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BEARING WITNESS: CLAUDIUS BUCHANAN'S MISSION IN KERALA

R.K. Jayasree

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Institute of English
University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

Bearing Witness:
Claudius Buchanan's Mission in Kerala

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The Bible is polyphonic and is the product of a constant engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics. An enquiry into the history of the Bible in India is also an enquiry into the claim of Rev. Buchanan's Bible to be designated the first translation of the Bible into Malayalam. *Bearing Witness: Claudius Buchanan's Mission in Kerala* is an enquiry into the historical and ideological contexts which engendered the translation of the Bible into Malayalam by Rev. Claudius Buchanan. It also leads one to the realization that a major linguistic enterprise like a translation of the Bible cannot materialize out of a linguistic vacuum. It proves that the historical and ideological contexts were shaped by hegemonic relationships and that the engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics has always been a defining feature of the Bible and that it spilled over into its translations. From a historical perspective, decisions and choices which initiated the translational act, especially those which coincided with an epistemological shift are of great significance. The study seeks to describe and theorize the historical context which engendered the earliest translations of the Bible into Malayalam, the Buchanan Version of 1811.

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Through the prism of life...

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. . . you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth -- Acts 1:8

Sanctions as well as embargoes on translation are part of the exegetical tradition of the Bible. Christ told his apostles to take his word unto the ends of the earth. In both ancient and modern times men would interpret this as an exhortation to go forth and speak His word in other tongues. The Apostle Thomas is said to have brought His word to Kerala. Whatever might be the historicity of that claim, Christianity and the Bible predate the coloniser in this state. The Syriac *Peshitta* Bible had been in circulation among the Syrian Christians of Kerala for a long time. But to them it was more an object of veneration than a text to be actually read and much less, translated. Scripture translation in Kerala dates only with the arrival of the Protestant missionaries in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The present study is an enquiry into the historical and ideological contexts which engendered the translation of the Bible into Malayalam by Rev. Claudius Buchanan (12 March 1766 - 9 February 1815).

The Bible is polyphonic and is the product of a constant engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics. The

monolithic appearance of the biblical canon is, in fact, a carefully constructed façade. My contention is that the historical and ideological contexts were shaped by hegemonic relationships especially those engendered by imperialism. I also contend that the engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics has always been a defining feature of the Bible and that it spilled over into its translations. In the present context hegemonic relationships engendered by British imperialism constitute the politics of translation. I argue that decisions and choices which initiate the translational act, especially those which coincide with an epistemological shift are of great significance from a historical perspective. The poetics of the translational act in the case of Scripture translation in Kerala was determined by the politics of translation. If one deconstructs the original/copy binary there exists no hierarchy between a text and its translation and the latter becomes an extension of the text and hence integral to its poetics. The decisions and choices involved in a translational act are considered part of the poetics of the text.

I would describe my study as Janus faced - it has two faces, one turned toward translation and the other toward history. It looks at translation but perceives it as the product of a specific historical context; more as a historical event than as a mere literary or linguistic one. I mainly seek to describe and theorize the historical context which engendered the earliest translations of the Bible into Malayalam, the Buchanan Version of 1811.

The Bible's interaction with imperialism is of long vintage. I think it would be in the fitness of things to begin by exploring how, before it became a colonial artefact, along with a whole lot of seemingly innocuous texts, the Bible was the record of Jewish interaction with various imperialisms of the Levant. This is essential to an understanding of the baggage it carries. An attempt to trace the history of the Bible in India also forms part of the first section. It should be noted that this is an attempt to trace the history of the Bible in India and not Christianity as such.

An enquiry into the history of the Bible in India is also an enquiry into the claim of Buchanan's Bible to be designated the first translation of the Bible into Malayalam. It also leads one to

the realization that a major linguistic enterprise like a translation of the Bible cannot materialize out of a linguistic vacuum. The antecedents of the first Malayalam translation lie in the activities of the Carmelite missionaries who came to Kerala in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and wrote grammars, dictionaries and lexicons of Malayalam. The second section gives a brief account of their literary and linguistic activities which form part of an orientalist discourse formation.

The third section explores the significance of the Buchanan Version of 1811 (the first translation of the Bible into Malayalam) in the wider context of imperialism which has generally received scant attention. The section brings to light the imperial design, its execution and reception. The Buchanan Version bestowed a homegrown liturgical language on the Syrian Jacobite Church in Kerala but hardly anything else.

The fourth and final section ties up the loose ends, so to speak. It seeks to situate the earliest translations in a historical context and illustrate how they were conceived of as significant tools of colonial domination.

Section I

> . . . of making many books there is no end.
>
> Ecclesiastes12:12.

Christ, it is said, spoke to his disciples who came from the riffraff of the Jewish society of his time, in Aramaic. But when his words came to be recorded sometime between the first and second centuries CE they were in Greek, thereby conferring a basic translated status on the New Testament. Interestingly enough, both languages were imperial legacies, the results of Jewish encounters with two major imperialisms of the Mediterranean world. The Bible's involvement with hegemonic domination thus goes a long way back in history. The present study seeks to illustrate how the two earliest translations of the Bible into Malayalam, belonging as they do to a period of epistemological shift, were shaped by the ideological and hegemonic contexts in which they were made. I seek to prove that almost all major

translations of the Bible were made at such historical junctures and that in Bible translation the poetics of translation has always been determined by its politics.

The Bible is the Book. The word actually has a very interesting history from an etymological perspective. It goes far back in time to the Phoenicians in the second millennium before Christ and is inextricably linked to trade and commerce in the ancient world. Intrepid sailors, the Phoenicians made their port Byblos the greatest papyrus market of the ancient world and so successful were they that the name of the port became synonymous with the product. The Greeks adopted the term as a masculine singular noun *biblos* which also had a neuter diminutive *biblion* ("a little book") whose plural was *biblia*. In fact, the New Testament, in its Greek original, begins with the word *biblos*. Latin adopted *biblia* as a Greek loan word and turned it into a feminine singular some time during the Middle-Ages. "The singularity of the expression 'the Bible,'" say Riches in *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction*, "conceals a sense of plurality in its etymological roots" (31).

In fact it conceals far more than that. For one thing it obscures not only the plurality in its etymological roots but also in its form and content. For another it downplays the engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics. Though the word means "the book," the Bible is an ancient collection of texts in which one recognizes the hand of about forty authors, the cadence of different narrative styles and the stamp of diverse historical periods. One might even call it a motley collection of books, if the term motley could be applied to books. The Bible speaks to us in many voices. Commenting on the varying nature of the texts, Riches says:

> Those who attribute a monolithic status to the Bible, like Daniel-Rops, tend to look for the underlying unity in the apparent haphazardness. He quotes Paul Valery's observation that western civilization rests on three foundations: Greek intellectual curiosity, Roman order and Judaeo-Christian spirituality (2) and adds, "to regard the Bible as a collection of heterogeneous texts ranging from cooking recipes to the highest mystical speculation is to condemn oneself to complete incomprehension"(33).

To be intrigued by the heterogeneous, polyphonic nature of the Bible is not to deny what Daniel-Rops calls the "grand idea binding all these diverse books together" (33). The Bible does have a unity but it is a carefully constructed one and is the result of a continuous engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics, right from composition and compilation to canon formation and later, translation. Another common misconception that the monolithic appearance of this collection of texts has engendered is the notion of a biblical time during which the texts of the Old Testament / Hebrew canon were composed first, with the texts of the New Testament following close upon their heels. Actually a period of roughly 500 years (called formerly the Inter-testamental period) intervenes between the two.

The most fundamental division in the Bible is the one that divides it into two unequal parts - the Old and the New Testaments each consisting of a number of books. The number of books in the Testaments, especially in the Old Testament, raises the question of canonicity. Canon again is a very old word going back to a Semitic root. According to Daniel-Rops "the word is Greek but probably borrowed from some Semitic tongue; in Hebrew *qaneh* means 'a measuring rod' " (38). Sanders in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* lists the cognates of *qaneh* in other Semitic tongues: Assyrian *qanu*, Akkadian *qin,* Ugaritic *qn* and traces its semantic evolution from its original meaning of "reed" and to something "firm and straight" and then, by a metaphorical application to "a model," "standard," "paradigm" etc. (837-38). It prefigures, in a manner of speaking, the Bible's own evolution in later times. From a fairly innocuous primary meaning the word evolved into secondary connotations of "judgmental," "authentic" etc. which invariably presuppose a hierarchical or even hegemonic relationship. At first employed by Alexandrian grammarians for the corpus of classical works worthy of emulation and also by classical writers like Cicero and Pliny in much the same sense, the fathers of the Church used the word to denote anything fundamental to religion.

