in the Tamil "resurgence" of the late nineteenth century, Śaivites presented medieval Tamil *Śaivite* texts as the only worthwhile *literary* corpus in Tamil; however, this inscription was radically challenged by twentieth-century Dravidianists who reconstituted the Tamil literary canon and history by adopting an earlier Tamil *Caṇkam* poetry as "secular" and ethical literatures divorced from specific sectarian interests (Venkatachalapathy 2006). This dialectic between scripture and literature in the Tamil context has been invoked repeatedly in attempts to place Protestant translations and the Tamil Bible within the Tamil landscape, where either Protestant missionaries or Tamils have argued in favor of particular translations as "scripture" by bringing into play powerful conceptualizations of Tamil literariness in circulation. On several occasions, however, different Protestant groups have contradictorily claimed that a translation of choice is "literary" and yet somehow it is the translation's perceived ability to rise above mere "literariness" that ultimately makes it more suitable as "scripture."

Further, the predominant use of poetic genres in the Tamil cultural landscape until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the subsequent insertion of prose as serious textual form through missionary translations into Tamil provoked great interest in how texts may be categorized as one or the other and how the cultural significance of either genre may be harnessed for sacred purposes; as a result, we saw new equations emerge between sacred subjects and literary genres, between textual and reading practices. That Bible translation projects challenged existing notions regarding Tamil genres by introducing discursive prose, and that attitudes to literary genres as suitable for Protestant purpose altered confirm that it is misleading to link a particular genre with either a specific religious group or with an intrinsic Tamil cultural consciousness. The association of particular literary genres with the sacred are cultural *and* historical constructs and thus may be appropriated or rejected by the same faith community at different historical moments for a variety of reasons.

Second, shifting engagements with genre has not played a large part in scholarly analyses of Protestant Tamil literature, translations, or identity. The discussion has been limited to a focus on how Christian converts have adopted "indigenous" poetic forms, images, and devotional modes to "assimilate" to "indigenous culture." This standard narrative has played a prominent part in Indian Christian theology throughout most of the twentieth century, framed primarily as a "dialogue" between Christian and Hindu Tamils, with the use of Tamil poetic conventions claimed as one concrete example of Tamil Christians desiring to "Indianize" themselves. Among these, Dayanand Francis (1989, 1998; Francis and Balasundaram 1992), for instance, has written extensively on the influence of Hindu terms and poetic traditions on Protestant Tamil poetry and on the need for greater dialogue between the Tamil church and the Hindu religious traditions. His greatest concern along with others such as S. Jesudasan (1966) and D. Rajarigam (1958)[50] has been on how Christianity can be better "Indianized," while retaining the uniqueness of the Christian message.

Although this body of scholarship by highlighting literary and cultural parallels between Protestant and non-Protestant Tamils is making an important intervention (often also viewed as too radical by some within the Protestant Tamil community) in the way the community sees itself in relation to other religious communities in South India, their work must be challenged and extended further. Rather than viewing Protestant and Catholic bhakti literatures as efforts to "assimilate" to some amorphous "Indian culture," it is more constructive to address the politics of generic choice in a wider context—historical as well as spatial. So, instead of framing the Protestant use of Tamil poetic genres with questions such as how far do (or should) Indian Christians "Indianize" themselves, which can only prompt either descriptive or prescriptive answers, changing the questions to how competing genres relate to competing religious groups, or who is in a position of power to construct certain genres as representative can offer a window into the multiple processes at work in constructing religious identity. It is therefore more appropriate to take contradictory attitudes to genre as the starting point to explore how and why networks between literary genres, religion, and collective identities are constructed, which offers a new perspective on the "dialogue" between religions that has been the dominant interpretative framework of the scholarship on South Asian Christianity hitherto.

The different claims on genre by Protestant texts is useful in reconstructing some sense of how Protestant Tamils have conceived their relationship with scripture and textuality, for, as Sheldon Pollock (1995) asserts, genre is a critical factor in determining how South Asian texts were read and understood, serving as a guide to audience expectations in social and historical contexts other than our own. What I wish to emphasize is that literary genres were not chosen randomly by Tamils translating religious subjects but were carefully selected from a sophisticated range of competing elite and popular genres because each (as much as language registers) signified a desired social position or religious affiliation. Protestant Tamils were also responding to shifts that developed in the uses of particular genres and were attuned to changing perceptions of what these represented. The shifting status and popularity of some genres indicate not just changes in literary aesthetics but importantly a transformation in the way Protestant Tamil audiences have related to their literatures. Finally, Protestant translation practices and choice of genres are mutually constitutive processes and unraveling these processes allows us to examine shifts in how Protestant Tamils at different historical moments have represented themselves as "Protestant" through their choice of hearing, reading, translating, and performing their sacred texts.

Conclusion

> The Catholics pretend that the common version of the Bible is not correct, but they do not make any efforts to give the people what they esteem the true version. The Sivas do not publish their sacred books—the Mohammedans do not publish the Koran—and neither the Catholics—Sivas—nor Moslems—wish to have made known extensively the books from which they derive their doctrines.
>
> The conduct of the Protestants, in this particular, is totally different from that of Catholics, Sivas and Moslems. The Protestant freely distributes the Bible, because he believes it is from God...
>
> —Editors*,* *Morning Star,* May 25, 1843, III (10): 115

This public challenge posed by the Jaffna-based Protestant Tamil editors of the *Morning Star* exemplifies how in South Asia attitudes to translating and distributing scriptures figured prominently in representations of "religion(s)" from the eighteenth century onward. The emerging discourse on scripture translation provided a new set of criteria by which to measure and define the parameters of each religion. Whether the different faith communities in Tamil-speaking South India (and Sri Lanka) translated their scriptures or not, they were drawn into a discourse that challenged them to define themselves in response to this key question. Within this evolving discourse on scripture translation, Protestant Christianity was posited as uniquely "translatable" as opposed to other religious traditions in these Tamil-speaking areas; but this Protestant narrative has been repeatedly challenged on several fronts in the translation history of the Tamil Bible.

An important feature in the trajectory of the Bible in Tamil has been the perceived link between a single authoritative version of the Bible in Tamil and a unified, specifically "Protestant" identity. From the nineteenth century onward, the primary reason offered in favor of "revision" projects has been that possessing and reading a shared version of the Bible results in the articulation of a collective identity. This has been echoed repeatedly in the twentieth century, especially at points of severe disagreement. Thus, Protestant Tamil self-perceptions at the cusp of the twenty-first century have largely centered on collectively owning the one translation and using one term for God. Conversely, the repeated failure in achieving this has continuously been represented as a disturbing sign of division and, worse still, as an embarrassment to their religious faith. But, from our examinations thus far, it is not the mere possession of a single, authoritative version of the Bible in Tamil that has offered unity for all Protestant Tamils. For just as there have been social groups or radicals who have challenged one particular translation in the past, there may continue to be new groups who perceive themselves as marginalized or underprivileged for whom the "standard version" will not suffice. Instead, it is the continued debate over Bible translation, deploying diverse interpretative and reading practices, that has drawn the various sections of Protestant Tamils into a collective discussion on a subject of mutual interest. Hence, rather than regarding disputes over terminology, language registers, or genre as divisive and debilitating, it is more useful to view such disagreements as playing a vital role in the process of formulating religious identity. It is through contestations over translated versions and religious terminology that the interests of different groups within the Protestant Tamil readership are made clear. Bible translation and the critical reviewing of past and current language use open a space to articulate differences within the narrative of a unified collective identity. Since reading the Bible is central to Protestant practice, the Tamil Bible has acquired a pivotal place as a unificatory symbol that can represent a corporate Protestant identity and also the very mechanism by which disparate denominational, linguistic, and caste particularities within the community can be expressed. Thus, if at all it is viable to locate some sense of belonging to the Protestant Tamil community, it is in this rigorous hermeneutical engagement with the Tamil Bible and its many versions.

