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. Gufishan 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.


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 Sastrī’s *Jāti-tiruttalin 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.


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[jing] 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 Timnevelly 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 Tirukkuṟṟal. Zvelebil (1995) describes the Tirukkuṟṟal 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-purāṇa, 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 vali* [(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 (*Nānakkummi* [wise song], 1870).

18. Moodaliar’s tract *Nānōtayam* 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.


25. These tracts had very polemical titles, clearly advertising that the contents were critiques of Christianity in both Tamil and English: e.g., Mutiliyār’s *Viyāsa matacittānta pāhiyamata tirāskāram* (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 *Kiristumata Kānṭatā tirātū* [Anthology of Treatises Refuting Christianity] (1915) includes eighteen tracts with titles such as: *Pūrōṣṭānta kiristumata kaṇṭanam* [Refutation of Protestant Christianity], *Kiristumatattin kuruṭṭu nampikkai* [Blind Faith of Christianity], and *Paipilum ulaka ċiristiṇyin āpāsamum: patirikalukku ọr Carputti* [Fallacy of the Bible’s Account of Creation].


27. Different aspects of Hinduism, both elite and popular, were being constructed through translations of various Hindu scripture: Subba Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gīta* (1888); Mukerji, *Devotional Passages from the Hindu Bible* (1929); Lawrence, “The Grama Devathas” (1925).
28. The Manimēkalai turavu 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 Cāttan as its author, there is little empirical evidence to substantiate this claim.


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 slibo.


6. Both tāmpirān and caruvćuvaran, 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 caruvćuvaran has continued to function in Protestant devotional literature.


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.

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 parāparanē, 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 parāparanē carried on as the official term used in church services along with kaṭavul, Lutheran congregations have used the term tēvan 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.


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 kāṭavuḷ 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 "tēvāti tēvaṉ" (God above all Gods) for Śiva in the Tēvānam.
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), tēvacikirutan (that which belongs to God), tēvāmāta (mother of God, the Virgin Mary), tēvavacakaram (transubstantiation), tēvavelppaṃuttal (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 vētaṉ, 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 caṟuvēcuvaran 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 Sabha 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 parāparan 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 kāṭavuḷ “shall be used wherever Theos denotes the One Supreme God.”

40. It is important to point here that the Tirukūṟṟaḷ 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 Nandan 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 Cutchëry (kaccëri) 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 munîṣi 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, Tiruppāṟakāṭāṭkapāṭkāvar, 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 Mutalir in his essay. Tandevaraya Mutalir was the most renowned of the Tamil headmasters at the College of Fort St. George, Madras (Venkatachalalapathy 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.


21. Krishna Pillai was a Vellala Vaisnāvite 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, Nānṉāl* 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 ‘Tevan’ 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 vētakamattin puruttruputalkal puraṃikkappu- vatakuriya kāranakal.”

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.


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.


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 Mutalirā 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 *Kampāṟamāṇam*. 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 venpa (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 Na valar 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 Narpōṭakam (“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.


29. Sastri, Pandegey Perasdābam [pamṭi kaippiractāpam] 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 kīrttanaṉ was a new eighteenth-century song form developed and perfected in Tancavur using simple lyrics and usually focusing on divine themes, the kīrttanaṉ 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.


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 Serfoji 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 ‘skillful 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...

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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