Before we go into the deeper and murkier waters of canon formation, i.e. the decisions involving the canonical nature of particular books and who made them, let's look at the shape

of the canon as it exists now with regard to the major Semitic religions of Judaism and Christianity. They do not share the same canon either in the number of books or their arrangement. The Scripture for the Jews consists of thirty eight books of the Old Testament with a basic tripartite division into Torah, Prophets and Writings. The Jews do not recognize the New Testament. There was at one time a Jewish tradition which reduced–artificially, it has been generally suggested–the number of books to twenty two, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The historicity of a properly drawn up list is not in question, avers Daniel-Rops, because the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE) attests the existence of such a list in the time of Christ (31). There had been far more than thirty eight texts in circulation among early Jewish communities. Apparently the more orthodox among the Jews-whose number far exceeded that of the more liberal, hellenizing Jews-were unwilling to accept those not written in the Hebrew tongue, thus privileging the ancient one.

When the Greek version of the Old Testament and later the pre-Reformation Christian canon, chose not to follow the arrangement of the books in the Hebrew canon which more accurately reflected the historical development of the canon, and adopted what Barton calls "a roughly thematic arrangement", with "all 'historical' books at the beginning, the 'wisdom' or teaching books such as Proverbs in the middle, and the prophetic books (including Daniel) at the end" (1:6) and also when Jews rejected the Septuagint, the celebrated pre-Christian translation of the Old Testament made for hellenized Jews in Egypt, in favour of the much inferior one by Aquila, political exigencies seem to have guided the decisions.

Quoting Metzger, Sanders says that traditionally canon has been viewed as both an authoritative collection of books with respect to shape-*norma normata* and a collection of authoritative books with respect to function-*norma normans* (1:839). The two basic uses of the canon, namely, the shape of a limited body of sacred literature and its function, have come to be used with much wider connotation: shape implies much more than the number and order of books in a canon and function implies much more than how a community used its canon. Both the terms embrace

"consideration of pre- and proto- canonical literary and historical factors as well as factors resulting from eventual stabilization of text and canon" (1:839). What this implies is that a number of choices and decisions were involved in the formation of the canon and that quite a few of them were political in nature.

No historical account of canon formation exists. There are allusions to it in the apocrypha (2 Macc. 2:13-15 and 2 Esdras 14:19-48) but they are purely legendary. The biblical canon, from its beginnings in the more obscure periods of Jewish history to the time when it came to be stabilized in the early centuries of the Common Era, is also the record of the Jewish people's encounter with various imperialisms of the Levant. The hegemonic relationships came into play not only in fixing the shape and function of the canon (as when books which contained incendiary visions of cosmic battles or defeat of the enemies of the Jews find no place in the canon) but also in the languages in which the canon came to be recorded first. The foundational languages are Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New. When the Old Testament canon was in the process of collection, Jews spoke Hebrew as their mother tongue. But after the Jews' encounter with Babylonian imperialism in the sixth century BCE (when the Old Testament canon was being stabilized) Aramaic began to replace Hebrew. Aramaic and Hebrew belong to the Semitic family of languages (along with Arabic, Ethiopic and ancient Akkadian) but are not mutually comprehensible. Aramaic was the language of nomadic tribes who began to penetrate into West Asia around 1000 BCE. The Arameans never founded an empire but only petty kingdoms but their language became the lingua franca successively of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires (Luke 17).

The fluidity on the linguistic front also ensured that the process of collection and the process of translation went almost hand in hand. The destruction of First Temple Judaism and the subsequent deportation to Babylon in the sixth century BCE played an important role in making Judaism a scriptural religion. Deprived of their temple worship, the Jews came to depend on the Scripture to preserve their identity. Public readings of the Law

which had by then become more or less stabilized became central to their religious practice. There had been Jewish communities in Egypt at the time of the Babylonian exile. When, in the following century, under Persian rule, the Jews were allowed to return to their home land, not all the exiles returned to Palestine. A number of them elected to stay back in Mesopotamia, thereby creating a sizeable Jewish community-the Diaspora- in Mesopotamia. But by then the Jews spoke Aramaic, the language of Babylon, rather than Hebrew. And Aramaic, the lingua franca of Babylonian and Persian empires as mentioned earlier, remained the language of the Jews throughout the Second Temple Era. The advent of Hellenism following the conquest of Alexander (331 BCE) only added to the linguistic melting pot. Greek remained the dominant language throughout the Seleucid period and much later which perhaps explains why the earliest Christian writings are in that language.

People down the ages have speculated on the languages that Jesus might have known. The general consensus seems to be that he knew all the major languages in use in his time, speaking Aramaic as his native tongue, using Greek also as the lingua franca, and learning Hebrew in the synagogue as a liturgical language. As a Galilean Jew he must have preached in Aramaic to his people who were not urbane, Hellenized Jews.

Educated Jews probably knew enough Hebrew to understand the Mosaic texts but Palestinian and Mesopotamian Jews and the Jews in the Hellenistic cities needed translations respectively into Aramaic and Greek. This is the point at which the engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics began to spill over into its translations.

The most ancient translations of biblical writings were made into Aramaic probably at the time of the return from the Babylonian exile. They were called *targum*. The custom was for a learned person to read the Torah out aloud and another to provide an Aramaic version at the same time. To begin with, people were discouraged from committing these *targumim* to writing for fear that they might usurp the reverence due only to the original. Thus in the beginning they remained oral. According to Birdsall, by

the end of the Second Commonwealth they had become part of the "exegetical inheritance among the Jews" (6:788). The earlier versions contain more exegetical material than the later.

Next in antiquity is the ancient Greek version popularly known as the *Septuagint* which, again, was necessitated by a linguistic change of habit resulting from hegemonic domination. Tradition has it that it was commissioned by Ptolemy Philadelphus (283-246) who ordered it at the instigation of his librarian Demetrius so that he could know the laws which governed the lives of his Jewish subjects. There is a well known legend about the *Septuagin*t which bestows divine status upon the translation. For all its supposedly divine origin, scholarly opinion is that far from being a miraculously facile work of translation, the *Septuagint* clearly reveals the stamp of many hands of unequal skill. It is not a literal translation but a highly interpretive one, with the translators having taken some liberty with the text itself and with the arrangement of the material. This was done wherever they had an axe to grind. They wanted to make the text acceptable to the more liberal Alexandrine Jews. The pre-eminence of the *Septuagint* was hardly unassailable. Though generally more faithful to the Hebrew original than some of the Aramaic *targums* its acceptance by the early Church fuelled efforts at versions acceptable to the Jews.

The next significant stage in the continual interplay between the poetics and the politics of translation is reached in the Latin translations which began to be made once Rome emerged as the new centre of power. The very first Latin version was made from the Greek Version, interestingly enough, in a colonial context in Roman Africa in the second century CE. Quite a few other translations, followed by revisions, also seem to have been made. The process of successive revision is a commonplace in the history of the Latin Bible. The early translations into Latin are collectively called the "Old Latin Versions" or *Vetus Latina*. The versions were many and the confusion engendered by them so confounding that in the fourth century Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, the most distinguished biblical scholar of the day, to undertake a revision. It is said that he only meant to revise the Psalter, but he seems to have come to the conclusion that his life's mission

was to create an authentic single version out of the various Old Latin Versions. After forty years of hard work when he brought out his version, all it earned him was carping criticism mainly since it did not contain many of the Old Latin clichés which the people, because of their familiarity with the Old Latin versions, expected to find in it. He is said to have died a broken hearted man. In a manner of speaking he was lucky because the politics of translation involved only heart break for him. In later times it would cost the practitioners of Bible translation their lives.

Ironically enough, Jerome's version, whose *raison d'etre* was to put an end to the multiplicity and diversity of texts and to provide an authentic version which would make further attempts at translation redundant, did nothing of the kind. Finally the Council of Trent (1545-63) affixed its official stamp of recognition on the *Vulgata,* a fourth century translation based mostly on Jerome's Version.