Moreover, it is apparent that there is a conflict between Protestant Tamils' continued regard for the Bible as a normative source of authority for the entire community and their varying claims that their different, preferred set of sacred terminology alone underpins the authoritative formation of the translated Bible as "scripture."

This tension informs much of their self-perception as *a* religious community—and brings to the fore the multiple social locations of subgroups. The several, and often contradictory, claims made on key terminology, language registers, and literary genres have opened up the means with which to investigate what appear to be a series of arbitrary discursive moves in this translation history. This has allowed us to scrutinize how different sections of the community have constructed themselves through their perceived relationship with scripture. Different caste groups have at different historical moments adopted one version as best representing their "Protestant" interests but in attempts to justify their choice have brought a range of social and political concerns into the equation.

The social power of elite and upwardly mobile castes who at different points have claimed the right to speak representatively for all is a significant part of this interplay between language, religion, and identity. Strong caste identifications—especially Vellala, Nadar, and Dalit—have underscored evaluations of translation choices; but in the case of elite Vellala or Nadar statements, these have been presented as apolitical concerns for high literariness or sacrality. In addition to these caste interests, the increasing class divide from the last decades of the twentieth century has meant that urban middle-class Protestant Tamils are moving toward the English Bible—adopting either the "King James Version" or the New International Version (1978) as their main version for church worship and personal devotion. However, the social power of "global" English over the "local" Tamil, the implications of the consequent turn away from the Tamil Bible, and the links with contemporary global religion, media, and culture deserve a fuller examination than has been possible within the scope of the present work. Nonetheless, despite this shift to the English language and Bible among some sections of Protestant Tamils, the continued contestations over whether the *Tiruviviliyam* should be read or not, and disputes over the sacred quality of particular versions and terminology signal that the Tamil Bible continues to be of considerable relevance to the self-perceptions of the majority. Ultimately, disagreements on translation and contesting claims on language use are powerful reminders that religious identity is not a discrete category but a product of a series of incomplete transactions with both those "outside" the group and others "inside" it. In the context of such particularized contestations, I agree with Dilip Menon's (2004) evaluation that, in South India, Anderson's (1983) "imagined" community was not so much that of the nation but that the community was imagined in local terms of religion, class, and caste.

There have been a few recent efforts to examine the "shared terrains" and "common popular practices" among religious groups in India as a critical strategy that deconstructs the hegemony of concrete religious groups (Raj and Dempsey 2002). However, to say that Protestants (or any other religious group) share a common religious terrain with other religions in South Asia is not sufficient. It is important also to investigate what specific elements and practices *are* shared and what are *not*. Equally, to what extent are exclusive sacred elements viewed as representing the essentials of a religious tradition? How far do attitudes to what can be shared change from one historical period to another and why? Further, what existing critical tools can we use or develop to start differentiating between "sharing," "borrowing," or "appropriating" between religions?

My aim in this book has been to direct some specific questions to investigate what aspects and to what extent Protestant Tamils in different periods have perceived as common ground with other religious groups. Most Protestant Tamils have wanted to maintain an identifiable sense of what it means to be "Protestant" but their opinion on how this may be achieved or to what extent has varied. Juxtaposing changes in Protestant terminology with shifting discursive claims made on individual terms has demonstrated that the "sharing" of linguistic and literary terrains with non-Protestant has been riddled with problems of defining what could be shared and what must not be shared. Protestant participants in the debate have continuously redrawn the limits of what is Protestant and how it relates to the non-Protestant. For example, in the nineteenth century, Sastri did not think that "sharing" Tamil linguistic or literary practice would compromise his commitment to the Protestant faith and its values but rather display it to best effect. By contrast, most twentieth-century Protestant Tamils have not wanted to "share" the language of the translated Bible and assume that they are faithful to core Protestant values by *not* doing so. With such historical shifts, it has been important to tease out exactly what the arguments offered are and what kinds of narratives are constructed to maintain exclusive religious boundaries. Although attitudes to translation, language, and literary genres are only some components in the complex make-up of religious identities, the field of Bible translation may offer further ground for comparative and in-depth study of this issue of "shared terrains" between religions.

Further, an examination of attitudes to scripture translation and language practices across the several religious traditions of South Asia would offer a new dimension to the study of religions in South Asia. The construction and circulation of sacred registers of language in the translation activities of other South Asian religions is a rich area for future comparative research: in particular, what forms of rationalization are proffered in and through languages for the creation of new versions of religious "reality" in the subcontinent? Examining shifting attitudes to translation will reveal how other religious traditions in South Asia have approached the issue of sacred language and/or genre to construct the authority of their sacred texts and how the dynamic interplay of discourses allow the several players to continuously reposition themselves in relation to key defining questions on language and religion.

Finally, investigating Protestant translation attitudes and practices in other Indian language cultures will, I imagine, yield rich results for a more "critical literary history," as Blackburn and Dalmia (2004) call it, in each language; this will also add a dimension to the critical study of the competing discourses that have constructed existing histories of Indian languages and their literatures. Most modern Indian languages and their literatures have been influenced considerably by missionary engagement with translations and language study; and indeed scholarship on these languages acknowledge the importance of missionary "contributions" by way of compiling dictionaries and grammars or developing print and print journalism. However, critical studies of the linguistic and literary implications of the translated Bible in other Indian languages have not yet been undertaken. Studies focusing on the Bible's trajectory in other Indian language traditions may offer fresh grounds for comparative analyses of language literatures. Examination of how Bible translation has proceeded in different (or neighboring) languages would open new grounds for investigating the historical relationship between various language cultures as they developed in modern India. Bible translation projects were one of several important contexts within which a hierarchy of Indian languages was constructed and certain existing linguistic features were either highlighted and appropriated or viewed as "primitive" and in need of reconstruction. However, as in the case of Tamil, it would be useful to compare these interpretative mechanisms with the diverse responses offered by speech communities (both Protestant and non-Protestant) to the translated Bible. Situating the cultural history of the translated Bible in wider cultural and historical frameworks will add new dimensions to our understanding of how different communities have conceptualized and negotiated relations between languages, scripture, and group identities. Rescuing the study of Bible translation from its present confines within theology and mission studies will benefit language and literary studies as well as theological engagements with the Bible in India.

Notes

Introduction

1. Frykenberg (2008: 244) dates the presence of Christian communities in Kerala using Syriac as "their language of learning and liturgy" to this period. There is no conclusive evidence that the entire Bible in Syriac was available then but in 1806 the *Metran* of the Syrian Christians in Kerala presented Claudius Buchanan with a rare copy of the Syriac Scriptures that he claimed was more than one thousand years old, while Susan Visvanathan (1993) quotes a nineteenth-century Syrian priest as claiming that their Bible had been in the "Malabar for fourteen hundred years or longer."
2. Gulfishan Khan (1998: 146) gives a fascinating account of Akbar's efforts to acquire a copy of the New and Old Testaments in Persian or Arabic translation. Akbar was finally presented a copy of the Gospels in Persian in 1605.
3. In using the term "culture" in conjunction with language, literature or religion here and elsewhere in the book, I will be referring not only to a particular language, literature, or religion per se but to the whole range of institutions, communities, activities, and attitudes, i.e., the discourses, which together construct each and within which each acquires meaning.
4. André Lefevere (1992: 12), for instance, argues that "translation is acculturation."
5. European scholars who studied Indian languages, literatures, and history. In Said's (1978) formulation, Orientalist scholarship discursively represented the "Orient" variously as exotic, static, and as Europe's "Other."
6. In the Indian context, it is mainly Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) and Niranjana (1992).
7. See pp. 31–32 of Introduction.
8. Robert Caldwell (1849: 6): "The term 'Hinduism,' like the geographical term 'India,' is an European generalization unknown to the Hindus. The Hindus themselves call their religions by the name of the particular deity they worship, as '*Siva bhacti*.' '*Vishnu Bhacti*,' &c…"
9. Although the earliest Buddhist and Jain settlements in Tamil society go back to the second century B.C.E., their most significant literary production in Tamil has been dated between the third and sixth centuries C.E.
10. Caldwell (1849: 75–6) echoes this in the nineteenth century: "Romanism, as actually existing in these parts, is powerful only for the perpetuation of evil. It makes no converts from heathenism, and is considered by heathens themselves as a heathenish ally."
11. See "A Brief History of the Bible in Tamil Translations" later in the introduction.