Till the advent of papacy various imperialisms of the Levant acted on the Bible. With the emergence of papacy as a kind of imperialism and its endorsement of the *Vulgata,* the slow and steady metamorphosis of the text into an imperial tool begins. For centuries, till the Reformation, the *Vulgata* was to occupy a privileged position in the centre, jealously guarding its pre-eminence and impeding any move to the peripheries. With the rise of Protestantism, the *Vulgata* lost its centrality and the Bible reinvented itself in various European vernaculars. Ironically, these translations which came into being as acts of revolt against hegemonic domination, both with respect to the text and the context, themselves became tools of domination.

It was with the Reformation that the politics of translation gained a very definite edge over the poetics of translation. Once Reformation was under way, translation was no longer an innocuous scholarly pastime and became overtly political. In the past fidelity was the main concern but now it was subversion in myriad guises. Translation became intimately connected with the breakup of feudalism and the emergence of early forms of capitalism. The link between early capitalism and Protestantism is too well documented to be recounted here. The growth of

linguistic nationalism in Europe spawned a number of vernacular versions.

Elisabeth Jay makes a valid observation in "'Now and in England' (Eliot 1968: 50)" anthologized in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology:*

> Viewed from the standpoint of Latin, the universal language of Christendom, the vernacular mainly presented risks of misinterpretation, error, heresy and schisms as the centre lost linguistic control and access to its margins. On these same margins, however, theology in the vernacular started to make itself intelligible to new audiences and encouraged the development of literary genres undreamt of by those who saw the vernacular as merely a vehicle for derivative versions of Latin originals. (50)

English Versions of the Bible exemplify the history of translation during the Reformation. In fact the translation of the Scriptures in English could broadly be divided into two periods on this basis, the Reformation forming a dividing line. Up to the Reformation, we have Old English poets making pretty little paraphrases, glosses and partial translations of the Scripture. The Norman Conquest of 1066 did cause major linguistic upheaval but it did not affect the pre eminent position of Latin as the language of religion. No full-fledged translation of the Bible was ever attempted during the period immediately following. The clergy who themselves had little Latin continued to expound the Bible in Latin to the laity. The early exercises in translation do not form what Lewis calls "a genealogical continuum" (6: 817) with the later printed versions. Meant primarily for the clergy they hardly caused any trouble for the Church.

With Reformation there is a dramatic shift. Wycliffe (1324-1384) has been hailed as the "morning star of the Reformation." He might well have inaugurated the Reformation in England and so earned the sobriquet but the air of serenity and undisturbed calm that it conjures up hardly describes his tumultuous life. He formed a band of itinerant preachers called "lollards" who travelled over England carrying only a staff. He began his work

at about the age of fifty in the village rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire. Before that he was for many years an Oxford scholar and teacher. Wycliffe stirred up the hornet's nest with his highly controversial views on the burning theological questions of the day.

For all his keen intellect, personal integrity and courage, he would have been just another troubled individual had it not been for the work he undertook in the last four years of his life. The Wycliffite Bible was not his work alone. Nor is it indubitably the first English Bible. There are references to authorized English Bibles prior to Wycliffe but their existence has not been conclusively established. Thomas More and Thomas Cranmer (who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533) have both hinted at the existence of earlier versions but Tyndale in his preface to his translation claims that he had no "fore-example" (3). Wycliffe's disciple, Nicolas de Hereford, Chancellor of the Hereford Cathedral, translated most of the Old Testament while another disciple, in fact, his most trusted one, John Purvey, did most of the New. The whole work was finished and thoroughly revised by Purvey. The Black Friars Synod of 1382 condemned Nicolas de Hereford as well as Wycliffe for heresy. Wycliffe died before he could be brought to trial so they dug up his grave, burnt his bones and scattered the ashes on the river Swift. Purvey was arrested and recanted under torture. Translation had indeed become fraught with danger for its practitioners.

Wycliffe made the Bible accessible to the common folk. It would be another century before printing reached the English shore, so the Wycliffite Bible remained in manuscript. He had no access to the Greek version and based his on a none too perfect Latin one. Some of its vigorous phraseology is said to have permeated the later translations.

Tyndale entered the fray when the Reformation was well under way. "The history of the English Bible", says Wild, "is more than the history of the text; it is indeed, a romance" (80). One begs to differ: Tyndale's translation has more the makings of a lurid Hollywood thriller than a romance. Born probably in 1494 in Gloucestershire, and educated at Oxford and later at Cambridge,

Tyndale was ordained sometime in his youth. An unfortunate contretemps with the local clergy while tutoring the children of Sir John Walsh in Gloucestershire convinced him that they as well as the laity stood in need of the scripture in the vernacular. In answer to a "learned man" who exclaimed during the course of an altercation on spiritual matters, that "we were better be without God's law than the Pope's" he is reported to have declared: "I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost" (xii). So he clearly had an agenda, an explicitly political one, which was to guide the future course of his life and which he very well knew ran counter to that of the established church of the day. It was not translation per se that the Church feared but its accessibility to the laity and as such, his venture was risky.

Translation to Tyndale was never an innocuous literary activity in which one dabbled in one's leisure time. It was an act of empowerment and hence inherently political. Unlike Jerome who viewed the translation and interpretation of the Bible differently, favouring simplicity in the former and eschewing it in the latter, Tyndale, distrusted fanciful exegesis: "the scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all . . . where unto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way . . . ." (Tyndale xvii).

His style, deceptively simple and direct, came to exert a lasting influence on almost all later English versions. Between Tyndale's martyrdom in 1536 and the publication of the King James' Version in 1611 five English versions appeared. With the sole exception of the Rheims-Douay version they were all revisions based primarily on Tyndale's version. The only one to leave a lasting imprint was the Coverdale version.

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) had been fired by the ideas of the Reformation while at Cambridge. His career, in the initial stages at least, bid fair to become a repeat performance of his illustrious predecessor's. He was also accused of heresy and had to flee to the continent. He met Tyndale while there and was associated with him for a short while. He was more of an editor

than a translator. Though well-versed in Latin and German, he had no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. He brought out his Bible, based on Tyndale's version and Latin and German ones, on 4th October 1535, a year before Tyndale's martyrdom. The first complete English Bible to be printed, it had a long title: *The Bible : that is, the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into Englishe.* Though Coverdale, prudently perhaps, chose not to proclaim the fact, it was based primarily on Tyndale's version, especially its New Testament. He was also astute enough to dedicate his Bible to Henry VIII, going so far as to invite him to correct, or improve or utterly reject it as he deemed fit. Though alternating between exile and home, he lived to the ripe old age of 81 and died peacefully which was a remarkable thing for Bible translators in those benighted times.

The perils of translation do not seem to have abated for English translators of the Bible even in the year 1537 because John Rogers who brought out the next major version entitled *The Byble, which is all Holy Scripture: in which are contayned the Olde and Newe Testament, truly and purely translated into Englysh by Thomas Matthew,* had to do so under a pseudonym. Rogers was an associate of both Tyndale and Coverdale. His version, a rehash of the Tyndale and the Coverdale ones, proclaimed on its title page, "*Set forth with the kynges most gracious lycence*." But that did not save him from martyrdom under Mary Tudor.

The Authorized Version which appeared in 1611 marks the next stage in the continuing engagement of the poetics of translation with its politics. Though never actually authorized by a royal charter, it came to be called the Authorized Version. It was certainly commissioned by King James who appointed a committee to work on it. Modern scholarship has it that about 90% of the Authorized Version is Tyndale, a debt which was never acknowledged.

The politics of translation acquires a different hue with the King James' Version. On 31st December 1599 Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to the English East India Company. England was emerging as a colonial power. The English Bible was now

required to play a different kind of political role. With the fall of Constantinople, Christianity had become more or less Eurocentric. With the colonizer the Bible began its voyage to the margins. It was in the margins that interesting things happened as the Bible began to speak to new audiences.

Parallel to the Western tradition the relentless march of history as well as Christianity had spawned an equally robust Eastern tradition. Of the ancient Eastern versions, the one which deserves special mention is the Syriac *Peshitta,* (which means "simple") with its roots in the Hebrew original and the Greek-based *Syro-Hexapla*. *Peshitta* is the standard version used in the Syrian churches of Kerala. Its origins are obscure. Most of the books are thought to date from the first to second century CE. The roots of its Pentateuch lie in the *targum* tradition. This is the version which reached the shores of Kerala probably in the fourth century CE and provided the source text, or at least one of the source texts, for the two early Malayalam translations of the Bible in the colonial era.

Given the Bible's vast history of the engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics, any study that attempts to uncover the colonial underpinnings of early translations of the Scripture into Malayalam would be incomplete if it did not trace its pre-colonial history. The general perception is that the Bible began its journey outside Christianity's traditional sphere of influence mainly as the colonizer's tool. R.S. Sugirtharajah begins his exposition of how the Christian Bible has been transmitted, received, appropriated and subverted by the Third World people with the observation that "Along with gunboats, opium, slaves and treaties the Christian Bible became a defining symbol of European expansion" (1). Closer home we have it on the authority of a contemporary Syrian source that the Portuguese, the pioneer colonizers did not "sail anywhere without priests" (Hosten 1. 5: 229). But the history of the Bible in India is in a way unique because it did not arrive in India in its colonial avatar. Christianity, and quite possibly the Bible too, have a long tradition in India. How long is a matter of conjecture as well as contention.

If credence were to be given to the St. Thomas tradition–the belief that the Apostle Thomas brought the Gospel to India in

52 CE and that he was martyred at Mailapur near Chennai– the pre-colonial history of the Bible would be almost coeval with Christianity in its land of origin. The apostolic origin claimed by the Syrian/St. Thomas Christians of Kerala is a historical conundrum that has generated a lot of discussion. Alphonse Mingana, Syriac scholar *par excellence*, in his *Early Spread of Christianity in India* states that almost all scholars of the second half of the nineteenth century have offered a negative verdict on the historicity of the apostolic mission of St. Thomas and confines the tradition to the realms of apocrypha and myth (4). Then he proceeds to discuss two works which represent early twentieth century scholarship on the subject. They are *India and the Apostle Thomas, An Inquiry,* written in 1905 by Medlycott, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Tricomia and *Die Thomas Legende* published seven years later by the Jesuit, J. Dahlmann. The former, considered something of a *tour de force*, represents, in Mingana's words, "the most detailed investigation of the St. Thomas mission" (4) but that does not stop him from dismissing Medlycott with the observation that it was a pity the he did not show the text to a good Syriac scholar before printing it. Mingana adds with unconcealed glee that in 1914 the Indologist Richard Garbe of the Tubingen School had, in "St. Thomas in India," disposed of all the 174 pages of Dahlmann's dissertation and 300 pages of Medlycott in a few short passages.

Richard Garbe concludes his examination of the apostolic origin claimed by Syrian/St.Thomas Christians of Kerala thus:

> The small Christian community in southern India known by the name of St. Thomas Christians consisted first (in the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries) of Persian immigrants; these were joined later by Jews and native Indian members of the Dravidian race. (26).

Though he agrees with the views expressed by Garbe, Mingana does observe that "one should find it difficult to reverse with a single stroke the constant tradition of the Christians to this effect from the second century down to our days"(4). There does not seem to have been any major breakthrough in scholarship on this topic. As recently as 2008, Robert E. Frykenberg, in *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* takes much the same

position as Mingana. Commenting on the historicity of the St. Thomas tradition, he says that “at least in metaphorical terms, the tradition retains canonical status” and adds the following comment in a footnote: “Thomas Christians continue to respond to skeptics that the evidence for Thomas coming to India is as strong as the evidence for Peter coming to Rome. The presence of the Gospel in India, from this perspective, antedates any canon, creed or council in the West” (3).

References to India crop up in early Christian writings but not in Indian sources. There is no account of Christianity in India written by an ancient Indian author. All historical documents relating to early Christianity in India are either of Greek or Syriac origin. Even making allowances for the fact that these writers –who had no particular interest in India–had a very elastic notion of the geographical limits of the country and had a tendency to include regions west of the Indus also in India, there are references which are explicit enough to make one posit the possible existence of the Scripture in India. This section seeks to survey only those which either mention the Scriptures directly or indirectly by referring to the liturgy. According to George Kurukkoor, antiquarian, bibliophile and polyglot scholar par excellence, references to liturgy are indicative of the possession of the Scripture because Christian liturgy originated from the Jewish Scripture-based liturgy.

The earliest reference to the Bible in India is to be found in Eusebius of Caesaria, apologist, biblical exegete and the earliest church historian. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* he talks about a visit which Pantaenus, whom he describes as “a man most distinguished for his learning” made to “the nations of the East.” The visit has been dated shortly before 190 CE. Quoting traditional sources Eusebius states that Pantaenus had his early training in the philosophical principles of the Stoics and that he advanced as far as India. Again quoting tradition he says:

> ὧν εἷς γενόμενος καὶ ὁ Πάνταινος, καὶ εἰς Ἰνδοὺς ἐλθεῖν λέγεται, ἔνθα λόγος εὑρεῖν αὐτὸν προφθάσαν τὴν αὐτοῦ παρουσίαν τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγέλιον παρά τισιν αὐτόθι τὸν Χριστὸν ἐπεγνωκόσιν, οἷς Βαρθολομαῖον τῶν

> ἀποστόλων ἕνα κηρῦξαι αὐτοῖς τε Ἑβραίων γράμμασι τὴν τοῦ Ματθαίου καταλεῖψαι γραφήν, ἣν καὶ σῴζεσθαι εἰς τὸν δηλούμενον χρόνον. ὅ γε μὴν Πάνταινος ἐπὶ πολλοῖς κατορθώμασι τοῦ κατ' Ἀλεξάνδρειαν τελευτῶν ἡγεῖται διδασκαλείου, ζώσῃ φωνῇ καὶ διὰ συγγραμμάτων τοὺς τῶν θείων δογμάτων θησαυροὺς ὑπομνηματιζόμενος. [5. 10. 3.1]

Translation: One of them was Pantaenus and he is said to have gone to the Indians, where it is reported he found, among somebody there who had known Christ, the Gospel according to Matthew which preceded his arrival. Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had announced them and had left the book in Hebrew letters, which even had been preserved up to the above mentioned time. Pantaenus, after many successful things, finally leads the school of Alexandria, explaining the treasures of the divine doctrines with living voice (= orally) and through writings. (my translation)

We find the same details in Hieronymous Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*:

> Hieronym., de ui ill. 36: Pantaenus, Stoicae sectae philosophus, juxta quamdam veterem in Alexandria, consuetudinem ubi a Marco euangelista semper Ecclesiastici fuere Doctores, tantae prudentiae et eruditionis, tam in Scripturis divinis, quam in saeculari litteratura fuit, ut in Indiam quoque rogatus ab illus gentis legatis a Demetrio, Alexandriae episcopo, mitteretur.

Translation: Pantaenus, philospher of the Stoic school, in accordance with an old custom of Alexandria, where since Mark the evangelist there has always been ecclesiastic scholars, was of such wisdom and knowledge both in holy scriptures and in secular literature, that, on the request of legates of that nation, he was sent to India by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria. (my translation)

Jerome says more or less the same thing in his Letter to Magnust too:

> Epistula ad Magnum : Pantaenus Stoicae sectae Philosophus, ob praecipae eruditionis gloriam, a Demetrio Alexandriae Episcopo missus est in Indiam, ut Christum apud Brachmanas et illius gentis philosophos praedicaret.

Translation: Letter to Magnus: Because of the glory of his great knowledge, Pantaenus, philosopher of the Stoic sect, was sent to India by Demetrios the bishop of Alexandria, to preach about Christ to the Brahmins and philosophers. (my translation)

The reference in Eusebius to an early Christian community in possession of a "Hebrew" version of St. Matthew, though intriguing, presents a number of problems. The reference to "Hebrew" can only be taken to signify an Aramaic version. For one thing, alone among the gospels, the one according to Matthew was originally written in Aramaic and it was unlikely that it would have been translated into Hebrew which was by then a dead language. For another, it was customary in those times to use the two terms interchangeably. We find instances of such usage even in the Bible (John 5:2, 19:20). But the reference to St Bartholomew is certainly problematic in that it runs counter to the St. Thomas tradition held by the Syrian Christians and has been hotly contested on many heads. On whether Eusebius got his geography confused and was referring to South Arabia when he talked of "the nations of the East" and "India," scholarly opinion is divided. But Jerome, writing a little later, seems to have got it right when he says, Pantaenus was sent "to preach about Christ to the Brahmans and philosophers of that nation." It is to be noted that it was with the upper and elite echelons of society that the early Church wanted to initiate a dialogue.