12. Letters to the editor, *Morning Star*, attacking Catholic practices identify letter-writers as “Protestant”: letter dated August 14, 1845, V (15): 118, signed “A Protestant native”; letter dated November 20, 1846, VI (22): 182–83, signed “Your obedient servant, A Native Protestant.”
13. See, e.g., “Opposition of the Papacy to the Circulation of the Bible,” *Morning Star* March 13, 1845, V: 37.
14. For instance, as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century William Stevenson (1721), chaplain to the East India company at Fort St. George, Madras, uses the term “Protestant” in the title as well as “Protestant Missionaries” in the text when he refers to the “opposition of the *Romish* Priests... when they find that the *Protestant* Missionaries begin to gain Ground... ” (1721: 8).
15. Vedanayaka Sastri’s *Jāti-tiruttaliṉ payittiyam* (1829) or “Foolishness of amending caste” offers an interesting case in point as its Tamil “Preface” has survived with a contemporary English translation. His use of the Tamil phrase *nammuṭa cuvicēṭa mārkattu capaikellām* (lit. our Evangelical Churches) appears as “Protestant churches” in the English version, suggesting that the use of the term “Protestant” was current among Tamils at least when writing in English.
16. See chapter one p. 47 for details.
17. There are several such letters to the editor printed using the term “Protestant” or “Protestant Native”: August 14, 1845, V (15): 118; November 20, 1846, VI (22): 182–83; January 11, 1844, IV (1): 6; July 14, 1845, V: 119; January 22, 1846: 14–15; December 24, 1846, VI (23): 183; December 31, 1846, VI: 191; December 28, 1848: 104; April 26, 1849: 32.
18. While this quotation is taken from “Prospectus of the Morning Star for 1844,” of the *Morning Star* (December 28, 1843, III (24): 264–65), this distinction is drawn clearly in editorial comments in several other issues of the *Morning Star*.
19. For example, “Protestant Religion no Novelty,” Neyoor Tract Society, 1853.
20. Similar attempts were made by C. P. Brown for Telugu, Rev. H. Gundert for Malayalam, and Rev. F. Kittel for Kannada.
21. He distinguished Tamil words for the Brahminical “gods” as of Sanskrit origin from the names of “demons” and words associated with “demon-worship” as of Tamil origin, which led him to propose that the latter were the original gods and religion of “primitive” Tamils before the arrival of the Brahmins.
22. For more details, see chapter one.
23. Tamil secular poetry, on the subjects of love and war, attributed to the first century C.E.
24. See Županov (1999, 2005) for an excellent discussion of Catholic translation strategies of Henriquez and Nobili.
25. Baldeus had started translating the Bible but he could only put his translation in print when he returned to Rotterdam in 1671. He only got as far as translating the Gospel of Matthew before being forced to leave Ceylon after a disagreement with the Dutch East India Company. Apparently, his translation was used in Ceylon in manuscript form. It was finally

printed only in 1741 after the printing press came to Ceylon in 1736 and after it had undergone several revisions at various hands (Kulendran 1967: 39). After Baldeus, Rev. Adrian De May, who came to Ceylon in 1678, attempted to translate the New Testament into Tamil. According to Kulendran, he finished his translation of the New Testament in 1692 but this was not printed either. Thus, the first Dutch translation of the entire New Testament in Tamil to be printed in Ceylon was in 1759, much after the Tamil New Testament was printed at Tranquebar (ibid.).

26. This is evident both in the criticism and defense of print expressed in several Protestant missionary documents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ambalavanar (2006: 152–53) quotes a nineteenth-century Jaffna Protestant Tamil who accused the American missionaries of "lament[ing] the vile use of the Bible" by the people.
27. Rhenius then moved to Tirunelveli, in south Tamilnadu, in 1820, and worked in the district for eighteen years. In 1835, he had to leave the CMS due to disagreement over the enforcement of Anglican rituals, which he disapproved of.
28. The revision committee met in 1861, 1863, 1866, and 1868 to discuss the progress of the work.
29. See chapter four for a more detailed discussion of Arumuka Pillai.
30. Although there was an effort in the nineteenth century to gather wider opinion, these were mainly the opinion of Protestant missionaries and a few Tamil clergymen. Negative criticism expressed by Protestant Tamils was not recorded in any of the nineteenth-century histories of BFBS that I had access to.
31. This letter was sent from the business manager, Bible Society India, to W. J. Bradnock, BFBS London.
32. See chapter one, p. 68 and note 39.
33. See chapter one, note 38.

1 The Terms of the Debate: Translating the Bible in Nineteenth-century India

1. For example, Tiliander (1974), Rajarigam (1958), Sandgren (1991), Kulandran (1967), and Packiamuthu (2000) are some of the better-known book-length examinations of the Tamil Bible that approach the discussion of Bible translation within the overarching frame of religious "dialogue."
2. These links made in the arguments of the books are also reflected in their titles: Abbe Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (1973); Robert Caldwell, *The Tinnevelly Shanars: A Sketch of their Religion and their Moral Condition, as a Caste* (1849); and *The Languages of India in their Relation to Missionary Work* (1875).
3. See also "Tamil: History, Politics, and Identity" in Introduction.
4. Including imperial and colonial interests, travel writings, and Oriental scholarship.
5. "The moral conduct, upright dealing and decent dress, of the native Protestants of Tanjore, demonstrate the powerful influence and peculiar

excellence of the Christian religion. It ought, however, to be observed, that the Bible, when the reading of it becomes general, has nearly the same effect on the poor of every place" (Buchanan 1811: 58).

6. Here, I refer to Indian converts to Protestant Christianity who were ordained as clergy in the various Protestant denominations and not European or American missionaries who were appointed to work in India.
7. I am aware that the use of term "scripture" has been reconsidered by several religious studies scholars (Wilfred C. Smith, 1993; Coburn, 1984; Graham, 1987; Levering, 1989) who have raised pertinent questions regarding the suitability of using the term in the context of more recent awareness of the differing concepts of scripture in the various traditions of world religions. As a result, there has been a shift from earlier emphases on a central written text to a notion of a collection of oral or written texts considered sacred by its community. My own use of the term includes this understanding of the dynamic nature of the relationship between sacred texts and their communities, for as Smith (1993: 18) suggests, "Fundamental, ... to a new understanding of scripture is the recognition that no text is a scripture in itself and as such. People—a given community—make a text into scripture, or keep it scripture: by treating it in a certain way."
8. See also the "Advertisement" at the beginning of *Several Letters Relating to the Protestant Danish Mission* (1720), which promotes correspondence from the Danish missionaries in South India as "Letters ... presented to the Benefactors and Well-wishers of the *Protestant* Mission to the *East-Indies, ...*" (3).
9. Pollock has argued this on several occasions in his work on South Asian literary culture.
10. In the Tamil context, German missionaries in the eighteenth century wrote letters addressed "to the Tamil people" that drew similar contrasts to achieve the same purpose.
11. The Christian Literature Society also published tracts, often translated from an Indian language into the English to facilitate further language translations.
12. His suggestions for future topics that could be tackled by tract writers are reflected in the titles of Tamil tracts.
13. Tamil poet, probably of Jaina persuasion, and believed to be the author of the *Tirukkuṟal*. Zvelebil (1995) describes the *Tirukkuṟal* as a comprehensive manual of ethics, polity and love in 1330 distichs divided into 133 sections of 10 distichs each: first 38 on cosmic and moral order (aram), next 70 on political skill and social life (porul), the rest on pleasure (kamam).
14. Saraswati is the Hindu goddess of wisdom, said to have been born of the god Brahma. According to the *Matsya-purāna*, Brahma later desired and mated with her (Kinsley 1986).
15. Take, for instance, the title of Mundy's book: *Christianity and Hinduism Contrasted: On a Comparative View of the Evidence by which the Respective Claims to Divine Authority of the Bible and Hindoo Shastras are Supported* (1827) which moves from an exploration of textual contradictions in the Hindu scripture to a comparison of the "beneficial effects" of Christian and Hindu scriptures on the moral characters of those who read them.