Moraes adds a few more details to the story: according to him, it was in response to a request from the church at Kalyan for a scholar to help them in their disputations with the Brahmans that Bishop Demetrios of Alexandria sent Pantaenus to India (45). He also asserts on the authority of Eusebius that the copy of the gospel was in the handwriting of the evangelist himself and that Pantaenus took this copy with him to Alexandria but his assertion is not supported either by the Greek or the Latin versions of Eusebius.

Indirect references, most of them involving various acts of translation and indicative of the possible presence of the Scripture in the country, abound in ancient sources, mainly Syriac. For instance there is Dudi (David), Bishop of Basra, "an eminent doctor", who in the closing years of the third century "left his see and went to India, where he evangelized many people" (Mingana 18). He could hardly have done so without a copy of the Scripture in possession. A far more exciting reference comes from Edessa circa 425 CE when it was emerging as the centre of East Syrian theological study, in the form of a note in a Syriac commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, which says, "This Epistle has been translated from Greek into Syriac by Mar Komai, with the help of Daniel the priest, the Indian" (Firth 21). Apparently Komai began his scholastic life at Edessa with the translation of the works of Aristotle and he was a pioneer in the field of translations from Greek in to Syriac. In Mingana's view it is "gratifying to see that his collaborators were Indian Christians well-versed in the Greek sciences" (27-28). More importantly, adds Mingana, this passage also proves that the ecclesiastical language of the Indian Church was in the beginning of the fifth century Syriac and "not any of the many Indian dialects" (28). To wonder whether Daniel, whom Firth describes as "perhaps the first Indian student of theology known to history,"(21) ever attempted to translate any part of the Scripture into his native tongue would be in the realm of pure speculation but one feels that positing the possible existence of a Syriac version would not be so. Another Syriac scholar of the school of Edessa from the same century, Ma'na, the Bishop of Riwardashir in Persia circa 470, is on record as having sent copies of all the books that he translated from Greek into Syriac to India (Mingana 28). He would hardly have done so unless he was sure of a receptive audience here in India.

Among the indirect references or those indicative of the availability in the country of the Bible, the most important is the account of Cosmas Indicopleustes who, Stephen Neill says in *The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan,* must perhaps be "the least intelligent of all Greek writers" (18). Except for bare details very little is known of him. Even his name is believed by some to be a pseudonym. He is said to have been a Christian merchant of Alexandria. Cosmas, who according to Nagam Ayya

(243) is the first traveller to mention the Syrian Christians, visited some of the countries around the Arabian Sea, including Sri Lanka (which he incidentally calls Taprobane) and the Malabar Coast circa 522 CE. Once he left off his peregrinations, he retired to the life of a monk in the Sinai Peninsula and proceeded to write a book called *Topographia Christiana, or, The Opinion of Christians Concerning the World* sometime around 550 CE to prove, says F.E. Keay in *A History of the Syrian Church in India*, "the strange theory that the world is formed after the pattern of the Jewish Tabernacle, and that the earth, like the table of shewbread, is a rectangular plane, its length being double the breadth" and also to denounce "pagan" philosophers (including Ptolemy) who held that the earth was spherical(21). Though the arguments he advances to prove his proposition are ridiculous in the extreme, his observations about India, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia are generally held to be reliable. He talks, inter alia, about the Syrian Christians:

> Ἐν Ταπροβάνῃ νήσῳ ἐν τῇ ἐσωτέρᾳ Ἰνδίᾳ, ἔνθα τὸ Ἰνδικὸν πέλαγός ἐστι, καὶ Ἐκκλησία χριστιανῶν ἐστιν ἐκεῖ καὶ κληρικοὶ καὶ πιστοί, οὐκ οἶδα δὲ εἰ καὶ περαιτέρω. Ὁμοίως καὶ εἰς τὴν λεγομένην Μαλέ, ἔνθα τὸ πέπερι γίνεται [3.65.1]

Translation: In the Taprobane (Sri Lanka) island in the inner India, where the Indian sea is, there is also a Christian church (= a Christian community) and clerics and faithful**s**, I know not if there are any also beyond. Similarly in the so-called Male (Malabar) in which pepper grows. (my translation)

And after informing his audience of the situation that obtains in the so called Kalliana (where there is a bishop elected from Persia) and in Dioscorides (Socotra–which has Greek speaking colonists settled there by the Ptolemies who ruled after Alexander the Macedonian) he goes on to say:

> κληρικοί εἰσιν ἐκ Περσίδος χειροτονούμενοι καὶ πεμπόμενοι ἐν τοῖς αὐτόθι καὶ χριστιανοὶ πλῆθος· ἣν νῆσον παρέπλευσα μέν, οὐ κατῆλθον δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ· συνέτυχον δὲ ἀνδράσι τῶν ἐκεῖ ἑλληνιστὶ λαλοῦσιν, ἐλθοῦσιν ἐν τῇ Αἰθιοπίᾳ. Ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ Βάκτροις καὶ Οὔννοις καὶ Πέρσαις καὶ λοιποῖς Ἰνδοῖς καὶ [3.65.10]

> Περσαρμενίοις καὶ Μήδοις καὶ Ἐλαμίταις καὶ πάσῃ τῇ χώρᾳ Περσίδος καὶ ἐκκλησίαι ἄπειροι καὶ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ χριστιανοὶ λαοὶ πάμπολλοι καὶ μάρτυρες πολλοὶ καὶ μονάζοντες ἢ συ-χασταί. [3.65.15]

Translation: And there are clerics elected from Persia and sent to the people there and there are many Christians. I sailed by this island, but I didn't land on it. However, I met Greek speaking men from there, when they came to Ethiopia. Similarly among the Bactrians, the Huns, the Persians and the rest of Indians and [3.65.10]

The Persarmenians, the Medes and Elamites and in all the land of Persia there are countless churches (= Christian communities) and bishops and very many Christian people and many martyrs and hermit monks. [3.65.15] (my translation)

The picture that emerges from Cosmas' succinct description is that of thriving Christian communities with clerics, bishops, martyrs and hermit monks. Incidentally, the Greek word that the author uses to denote "elected"– *cheirotonoumenon* – has an interesting semantic history. It is derived from *cheir* meaning "hand" and initially denoted "to raise one's hand to vote." This is a word that early Christianity borrowed, along with *ecclesia* and a few others, from Greek democratic process. But whether the word can be taken to indicate the republican ecclesial system reputed to have been prevalent in the early Christian communities is unsure, because, according to Federico De Romanis, Professor of History, University of Rome, author of books on Indo–Roman trade, and a scholar in Greek and Latin, the word had come to denote a whole range of possibilities by Cosmas' time.

References of a similar nature to a Christian community in India continue through the middle ages. Travellers' accounts which form an important source of information generally fall into two categories: those by clerics and those by the laity. Unfortunately almost all of them concern themselves with the more mundane aspects of Christianity in India and are at best vague or at worst silent on the central text which formed the spiritual foundation of the church in India. For instance, Marco Polo, a lay traveller who visited India on his way to China in

1288 and also on his way back in 1292, talks about "a certain little town" where he was shown the tomb reputed to be of St. Thomas, a place of pilgrimage for Christians and Muslims alike but does not offer much information about the ecclesial set up of the church (Firth 42).

Travelogues by clerics are a medieval staple since missionary activity to India and the Far East, especially to China, received a fillip after the terrifying incursions that the Mongols made into Eastern Europe in the thirteenth century. The Western Church was anxious to woo the Mongol Khans. Though the mission seems to have been actuated more by a desire to save its skin than by any overwhelming desire to save the souls of the Mongols, the Church sent its emissaries to China, some of whom sojourned in India and left interesting accounts of the life and manners of the people here. Thus missionary activity in India may be said to be of long vintage. While it is true that these references also do not offer proof that these early Christian communities did possess the Scripture, it stands to reason that the kind of ecclesiastical organization hinted at in the passages cannot possibly exist without a central text.

This is especially so when we consider the case of John of Monte Corvino, who founded the earliest Roman Catholic mission in China in the last decades of the thirteenth century. In a letter he wrote to Pope Nicholas IV from China, which has been hailed as one of the foundational sources not only of church history but also of global history, he says:

I, Friar John of Monte Corvino, of the order of Friar Minor [Franciscans] departed from Tauris, a city of the Persians, in the year of the Lord 1291 and proceeded to India. And I remained in the country of India, wherein stands the church of St. Thomas the Apostle, for thirteen months, and in that region baptized in different places about hundred persons. (n. page)

From India he proceeded to China and translated the New Testament and the Psalter into Chinese but he does not seem to have undertaken or initiated a translation of the Scripture during his stay in India. This could possibly have been due to the fact that some version of the Scripture was already available here.

Monte Corvino was followed by Jourdain Catalani de Severac who specifically came to work in India in 1321 and he returned to Rome in 1324 to report on his mission and the state of Christianity in India. The Pope appointed him Bishop of Kollam and he returned to India in 1330. No records of his career subsequent to his visit to Rome exist. His earlier writings consist of two letters and a short description of his eastern sojourn called *Mirabilia Descripta* in which he says that "in this India . . . there is a scattered people, one here, another there, who call themselves Christians, but are not so, nor have they baptism, nor do they know anything about the faith: nay, they believe St. Thomas the Great to be Christ" (Firth 40).

Odoric of Pordenone, a Franciscan friar who visited India circa 1324 on his way to China is hardly more charitable towards the Syrian Christians: he describes them as "vile and pestilential" Nestorians (Firth 41). John de Marignolli, another fourteenth century Franciscan witness to the state of Christianity in India, according to Neill was the "the oddest of them all" (25). He visited Quilon around the year 1348 on his way back from China and stayed there "to teach the holy law" (Firth 41). How he taught the holy law without recourse to a text we are not told but we do have it on his authority that it was the Christians of St. Thomas who were "the proprietors of pepper" and not the "Saracens" (Firth 41). The fortunes of the Syrian Christians seem to have picked up since Odoric's time, because Marignolli says that they are the masters of the public weighing office and as Pope's legate he received every month a hundred gold fanams, and a thousand when he left (Firth 41).

Neill recounts how Marignolli's account came to light through the strangest of coincidences. On his return, the Emperor Charles IV entrusted him with the task of writing the chronicles of Bohemia. In the middle of this boring tome Marignolli surreptitiously inserted a lively account of his sojourn in India. "Five centuries later," says Neill, "some industrious bookworm, undeterred by weariness, read the chronicles and found in them unexpectedly this firsthand information about medieval India. Since that time, John has found his place in every account of the Christian church in India" (25).

There are accounts in a similar vein by lay travellers which refer to the Christian community in Kerala and which just stop short of mentioning the text. Around the middle of the fourteenth century a number of factors like the plague in Europe, break-up of the Mongol Empire and the rise of the Xenophobic Ming dynasty in China led to the collapse of the prosperous trade with the distant parts of Asia and a consequent decline in the number of Europeans travelling to India and beyond. The only traveller of note from the era is Niccolò de' Conti who mentions the Syrian Christians and records a visit he made to the shrine of St. Thomas.

An explicit reference to the Bible in Kerala is to be found in a Syriac document from the end of the fifteenth century. In *Kerala Society Papers* the Rev. H. Hosten, S. J. Reproduces this document in two translations both in English, one based on Assemani's Latin version and the other, done by Mingana from Syriac, side by side. In 1504, Thomas, Jaballaha, Jacob, and Denha, "monks of the monastery of St. Eugene in Mesopotamia, and Bishops ordained of the Indies," wrote a letter in Syriac to the Nestorian Patriarch "to report on the number of Christians of his sect in the vast regions of the Indies and announce the arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar"(1.5:225). This letter is preceded in Assemani's *Bibliotheca Orientalis* by a short history of the same bishops and their companions from the year 1490. The document is mainly concerned with a journey that "three believing Christian men" from "the remote countries of India" made to the Catholicos Mar Simeon, Patriarch of the East, "in order to bring bishops to their countries" (226). One person having died on the way, only two of them reached the Catholicos alive. The Catholicos found these men– George and Joseph by name– "well instructed" (226). The positive comment on the intellectual attainment of the Malabar clergy is intriguing because it runs counter to the laments on the secular and spiritual ignorance of Indian Christians that we find in the writings of European evangelists of the times. (Joseph, because of the account he left of this and his later travels, became well-known in history as Joseph the Indian.) After having ordained them priests, he sent them off to the monastery of St. Eugenius where they were asked to select two monks. The men thus chosen were both named Joseph. The

Catholicos named one Thomas and the other John and ordained them both bishops. The four of them managed to reach India alive where "the faithful were greatly pleased with them and went to meet them joyfully with Gospel, Cross, thurible and candles" (1.5:226). The gospel mentioned here would most probably have been the Syriac *Peshitta.*

What makes the letter fascinating to the historian is of course not the reference to the Bible but the account of the early cordial relations between the St. Thomas Christians and the Portuguese: "Let it be also known to you O Fathers, that the king of the Christians of the West, *who are the Franks our brethren*, [emphasis added] sent to this country powerful ships, and they were a whole year on the sea before they reached us" (229).

The Portuguese for their part were, from the beginning, Mundadan says in *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, "not a little puzzled by the particular pattern of Christian life of the St. Thomas Christians" (180). The words of people like Father Carneiro, a Portuguese Jesuit, who about the middle of the sixteenth century told the St. Thomas Christians: "both you and we hold to the same faith; yet difference of customs matters little" carried little weight and matters came to a head when the Portuguese insisted that the St. Thomas Christians conform to Latin rites and condemned many of their practices as heretical, schismatic or downright superstitious (Mundadan 181).

Soon the "Franks our brethren" who came to India armed with a papal bull which bestowed upon them suzerainty –the so-called *padroado*– over all lands discovered or undiscovered and not already under Christian rule to the east of a line that Pope Alexander VI drew on the map of the Atlantic Ocean south of the Azores island, began to devote themselves mainly to weeding out, by hook or by crook, what they perceived as Nestorian practices in the Syrian Church. This they sought to achieve by the colonization of rituals. The process culminated in the Synod of Diamper in 1599. Tisserant in his *Eastern Christianity in India* has characterized the year as "a fateful date and one of the darkest in the history of the relations between Latins and

Orientals" (Firth 89). Translation of the Scripture had no place in their scheme. One need only look at the rather rough and ready methods St Francis Xavier employed in proselytizing for the point to be driven home. In one of his letters he describes his *modus operandi* thus:

> I sought out men who had an understanding of my Portuguese as well as of their own Tamil. Then after many days and meetings, we got the prayers into Tamil . . . After that we set forth the Creed, the Commandments, the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Salve Regina and the Confiteor in the same language. I then learned the translated formulae by heart and ,taking a bell, went ringing it right through the town to collect as many children and adults as I could. (Firth 59)

The Portuguese definitely had a different take on the connection between language, conversion and colonization. They had no clue as to how to deal with Syriac (or the Chaldean as they called it), the liturgical language of the St. Thomas Christians. An MS letter written in 1567 by the Jesuit priest Melchior Nunes Barreto about the necessity of having some Jesuit priests instructed in Syriac, quoted by Mundadan, succinctly sums up the Portuguese attitude to the language:

> as all these people (of Malabar, Socotra and Persia) have their divine things in the Chaldean language and not in any other, they give almost no credit nor any devotion nor any authority to all the doctrine given to them except covered in Chaldean. This excessive devotion to the Chaldean language does great harm to them, for given the fact that they possess some errors very perilous to their salvation we cannot help them out because of the little credit they give to our Latin literature . . . (160).

Even as late as 1597, Alexis de Menezes, the key figure in the Synod at Diamper, writes that the Jesuit whom he was hoping to get appointed as the bishop of the Syrian diocese was to deprive the Syrians of "all the heretical books that they possess" and that he ". . . be instructed to extinguish little by little the Syrian language, which is not natural. His priests should learn the Latin

language, because the Syriac language is a channel through which all that heresy flows. A good administrator ought to replace Syriac by Latin" (Firth 82).