16. *Kuruṭṭu vaḻi* [The blind way] was one of Sastri's most frequently printed "tracts" although its authorship is attributed to both Vedanayaka Sastri and Miron Winslow.
17. Apirakam's songs were on creation, idolatry, salvation by Christ, heavenly bliss, and the pains of Hell (*Ñāṉakkummi* [wise song], 1870).
18. Moodaliar's tract *Ñānōtayam* starts with a hymn in praise to the Bible, thanking God for the gift of the "vētam" and asking for His help to meditate on his Word with true piety [patti or bhakti].
19. The *Morning Star*'s editorial of January 30, 1845, states that it is the first newspaper in Tamil published in Ceylon.
20. "The numbers of the Star,...form a...collection of valuable articles on History, Philosophy, Grammar, and Miscellaneous subjects [...] It will be our endeavour to communicate...articles on science, commerce, agriculture, government, Christianity, and whatever may tend to the improving of the mind..." ("Editorial address," January 7, 1841, 1(1): 1–2, 223. BL microfilm catalogued as SM 236).
21. The manuscript was first completed in 1713 but an English translation of this was first published only in 1867 by another Lutheran missionary in South India, W. Germann. A more recent translation was undertaken by Daniel Jeyaraj (2005).
22. A colporteur was a distributor, usually Indian, employed by BFBS to promote the Bible and Christian tracts through sales and preaching.
23. For instance, Davies (1882) and Thomson (1855) who publish English translations of the Gita as "A Sanskrit Philosophical Poem" indicate that the Gita's abstract philosophy is far above "gods who are stained by cruelty and lust" and the "superstitions" of the Hindu "system." Herling's (2009) excellent discussion of German translations of the Gita points out how appropriating the Gita through translation was equally important to those supporting contesting strands of British, French, and German Orientalisms.
24. He translated into prose the seventeenth-century Parañcōti Muṉivar's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟ purāṇam*, a poem in praise of Siva. See Hudson 1992, 1995.
25. These tracts had very polemical titles, clearly advertising that the contents were critiques of Christianity in both Tamil and English: e.g., Mutaliyār's *Viyāsa matacittānta pāhiyamata tiraskāram* (1840) also gives the English title, "A Hindu polemical tract in rejection of Christianity and Christian propaganda, based on readings from the Bible." Further, S. Sivasankara Cetti's *Kiṟistumata Kaṇṭaṉat tiraṭṭu* [Anthology of Treatises Refuting Christianity] (1915) includes eighteen tracts with titles such as: *Purōṭastāṇṭu kiṟistumata kaṇṭaṉam* [Refutation of Protestant Christianity], *Kiṟistumatattiṉ kuruṭṭu nampikkai* [Blind Faith of Christianity], and *Paipilum ulaka ciristiyiṉ āpāsamum: patirikalukku ōr Caṟputti* [Fallacy of the Bible's Account of Creation].
26. Entitled "Symbolism and idol-worship," "Religion," and "*Sandhya Vandanam* and *Anushthanam.*" See Pandiya 1888, 1889.
27. Different aspects of Hinduism, both elite and popular, were being constructed through translations of various Hindu scripture: Subba Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita* (1888); Mukerji, *Devotional Passages from the Hindu Bible* (1929); Lawrence, "The Grama Devathas" (1925).

28. The *Maṇimēkalai tuṟavu* is one of two surviving Buddhists texts composed in Tamil and according to Monius (2001) roughly datable to the fifth or sixth century C.E. It is a narrative in verse comprising 4,758 lines. Although the poem's preface refers to a Cāttaṉ as its author, there is little empirical evidence to substantiate this claim.
29. See Monius (2001: 77–86) for a discussion of the translation of Buddhist texts into Tamil and the self-conscious choice in literary language.
30. The terms "domesticating" and "foreignizing" translations were first proposed by Lawrence Venuti (1993, 1995) as useful ways of theorizing two opposing impulses in the translation process. However, his model has been challenged by a number of translation studies scholars (e.g. Baker 2007; Tymoczko 2000) who have critiqued the homogenized and straightforward dichotomies he offers between "domesticating and "foreignizing" translation strategies. Besides the very valid objections raised by them, my own examination of the multiple factors that have governed Bible translation in South India suggests that Venuti's theorization is too generalizing in its propensity to categorize translators and translations as one or the other. First, the distinction between "domestic" and "foreign" presupposes stable distinctions between languages, meanings, and cultures for defining what is "domestic" or "foreign," which is difficult to maintain in situations of rapid cultural change such as periods of active colonization. Second, Venuti assumes a translation situation where translators from the target culture (thus sharing a single set of "domestic" values) introduce dominant values of their own culture into the translated text in order to create complicit, domesticated reading publics. However, in the case of the Bible in India, the translators, who have predominantly been "outsiders" to the culture working with "insider" language specialists, have had a very complex relationship with this domestic-foreign dichotomy. And third, his theory suggests a homogenous effect of translated texts, i.e., all readers will either be fully "domesticated" or "foreignized." Venuti does not take into consideration the mixed reading strategies of the target audience that may question some domesticating translation strategies, resist other foreignizing strategies, or even desire to assimilate and capitalize on what is perceived as attractive "foreign" elements in the same translation. Ultimately, the translated Bible in colonial India was neither fully domesticating nor foreignizing, which is what makes it such a good subject for studying the contradictions that beleaguer these efforts that apparently sought, to use Venuti's terminology one last time, to "domesticate" Protestant Christianity in order to "foreignize" Protestant converts.
31. This dilemma echoes Venuti's suggested dichotomy.
32. In Stanley Porter's (2006: 197) estimate Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (1898), combined the readings of the editions of Tischendorf (1869–72), Westcott and Hort (1881), and Weymouth (1886) "to create a completely eclectic text". This was soon adopted by BFBS to replace the *Textus Receptus*.
33. Interpreters, called "dubashis," i.e., speakers of two languages, facilitated communication at all levels of interaction.

34. As W. Hooper proposed, they could be used as "Expert Assessors" but not given a vote on the rendering of God's Holy Word ("Revision of Vernacular Versions" 1899: 139).
35. I discuss the involvement of some nineteenth-century Tamil scholars in Bible translation in the following chapters.
36. A letter from the London headquarters to the Madras Auxiliary states: "We are glad to see the recommendation of the need for Indian representation in any future work. I suppose the Representative Council of Missionaries only includes British and American Missionaries at the present time. We should like to know, however, whether any Indians support their resolution. In fact we should be very much helped by the opinions of Tamil Christians on this whole question [of revision]" (Letter to Organe, June 24, 1915).
37. See note 39.
38. Besides these, the Bible Society Annual Reports for several years argued on similar lines.
39. According to the UBS website, "Bible Society is part of a global network of 145 independent national Bible Societies working in over 200 countries and territories. This network—or fellowship—represented by all these individual Bible societies is known as United Bible Societies (UBS)." http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/history/united-bible-societies/. Accessed on September 11, 2010.
40. In letters written to BFBS, Rev. E. E. Jenkins, Letter, 1860, and E. Sargent, member, Tamil Translation Committee (BFBS Editorial Correspondence 1858–89) are clear that the differences between Protestant denominations can be overcome mainly through obtaining one standard Tamil translation.
41. In Caldwell's (1875) opinion Tamil and the other "Dravidian" languages do not fall in this category.
42. The publication date does not appear on the title page but according to Young (1981) it can be verified from other sources.
43. For instance, the Madras Missionary Conference of December 1902 reported: "Many will be interested in the recommendation made that a list of biblical terms should be drawn up which have no equivalent in the Indian languages, and which convey no meaning to the ordinary Indian reader, such as Pharisee, Passover, Sabbath, &c.; and that this list in English . . . should be submitted to the Bible Society for sanction in order that a vernacular translation of these terms may be added to the various Indian versions" (Weitbrecht 1903: 493).
44. See "Tamil: History, Identity and politics in "Introduction".
45. And perhaps similarly in the other three languages and is a rich area for future scholarship.
46. A full account of this dispute is provided in *A Brief Narrative of the Operations of the Jaffna Auxiliary Bible Society in the Preparation of a Version of the Tamil Scriptures* (1870).
47. See Caldwell (1849: 55–60), for instance, who writes about the positive influence of Christianity on Tamil Shanars [Nadars] whose moral, social,

and intellectual "indolence," "languor and apathy" seem to otherwise render them barely recognizable as human.

48. "Mr Pandian preaching to Pariahs," Basel Mission Photo Archives, C-30.51.014.
49. Hardgrave (1969: 145) points out that Nadars, more than any other community in Tamilnad, recognized the importance of education for social uplift: "Education was stressed by the missionaries among the Nadar converts in Tinnevelly District, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Church Missionary Society established elementary and high schools throughout the southern districts, and several important colleges . . . The Hindus were at first less responsive to education . . . "

2 Locating the Sacred in Terminology

1. See chapter one, note 28.
2. Despite the efforts of some European and Indian theologians to the contrary, such attitudes have informed Bible translation until the latter half of the twentieth century. While translations such as the *Tiruviviliyam* have made a move toward using terms that point to conceptual similarities, resistance from the dominant sections of the Protestant Tamil community of readers indicate that they are not ready for such changes.
3. "The task before us is to trace the religious terms as far as possible back to their origin and to find out what has been the leading principle in adapting or refusing a certain term . . . The main interest lies in finding out to what extent a specific Hindu term is capable of conveying a corresponding specific Christian meaning, without overlooking the differences that really exist between the two religions" (Tiliander 1974: 21).
4. *Ciluvai* is used both in the *Union Version* and the *Tiruviviliyam*. It probably entered Tamil and Malayalam from the Kerala Syrian Christian usage of the Syriac *slībo*.
5. *Caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* by Ziegenbalg in his New Testament (1714–15) and *parāparaṉ* by Fabricius in his Old Testament (1776).
6. Both *tāmpiraṉ* and *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ*, however, continued to be used in Protestant literature, such as in hymns composed by Protestant Tamils. The Protestant Tamil poet Vedanayaka Sastri uses these term in his hymns quite frequently and hence *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* has continued to function in Protestant devotional literature.
7. Unpublished notebook in Archiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen, Halle IIC 10, p. 59.
8. Walther, Notebook, IIC 10, p. 59. I am grateful to Axel Utz for translating the notes from German.
9. The son of Auguste Hermann Francke, Gotthilf Auguste Francke became first joint director of the Francke Foundations after his father's death in 1727 and then director from 1739, continuing his father's overseas missionary work especially in India until his death in 1769.

10. Unpublished letters from Tamil catechists Aaron, Diogo, Ambrosio, and Rayanaikken addressed to Gotthilf Auguste Francke in Halle between 1743 and 1756. Archiv der Franckeschen Stiftungen, Halle.
11. According to Tiliander (1974: 131), the word was not restricted to the Lutherans: in nineteenth-century Tamil translations of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* some prayers began with *parāparaṉē*, a usage that survived from the time when the Anglicans took over Lutheran congregations at the dissolution of the Tranquebar Mission.
12. In the second half of the twentieth century, although *parāparaṉ* carried on as the official term used in church services along with *kaṭavuḷ*, Lutheran congregations have used the term *tēvaṉ* in their everyday speech.
13. For a full discussion of this term, see Israel (2011).
14. This controversy between the Serampore (Baptist) Brethren translating the Bible into Indian languages and the BFBS over the interpretation and translation of "baptism" is recorded in "Protest presented to the British and Foreign Bible Society, by the Baptist Missionary Committee, March 6, 1837 and 'Mr. Hinton's Letter to Lord Bexley, President of British and Foreign Bible Society," from the London Baptist Magazine of February 1838.
15. The justification provided by the committee was that they hoped to avoid demarcation of some terms as peculiar to the Christian religion as well as replace Sanskrit with Tamil terms.
16. Since the Tamil has no letter that corresponds with "b," the Tamil letter "p" is always used instead and the Roman letter "p" is used to denote it in the modern system of transliteration. In the nineteenth century, however, it was common practise to use the Roman "b" rather than the "p." I have used "bali" wherever I quote directly from a nineteenth-century source.
17. The six types of offerings are: 1. Abhisheka, 2. Diparadhana, 3. Naivedya, 4. Homa, 5. Bali, and 6. Saivapuja" (Jeyaraj 2005: 180).
18. Kittel's (1872) tract, which presents Christ's sacrifice as a fulfilment of all known practices of sacrifice—Aryan and non-Aryan—uses the root *yajna* throughout to explore the various types of sacrifices and how they all ultimately point to Christ's sacrifice. Kittel very briefly discusses *pali* in a footnote as having "the specific meaning "a gift which is not offered into the fire' " (6).
19. Caldwell (1849: 22) similarly associated *pali* with the bloody sacrifices and "devil worship" of Tamil low-caste groups: "The fact of the prevalence of bloody sacrifices for the removal of the anger of superior powers is one of the most striking in the religious conditions of the Shanars, and is appealed to by the Christian Missionary with the best effect."
20. Catholic missionaries first adopted this strategy of using existing hierarchies in Hindu society to their advantage. Nobili was one of the first to align himself with the Brahmanical caste to attract status within Tamil culture for the Catholic mission (Rajamanickam 1999; Županov 1999).