Their efforts to suppress the language having proved futile, they came to devise an ingenious, two pronged plan to subvert it. This was by having Jesuits become proficient in the Syriac language first and then using that very proficiency to subvert the texts by replacing their contents with those of the Latin texts. The texts were Syriac but their contents were Latin. Thus many Latin texts came to be translated into Syriac under the aegis of the Portuguese, but apart from translating the decrees of Diamper into Malayalam the Portuguese do not seem to have thought of translating either the Scripture or liturgy from Latin into Malayalam. Had they thought in terms of appropriating and adapting the linguistic heritage of the St. Thomas Christians to serve their ends the history of the Portuguese empire in India would have been quite different.

The sources cited so far have mostly dealt with the text in isolation. They have been pointers to the possible availability of the source text in this country and deal with the text in isolation rather than in the context of translation. The first person to record the existence of a central text– a Syriac *Peshitta* version– which could possibly serve as a source language text for a Malayalam version was Jacob Canter Visscher who spent five years (1717-23) in Kochi as chaplain to the VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*)–literally "The United East India Company"–or the Dutch East India Company. With Visscher there is a quantum jump. This was because he realized the full possibility of the Syriac *Peshitta* version, even going so far as to predict for the translation a stellar role in establishing a Dutch colony in Kerala.

While in Kochi Visscher set himself to observe "the manners and customs of the people, their laws, rites and ceremonies, the description of their kingdoms, as well as their origin and their modes of government, and other similar subjects" (Drury n. pag.) These he painstakingly recorded in a series of letters to various persons back home in Holland. He kept a copy of each for himself evidently with the intention of publishing them at

a future date. They were collected and published posthumously by his brother C. T. Visscher in 1743. This volume would have been forgotten had it not fallen serendipitously into the hands of another stereotypical colonial gentleman Major Heber Drury who was the Assistant Resident in Travancore and Cochin in 1860. He had it faithfully translated into English under his personal supervision. In the preface Drury remarks that the Dutch are "laborious writers and compilers at home and abroad" (3). Visscher's letters bear testimony to his observation.

The letter XVI titled "Description of the St. Thomas Christians-Their Priests-means of bringing them back to the right way-their antiquity, and history" contains Visscher's remarkable blue print for colonizing the country by means of evangelization through Scripture translation (Padmanabha Menon 40).

Many of the rhetorical tropes that would later infuse British colonial writings on Christianity in India infuse his writings also. The doctrinal deficiency of the St Thomas Christians is a leitmotif in both missionary and medieval travel discourses. Visscher's close scrutiny reveals that they are "Christians rather in name than in reality" (40). He does not feel that it would be "impractical to bring them over into the right way by suitable measures." But from a logistical point of view a chaplain whose sphere of activity was confined to the town of Cochin could not accomplish the task "for these people dwell in the mountains and are rarely seen except when they come into procure necessaries" (43). This notion of a beleaguered community of Christians in need of succor is another trope that would later be perfected under Resident Munro's aegis in Travancore. The brief historical account of the language that follows these observations, though inaccurate, proves that Visscher had taken his design seriously. An indispensable prerequisite would be a knowledge of their language which, he feels, would prove to be a great obstacle because it is "very difficult, and requires a man's entire devotion to it, having a great abundance of words and letters, of the latter no less than fifty –one." Two or three young students of Divinity, "well instructed in the Asiatic tongue," should acquire an adequate knowledge of the native language to use it in their

preaching by residing among the native Christians and by having constant intercourse with them. Then he reveals the *raison d' etre* of the whole exercise: "Perhaps too, *the Company's interests might really be furthered by the course suggested;* [emphasis added] seeing that these people, besides being numerous, are generally speaking of a martial turn; not to mention that the principal pepper merchants who supply the Company, are to be found among them" (43).

Visscher's letter is important in that it shows how the colonizer begins to perceive the link between hegemonic domination and language and because it envisions translation as the colonizer's tool.

It was left to the British to bring this plan to fruition. Among the MSS that Claudius Buchanan donated to the University Library at Cambridge between 1806 and 1809 was an MS copy of the *Peshitta* Bible. Christened the "Buchanan Bible" it is, in Burkitt's words "a large folio Bible in two volumes, written on vellum". This once handsome Codex was presented to Buchanan in 1806 by Mar Dionysius VI "at Cadanate(sic) in Travancore"(1.1:42). Though Mar Dionysius told Buchanan that the MS had been with St. Thomas Christians for a thousand years or more, from the handwriting, the Estrangela of Tur'-Abdin, Burkitt thinks it may safely be dated in the twelfth century.

Colonization is as much about language as about anything else, involving as it does, all kinds of linguistic activity: news papers, letters, journals, diaries, translations, manuals, gazetteers, chronicles and so on. Even the Portuguese, who bungled in their attempts to colonize India, left a large collection of documents about India. The British were better able to consolidate their position as colonizers because they harnessed the power of language best. Later Munro would express much the same sentiments expressed by Visscher in much the same language. Though Bible translation into Malayalam began only in the nineteenth century, its roots are to be found in the resurgent linguistic nationalism that swept Europe in the wake of the Reformation and had resulted in translations of the Bible into the vernaculars of the continent.

Section II

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight

Matthew 3:3

It was in 1811 that the first Malayalam Bible – a version containing the four Gospels – appeared. Called variously the Buchanan Bible, because it was commissioned by Claudius Buchanan, the Ramban Bible, after its chief translator, Philippose Ramban and the Courier Bible after the press where it was printed, it was the work of a group of local people led by an Anglican missionary. While it is true that Bible translation has always been a particularly Protestant preserve, a major linguistic enterprise like a translation of the Bible cannot materialize out of a linguistic vacuum. The way it is sometimes presented, it looks as if Claudius Buchanan came to Kerala, waved a magic wand, and caused a Malayalam Bible to appear out of the blue. The truth is far less romantic, much more complicated and well nigh impossible to locate.

While no one can gainsay the steady and systematic work done by Catholic missionaries especially from the eighteenth century onward, the impact of their efforts on the language is difficult to assess either on a synchronic or on a diachronic plane. In fact, John Ochanthuruth, in his introduction to *Missionarimarude Sahitya Sevanangal* by the Rev. John Francis Pallath (which sums up meticulously the literary and linguistic activities of missionaries in Kerala), bemoans the fact that Latin texts like *Nomenclator Missionariorum* and *Hierarchica Carmelitana* which would help document the missionary enterprise in Kerala in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are not available either in an English or a Malayalam version (2). Though it is generally agreed that the discursive formation of the early missionary enterprise in Kerala deserves to be explored in detail, the corpus of texts produced by it has not received the critical attention it deserves. Mainly produced for consumption in the West, the texts lie in the libraries and repositories of Vatican, and are not easily accessible to the lay researcher at the best of times. Besides, a considerable body of their writings is thought to have perished when the Dutch

conquered Kochi (1663) and Tipu's army overran Kodungallur (1789). The researcher's difficulties are also compounded by the missionary writers' predilection for anonymity.

The present section attempts to survey the period which is commonly perceived as some kind of a run up or preparatory to the appearance of the first Malayalam Bible. Missionary activity in Kerala goes a long way back but the period in question begins sometime after the arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala i.e. with the establishment of the first seminary in Kerala in 1541 by Vincent de Lagos, a Portuguese Franciscan friar at Kodungallur. (1541 is the date given by most sources though Antonio de Gouvea a Portuguese Friar, who published his *Jornada do Arcebispo*, an account of his sojourn in Malabar in 1606, gives the year 1546). The period prior to the arrival of the Portuguese has been excluded mainly for two reasons: one, the early missionaries do not seem to have occupied themselves with literary or linguistic activities, and even if they did, they have left no evidence of it; two, the period of early missionary activity is too far away in time to have helped in standardizing or fixing the language, which is a claim often made (and hotly contested too) on behalf of the missionary enterprise in Kerala in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Closer scrutiny reveals two distinct phases: a first phase lasting up to the eighteenth century during which the missionaries occupy themselves with establishing seminaries and printing presses and a second phase which starts roughly from eighteenth century and lasts well into the nineteenth when the missionaries engage themselves in a range of activities which in the latter half of the twentieth would come to be recognized as Orientalist with the publication of Edward W.Said's *magnum opus.*

The avowed aim of the first seminary was to train clergy to meet the requirements of the Syrian churches. Gouvea, relates that "the Religious" - probably the Portuguese Franciscans - who first worked among the native Christians were moved by "their ignorance and errors" and one of them,

Friar Vincent . . . went & stationed at Cranganore; & thence went frequently to preach in their churches . . . But seeing that no labours of this nature were capable of withdrawing them from

their errors, he founded . . . a college in the year 1546 in which were brought up & taught the sons of these Christians . . . (K. N. Daniel 2.3: 328-29).