21. In this translation, the chapter summary given at the start of Genesis 1:1 uses *kaṭavuḷ* to refer to the God who creates the universe but the biblical text in verse 1 uses the term *tēvaṉ*. Chapter 2 of Genesis then introduces *tēvaṉākiya yekōva*, i.e., "Jehova who is God."
22. See the introduction (p. 30) and chapter four for more details.
23. Kulenderan's (1967: 132) examples are Tirunavukkarusu's (Medieval Śaivite poet) use of "*tevāti tēvaṉ*" (God above all Gods) for Śiva in the *Tēvāram*.
24. Fabricius used "*tēvatuti*," (praise of God), "*tēvacamātāṉam*" (the peace of God), and "*tēvatūtaṉ*" (messenger of God).
25. Similarly Rhenius used *parāparaṉ* mainly for the Protestant God and *tēvar* for "false gods."
26. But Winslow marks all the compound terms coined by missionaries of the previous centuries, such as *tēvakumāraṉ* (Son of God), *tēvacīkirutam* (that which belongs to God), *tēvamāta* (mother of God, the Virgin Mary), *tēvavacīkaram* (transubstantiation), *tēvaveḷippaṭuttal* (divine revelation), *tēvācaṉam* (the throne of God), as Christian (i.e., Protestant) or Catholic usages.
27. According to the Śaiva agamas and other Śaiva texts, which depart from the earlier Hindu system, five gods are mentioned: Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mayesvara, and Sada Siva.
28. Bower too tells his reader that *tēvar* in the plural was associated with the names of five Hindu gods: "Brahma, Visnu, Urritiran, Mahesuran, Sadasivan."
29. Bower's preference for the term *parāparaṉ* is quite clear when he claims that the *cattiya vētam*, or the Bible, declares that *parāparaṉ* was the only true God. There is no indication in the entire passage on *parāparaṉ* that it was unsatisfactory or lacking in its ability to represent the Protestant concept of divinity.
30. It is unclear what Lawrence's source may have been. Lawrence (1926) is quoted again in the BFBS Editorial Sub-Committee Minute Cards, Vol. 8, October 10, 1926, pp. 29–30, Bible Society Archives, Cambridge University Library.
31. Tiliander's (1974: 85) observation here contradicts his comment regarding Bower pointed out earlier in this chapter.
32. Unpublished manuscript. Catalogued at the archives of the United Theological College as VPC-VNS 36.
33. There had also been a public row in the 1840s between the missionaries translating with the Madras Auxiliary and those with the Jaffna Auxiliary over the translation of "The Tentative Version" (1850), which first uses this term.
34. Sastri approved of the Catholic use of *caṟuvēcuvaraṉ* as an equally inspired term, though he thought *parāparaṉ* the superior of the two.
35. In response to these Protestant institutions, Tamil Hindus opened rival schools and colleges during the same period. The Pachiayappa Schools, which began with a body of Hindu Trustees opening a school in Madras's Black Town in 1842, were the "first example of intelligent natives of various castes combining to aid the cause of popular instruction" (Satthianadhan 1894: cxx). Similarly, the Jaffna Hindu College was

instituted by the Saiva Samaya Paripalana Sabhai in the 1890s. Among Catholic institutions were St. Joseph's College, affiliated to Madras University from 1866, and St. John's College, founded in Palayamkottai in 1880.

36. In fact, modern-day "Sunday Schools" at several Protestant churches still hold "memory-verse-competitions" for children, i.e., a test of who can recite the most number of Bible verses committed to memory.
37. See the introduction (p. 30).
38. This difference between formal and informal use of language is also evident in previous decades. Although Rhenius retained Fabricius's use of *parāparaṉ* in his revision, his *Memoirs* indicates his use of "*cāmi*" when in conversation with both Protestant and non-Protestant Tamils.
39. After extensive discussion on the available terms, the Executive and Consultative Revision Committees decided that *kaṭavuḷ* "shall be used wherever *Theos* denotes the One Supreme God."
40. It is important to point here that the *Tirukuṟaḷ* had very early on been viewed by Protestant missionaries as an ethical text delinked from specific Hindu traditions and so was mobilized as a "native" critique of inappropriate Hindu practices and hence a useful ally in missionary discourse.
41. Geden's second letter mentions that *tēvaṉ* was an ordinary Sanskrit term not native to any Dravidian language, "though it would be understood by any educated man. In my time in India it would have to be explained and taught to the villager" (February 12, 1927); (Kilgour, Letter to Lawrence, May 19, 1927).
42. Sent to Kilgour, the title of this document is "Notes on the translation of the word God (*Theos*) in the Tamil language," BFBS Tamil file No. 3: 1923–26.
43. This similarity between popular Tamil Hindu and Protestant devotional speech patterns indicates that even when there is an effort at a formal level to separate terms to indicate specific religious affiliations, informal oral usages cannot be similarly controlled. The full implications of such shared patterns of speech in popular devotional practices cannot be investigated fully at this juncture without further empirical data and research.
44. The correspondents were Rev. Devapirium and Mr. Devanesam whose comments were included in the unpublished document "Revised Tamil St. Matthew: Opinions Received from Indians."
45. See chapter four for a more detailed discussion of Jesudian's criticism of the proposed revision of the *Union Version*.
46. See "Tamil: History, Politics, and Identity" in the introduction.

3 Symbolic Versions: The Power of Language Registers

1. Kilgour who was then editorial superintendent at London includes this observation in a letter to Organe, based at MABS in Madras, October 30, 1928.
2. See chapter four for a detailed discussion of Vedanayaka Sastri as Protestant poet and writer.

3. This letter is quoted verbatim in Tamil in the unpublished pamphlet "Noise of New Correction" (Tamil title, "pudutirutalin kukural") written by Vedanayaka Sastri and members of the Tancavur Evangelical Church in 1825. It is catalogued as VPC-VNS 27 in the United Theological College Archives, Bangalore.
4. It seems as if Sastri may have had his treatises translated into English but there is no evidence on the English manuscript of the translator's identity or when the translation may have occurred. In most documents, the date remains the same, suggesting that there was a very short gap between the original Tamil and its English translation.
5. All translations of the Tamil originals in this chapter are mine. English originals are identified in the main body of the text.
6. It is unclear from the sources whether Nadan was a Lutheran or Anglican priest.
7. John Devasahayam was given temporary charge of the station at Tranquebar after the death of missionary John Christian Schnarré in 1820 (Hough 1860: 349, 351).
8. Sastri tells us that Devasahayam had written two letters to David Pilley one in English and the other in Tamil, regarding the resignation of one Arulanandem Pilley from missionary service.
9. Sastri and his fellow Evangelicals involved in the dispute belonged to the highest, non-Brahmin Vellala caste and supported the maintaining of caste distinctions within the church. For a more detailed discussion of Sastri's dispute with the missionaries over issues of caste distinction, see Antony Copley in Oddie (1997: 173–227) and Hudson (2000: 153–72).
10. See note 9.
11. Serfoji II, ruler of Tancavur from 1787 to 1832 and a friend and contemporary of Sastri, is, for instance, the best known of the Tancavur Maratha kings for literary, scientific, and technological accomplishments as well as for preserving Tancavur as a center of intellectual excellence in the early nineteenth century (Peterson 2002, 2004).
12. See Raman (2009) for a very useful analysis of the rise of this register of Tamil in early nineteenth century Madras Presidency. Raman argues the close link between Cutchēry (kaccēri) Tamil and the rise of the Tamil munshi (discussed later in this chapter) in the context of a particular kind of language teaching and scholarship fuelled by the administrative needs of the East India Company in nineteenth-century Madras.
13. Tamil term for metrical glossaries or thesauruses in verse.
14. Spelt muṉiṣi in Tamil, it is a loan word from the Arabic, meaning teacher of a language (in Persian, scribe).
15. Rhenius (1836: vi) constructs a scholarly genealogy for his Tamil assistant of fourteen years, Tiruppāṟkaṭalnātaṉkavirācar, to obviate precisely such accusations of inappropriate use of language pandits that might be levelled against his translations.
16. The MSS wrongly gives the date 1817 as the year when Ziegenbalg's translation of the Bible was printed.
17. According to Chitty (1859: 81), the merits of Ramachandra Kavirayer as an able poet and elegant writer of Dramas in modern times was well-known

and "his high attainments had procured for him the friendship and countenance of Mr. Ellis, the accomplished Orientalist."

18. Sastri uses the caste title "Pilley" for Tandevaraya Mutaliar in his essay. Tandevaraya Mutaliar was the most renowned of the Tamil headmasters at the College of Fort St. George, Madras (Venkatachalapathy in Trautman 2009).
19. Sastri's use of the term "munshi" for the two scholars is not entirely appropriate. As Trautmann (2006) and Raman (2009) have shown, there was a qualitative difference between such "head master-scholars" at the College of Fort St. George and the large numbers of subordinate Tamil teachers who formed an emerging "Tamil munshi culture." But by using the derogatory term "munshi" to refer collectively to the two scholars and anybody else who might have been assisting Rhenius, Sastri is immediately able to signal to contemporary Tamils and missionaries that the present revisions of the Tamil Bible are the result of poor scholarship.
20. See chapter four, pp. 203–5.
21. Krishna Pillai was a Vellala Vaiṣṇavite who had converted to Protestant Christianity and in 1878 translated John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into a critically acclaimed Tamil epic poem. See chapter four, note 26 for more details.
22. Hudson (1970) finds evidence that this position was nothing more than a title and a salary, and a way for some C.M.S. and S.P.G. missionaries to fulfill a responsibility they had assumed on behalf of a new convert. According to Hudson (1970: 269, 271), Krishna Pillai noted later that not a day's work was done during this time. In 1861, however, Krishna Pillai's brother Muttaiya Pillai, also a Protestant convert, did compete successfully for the position of "Tamil Referee" in the Bible translation committee headed by Bower and was acknowledged briefly in its report as a "native referee" who had thorough knowledge of Tamil and practical experience in the work of translation (*Revision* 1869: 13).
23. I return to this point in chapter four.
24. There is no historical evidence as to whether Sastri was qualified to make judgments on Dutch and Portuguese translations. He may have known some German as a result of close association with Frederick Schwartz as his pupil but again there is no evidence to support this. Further, according to Peterson, he did not write in English but had his treatises translated into English by others, which throws some doubt on his competency in English to arrive at these conclusions.
25. These are dates provided by Sastri and are not necessarily the date of first publication of each translation.
26. A Tamil grammar composed by Pavaṇanti-munivar in the thirteenth century. Along with the *Tolkāppiyam*, *Naṉṉūl* is the most frequently referred to as the foundational grammar of the Tamil language.
27. See chapter one for details.
28. This social change is most visible within the Protestant Tamil community as a result of missionary schools making literacy increasingly available to members of castes who would traditionally not have had access

to it. For a discussion of widening literacy in the second half of the nineteenth century, see section on '*Tēvaṉ*' in chapter two.

29. See "*The Original and its Translation*" in chapter one for details.
30. See "Tamil: History, Politics, and Identity" in the introduction to this volume.
31. See Norton (1993) where he shows just how contentious this issue had at first been in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain. This link between the language of the KJV and that of English literary texts is emphasized even now; for instance, it is frequently mentioned in the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the KJV.
32. See "Tamil: History, Politics, and Identity" in the introduction to this volume.
33. Tamil title, "*paricutta vētākamattiṉ pututtiruputalkaḷ purakaṉikkappaṭuvataṟkuriya kāraṇaṅkaḷ*."
34. This printed letter to the editor was signed by thirteen lay Protestant Tamils; there is no date given on the document (BFBS Tamil File 5: 1929–33).
35. In contrast, the *Tiruviviliyam* has been very successful among Catholic Tamils. With full support from the clergy, there has been no reported discontent with the language register or style of this version.
36. Interviews with Rev. John Giridharan, Iyesu Inbar Alayam, Adyar, April 19, 2002; Revs Premraj and Deborah Mathurandagam, March 17, 2002.
37. An exception is the previous Bishop of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC), Tiruchirapalli, (1999–2009), a supporter of the new terminology, who recognizing the importance of these media, directed that only verses from the *Tiruviviliyam* were to be used in the TELC calendar (interview, February 19, 2002).
38. See chapter one.
39. See chapter one.
40. See Israel (2008).
41. Lisa Mitchell (2009) has traced similar transitions in attitudes to Telugu in the same period.

4 Prose Truth versus Poetic Fiction: Sacred Translations in Competing Genres

1. Besides these translations, I must point out here that there is a considerable body of Catholic prose compositions on theological subjects, especially by Nobili and Beschi, that had developed on existing limited Tamil prose to write Catholic doctrine, sermons, prayers, and catechisms in Tamil.
2. Meenakshisundaram (1974: 278) observes that although prose did exist and Tamils were well-versed in it, they did not treat it as an independent species of literature. Prose was used more for administrative and commentarial purposes.
3. In his English preface to the 1885 edition of the first novel in Tamil *Piratāpa Mutaliyār Carittiram*, Samuel Vedanayagam Pillai argues in favor of Tamil literary prose, "My object in writing this work of fiction is to supply the want of prose works in Tamil, . . ." and "I am not aware that a similar work of prosaic fiction in Tamil has ever been presented to the public." (i, iv).

4. The law covering obscenity was dealt with in section 292 of the Indian Penal code of 1860.
5. "I have to confess that several books of the Papist missionaries,...have quite a good style, but they present also so many human trifles and erroneous teachings that I thought it worth the trouble to...free them so completely from such dangerous errors that they can be retained because of their style..." (quoted in Rajamanickam 1999: 49).
6. There is evidence that manuscript copies were still in circulation in 1817 (Muttusami Pillei 1840: 257). A copy of the poem with a French prose paraphrase was published in 1851 from Pondicherry.
7. See p. 178, also note 11.
8. However, Caldwell (1872: 197) also follows the usual Protestant linking of Catholic and Hindu textual practices: "The aim of the great Italian was to supplant the Ramayanam in a measure. He wished to present to Christian natives a *poem* which would be to them what the Ramayanam was to other Hindu religionists."
9. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* for example, was translated and circulated as one of the best examples of Protestant literature.
10. Conversely, when Protestant missionaries translated Śaiva poetry into Tamil prose the purpose seems to have been to expose the "extravagant fictions" contained in the originals. The *Skanda Purana* (*Kanta Purāṇam*), for instance, was translated into Tamil prose in 1828 in order to be taught at the American Missionary Seminary at Batticotta in Ceylon. According to a Seminary report: "Enough, however, was read to convince all who would reflect, that the book is filled with the most extravagant fictions, many of which are of an immoral tendency..." (Hudson 1992: 30). By virtue of prose's supposed perspicuous nature, prose translations also conveniently served to expose the dubious merits of rival sacred texts.
11. Also commonly known as *Kamparāmāyaṇam*. It's poet, Kampan, has been assigned by various Tamil literary historians as belonging to the ninth, tenth, or twelfth centuries.
12. Incidentally, this is the only tract that was reprinted several times between 1833 and 1866. Printed by the Jaffna, American mission, Madras, Neyveli, and Travancore Tract Societies, it was issued in parts as well as whole between 1833 and 1866.
13. See note 37.
14. For instance, Rhenius (1841: 159), early in the nineteenth century, remarked on popular Protestant efforts at translating the Gospel into Tamil verse: "One of the schoolmasters brought a specimen of the gospel in Tamul verse, such as the people are accustomed to in their writings." Rhenius, himself a translator of the Bible, does not comment on the quality of this translation but at no point does he discuss the possibility of translating any part of the New Testament into Tamil verse.
15. This pushes the beginning of modern Tamil discursive prose back by about a hundred and fifty years. Most modern literary histories refer to Arumuka Pillai's prose writings from the second half of the

nineteenth century and the publication of the first Tamil novel (1879) as the significant beginning of modern discursive and literary prose in Tamil.

16. Although not stated explicitly, it can be safely assumed that the translation referred to is the Tentative Version, the translation completed by Jaffna Auxiliary translation committee headed by Percival, with the assistance of Arumuka Pillai in 1850. See p. 30.
17. The article appears in two parts in two separate issues; the author's name is not mentioned ('The Tamil Bible a Standard for Prose Composition ," February 24, 1853, XIII (4): 17; March 10, 1853, XIII (5): 21).
18. According to Murdoch's *Classified Catalogue* (1865), this was first published in 1865, catalogued under "poetry," a subdivision of the category "Protestant Theology," and quite separate from his section on "the Holy Scriptures."
19. Kanagasabai's name is missing from the title page; Murdoch (1870) gives Macarthur as the publisher of the translation.
20. In his *Grammar,* Beschi (1917: 112) is quite dismissive of the claims of the *purāṇam*: "The word puranam properly signifies *antiquity*, but is here used in the sense of *history*. Those works, however, which the Tamils term puranam, have neither the form, nor the truth, of history. They abound in fables, and are composed in poetry."
21. The poem is sixteen pages long and comes with a prefatory page and two pages of glossary at the end over and above the 16pp.
22. In August, for instance, the translation in *nēricai veṇpa* (a subdivision of one of four principal stanza forms in Tamil prosody) is by Tevacikamani Pillai and in September, by a Tennur Partippulavar [*Morning Star* August 18, 1842, II (16): 193–4; September 15, 1842, II (18): 218].
23. These are published with no indication of who the translator/s may be and why they stop with Psalm 9.
24. Although the following are listed as published works by Murdoch, I have been unable to trace copies of any of them: Cenjee Thomas, *Poems on the Old and New Testaments* (1858); P. Arumokam Pillai, *The Prodigal Son* (1864); Jacob Peter Manuel, *On the Childhood of Christ* (1864); Rev. A. Vethakan, *Miracles of Christ Versified* (1867).
25. The editors of the *Morning Star* (February 23, 1854, xiv (4): 19–23) confirm this in an introduction to a five-part review article written by a supporter of Navalar to defend his plans for "Native Education."
26. Comprising 3,800 verses, this verse translation in the Tamil epic style *Irakshanya yātrikam* (Journey of Salvation) began to be serialized in *Naṟpōtakam* ("Friendly Instructor"), a Protestant Tamil monthly from April 1878 and was published complete in 1894 by Christian Literature Society. However, several prose translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress* had already been in print since the late eighteenth century. The first prose translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part I, in English and Tamil, was published in Vepery in 1793. The Tamil translation on its own was published by the Madras Tract Society in 1841. A revised translation of the novel was published in 1842, and a third edition in 1848. The Madras editions

only contain Part I. The whole work was then translated by the Rev. L. Spaulding for the Jaffna Tract Society, and was printed in 1853. A revision of the translation by Rev. Samuel Paul was published by the Madras Tract Society in 1890.

27. There is evidence that such songs continued to be sung among Catholic fishing villages until the end of the nineteenth century: Gover (1871: 193–200) records hearing a "company of coolies" at San Thome, with its strong Catholic presence among fishing communities in Madras, sing a folk "labour" song on the biblical story of Adam's fall.
28. The first book of forty-eight translated hymns was published in 1713 by Ziegenbalg, preceding the publication of his New Testament in 1714–15.
29. Sastri, *Pandegey Perasdābam* [*panṭikaippiractāpam*] or Festival Eulogy was Sastri's response to the revised Order of the Lord's Supper published in 1825 by the Church Missionary Society in Madras. A portion of the manuscript is part of the manuscript collection of documents entitled *jātitiruttaliṉ payittiyam* (1828).
30. Sastri does not elaborate on whether these were composed by Catholic missionaries or Catholic Tamils.
31. Although not explicitly stated by Murdoch (1865: 10), it is possible to infer from his description that Webb spent time with Vedanayaka Sastri in Tancavur to learn more about hymns in Tamil meter. This corroborates with the fact that most of the hymns in this collection were authored by Sastri.
32. The article, "Are Native Christians to Have any Psalmody in their celebration of divine worship? If so what is it? No.3" by "H___s" June 8, 1854, XIV (11): 51–2 provoked several responses in subsequent issues.
33. For a fuller discussion, see Israel (2012).
34. See note 37.
35. A poet-saint who lived between the eighth and ninth centuries C.E.
36. See Cutler (1987) and Carman and Narayanan, *The Tamil Veda* (1989), for a discussion of the belief that the Tamil Vedas were not a translation or imitation of the Sanskrit Veda but revealed in Tamil in parallel to the Sanskrit Veda.
37. According to Peterson (2004: 39), the *kīrttaṉai* was a new eighteenth-century song form developed and perfected in Tancavur using simple lyrics and usually focusing on divine themes, the *kīrttaṉai* was a flexible form ranging in musical complexity from ones that could only be performed by classically trained musicians to those that could be sung by congregations in the bhajana style.
38. For a detailed examination of Sastri's "Bethlehem kuṟavañci," see Peterson 2002, 2004.
39. This had not been the case in the eighteenth century, when German Pietist missionaries had not found fault with emotionalism in Tamil expressions of devotion. Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century German Pietists display powerful personal declarations of love often combined with sensual descriptions of Christ's body similar to devotional

trends in Tamil bhakti. I thank Matthias Frenz for bringing this to my attention and for his translations of several well-known Pietist hymns from the German.

40. However, Morton and Smith (2002) also argue that the continuous "accommodation" of theological differences within or without the established church also meant that a continuity of national religious experience could be maintained in Britain during this period.
41. According to Norman Cutler (1987: 28), the Signature Verse was usually called "phalasruti" and operated on a different rhetorical register from the other verses. The phalasruti, which invariably includes the name of the poet and of his native village or town, "historicises" the voice heard in bhakti poetry.
42. Sastri mentions this issue as one of his complaints in his "Humble Address" (1827).
43. An Anglican bishop of India was first appointed in 1814.
44. Sastri and Serfojii had spent several years as pupils under the care of the Lutheran missionary Schwartz and seemed to have maintained their friendship until Serfoji's death in 1832.
45. Three of Sastri's biographers give detailed accounts of the honors conferred upon him by Protestant Tamil congregations: Gnanadickam (1987); Devanesan (1956); and Manasseh (1975).
46. See Devanesan 1956; Peterson 2002.
47. The art of extempore story telling for three to four hours, introduced into Tamil Nadu from Maharashtra by the Maratha rulers of Tancavur. Music played a very important role and the poet's success depended on his knowledge of a wide range of subjects and the ability to create the necessary impact on the audience through music, gestures, voice, an intimate knowledge of religious texts and folklore, packing interesting bits of latest information into legends and a command of Tamil. Hudson (2000: 125–6) points out that Sastri called these events *'catur'* meaning 'skilful means' and that he was offered the title "Vedasastiriyar" (Scholar of Revelation) after one such event in Tiruchirapalli in 1815.
48. It is possible that this shift in Anglican missions occurred at a time when a similar change was taking place in British Anglican churches. Similar moves in favor of establishing a certain kind of Western church music occurred in the early nineteenth century. Roy Strong (2007: 217–18) has argued that a newfound Catholicity in the Anglican Church meant that village bands and singers vanished and in their place a fully robed choir and the organ were introduced: "the arrival of the barrel organ, the harmonium and the pipe organ made the old village orchestra and singers led by the parish clerk redundant and . . . extinguished a certain kind of communal exuberance in worship." Strong also provides evidence of parishioners objecting to the sound of the "sonorous and decorous organ" that was very different from that of the old village band. I am grateful to Dermot Killingley for pointing me to these similarities in Strong's study of the English country church.
49. For instance, C. and H. Jesudasan (1961) have sections on the "Christian Contribution" (pp. 236–40) and "Muslim contribution" (pp. 234–36) to

Tamil literature. The *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature* (1990) devotes most of its chapter on “Christianity and Tamil Literature” to “The Evolution of Tamil Christian Poetry”, see pp. 391–409.

50. Rajarigam was himself a Bible translator and in 1975 published an entirely new translation of the New Testament in the “Pure Tamil” style propagated by the Dravidian Movement from the 1930s onward.

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