The fact is, notwithstanding the strictures on the so-called doctrinal deficiency of the Syrian Christians (which, as pointed out in the previous chapter, is a staple of early travel and missionary writings alike) the Syrians had always had a system – however flawed or imperfect that might appear to the normative point of view of Western missionaries– in place for training both its clergy and its laity. In *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Mundadan observes, apropos the education and training of clergy:

> The moulding of the clergy by discipline was not, of course, kept at a high standard. Ordinary priests learned only to read (and perhaps understand) Syriac, the liturgical language, just enough to perform the different functions attached to their office . . . . The young clerics received instruction from elderly priests of the same parish. (150)

But he makes it clear that this was only the general situation and that there is evidence to show that there were "specialized people and educational centres for the training of the clergy, perhaps for only a select few". Mundadan quotes Joseph the Indian on the topic: "They [the Christians of St. Thomas] have excellent doctors; study of the letters; they have the book of the prophets just as we . . ." (150).

Joseph the Indian's knowledge of Portuguese was sketchy and there are indications in the text that Joseph and his interlocutor were not in perfect communication all the time but that diminishes neither the importance nor the truth of his account. In this case his testimony is supported by the account of Gouvea who says that at the age of eight boys began their training under a *panikker* who instructed them in reading, writing and warfare (Mundadan 150).

The first attempt was not a success. The Portuguese had underestimated the force of tradition. The community, though they did not demur at sending their children to the seminary at

Cranganore [Kodungallur] to be educated, refused to reap any benefit, as Gouvea puts it, "neither from the teaching of their sons nor from their sacred ministry" and "none of them brought up in the college in the Latin rite, was allowed to officiate in their churches, nor even to live there." He ends his description thus on a note of finality: ". . . so that the servant of God did not attain his end in this respect" (Daniel 329). Obviously the Syrian Christians did not take very kindly to the Latinization of their Church.

Gouvea makes no bones about the true purpose behind the establishment of the seminary. The sons of the Syrian Christians were "trained in the literature & customs of the Roman church, & ordained priests" so that "they might preach the true doctrine to their own people, & by this means the people would throw off their errors, & render obedience to the church of Rome" (Daniel 329).

Thus the establishment of the seminary at Kodungallur was part of a Portuguese strategy to establish and maintain control. It was in fact a case of establishing hegemony in the true Gramscian sense of the term – of employing a voluntary and non-coercive institution belonging strictly to the realm of the "private" to manufacture what Gramsci terms "spontaneous" consent "given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group." This consent, he said, is "historically" caused by the "prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci 12). As an attempt at manufacturing consent the Portuguese strategy failed miserably. The Syrian Christians' resistance to this attempt, so unequivocal at first, became subsequently muted due to the exigencies of their situation *vis-à-vis* the pepper trade. The Syrian Christians, masters of the pepper trade, could not afford to alienate the Portuguese who controlled maritime trade to the West. The Portuguese subsequently adopted a policy of accommodation but continued to mount pressure on the Syrian Christians to conform which reached its culmination with the Synod of Diamper. Even after Portuguese power waned in the

wake of Dutch ascendancy, the missionary enterprise in Kerala continued to be centred in seminaries.

The failure of the first attempt led the Portuguese to establish another seminary at Vaipicotta in Chendamangalam near Kodungallur in 1577 on more inclusive lines. There seems to be some confusion regarding the date of its establishment. It is not clear whether they started their residence and the seminary at the same time or, as one finds it in some accounts, they established their residence first and followed it up with the establishment of the seminary later. According to Scaria Zacharia, they built a small church there in 1578 and it was only in 1587 that a full-fledged seminary was built (Thomas 340). Firth gives the date as 1581 and says that the Jesuits, learning from the unhappy experiment of Franciscans at Kodungallur, were careful to teach Syriac language and liturgy and to allow the Syrian mode of dress at their seminary. He also adds in a footnote that the Syriac course was introduced by Francis Roz in 1584 (74). But the Rev. H. Hosten, S. J., quoting MS letters of the Society of Jesus, states that Peter Louis, the first Indian Jesuit, was in 1578 "labouring at Vaipicota (sic), among the Syrians or St. Thomas Christians, his own countrymen" (1.1:47). The statement seems to imply that the Jesuits had an establishment at Vaipicotta in 1578. Zacharia says that in addition to Syriac, Malayalam was taught there as an academic discipline. If indeed it were so, it would be a most remarkable thing in that it predates the introduction of English as an academic discipline in British universities by about three centuries. Archbishop Francis Roz, the right hand man of Archbishop Menezes of the Synod of Diamper fame, who taught for some time there was the first Western missionary to acquire scholarship in Malayalam as well as Syriac in proof of which we have an old Malayalam text called *Rozinte Niyamavali* (1606) written by him. With the establishment of another college at Kochi the city became a centre of Latin learning, comparable, according to Philippus Baldaeus, "with some of the best cities in Europe" (Sreedhara Menon 177).

The seminary at Vaipicotta flourished till the rise of the Protestant Dutch power. Even before Kochi fell to the Dutch in 1663, the Jesuits, foreseeing trouble shifted their seminary to

Ambazhakaad. They built in this obscure little village, thirteen miles east of Kodungallur, a seminary which in Fr. Shajumon's words, became "a beehive of missionary activities, a university of learning, a centre of printing and publication, a port for ships from the West"(15). The decision to move the seminary to a safe location was eventually vindicated because immediately after their conquest of Kochi the Dutch went on the rampage, which was uncharacteristic for an otherwise liberal and tolerant people. Not content with expelling Roman Catholic clergy from Kochi and its suburbs, they even destroyed the Jesuit Library. Sreedhara Menon quotes French traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier as having seen "the Dutch soldiers and seamen 'tear several of those beautiful volumes to light their tobacco' " (214). But after this initial uncharacteristic mayhem the Dutch allowed the missionaries to return and continue their activities. In fact the most enduring legacy of the Dutch occupation of Kochi – apart from the valuable documents on Kerala history in the form of memoirs and collections of letters left behind by Dutch men like Jacob Canter Visscher, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, Johan Nieuhoff and Philippus Baldaeus – the *Hortus Malabaricus* – is the result of the association between the Dutch and the Carmelites. The Dutch Governor van Rheede, a Carmelite monk called Fr. Matthaeus of St. Joseph, three *Gowda Saraswath* Brahmins, and an *Ezhava* ayurvedic physician by name Itti Achuthan collaborated on the monumental work.

The second phase begins in the eighteenth century with a discernable shift in the mode of operation and extends well into the nineteenth century but the present survey has within its purview only the period up to the first decade of the nineteenth century when the first translation of the Bible into Malayalam was made. This shift was brought about by an intellectual movement beginning to gather momentum in Europe. Most of the Carmelite and Jesuit missionaries who came to Kerala during this period (and even before) had been highly educated men, some like Francis Xavier and Angelos Francis even having been university professors. It is hardly likely that they would remain immune to the intellectual modes sweeping Europe. Unbeknownst to themselves, the Jesuit and Carmelite missionaries who came to

Kerala in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries became part of a much bigger enterprise. The dictionaries they compiled, grammars, histories and the travelogues they wrote – all these contributed to "an anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation" (Said 23, Intro) which was as yet unnamed but received a name with the publication of Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*. In the introduction to *Orientalism* Said states:

> Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point, Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (3, Intro.).

Without exception the missionaries who came to eighteenth century Kerala fit the bill to varying degrees as Orientalists. They could not have made a better job of it had they consciously tried. It is significant that in his introduction Said also acknowledges a connection between "impulses toward the study of the Orient in the eighteenth century" and "the revolution in Biblical studies" (17, Intro).The revolution in Biblical studies also coincided with the discovery of the wondrous antiquity of oriental languages. This outdated the "divine pedigree" of Hebrew (22, Intro.) and led to the emergence of philology, especially Indo-European philology as a major discipline. It was discovered empirically that the "so-called sacred languages [Hebrew, primarily] were neither of primordial antiquity nor of divine provenance" (135, ch.2). The major successes of philology in the eighteenth century, according to Said included "comparative grammar, the reclassification of languages into families and the final rejection of the divine origins of language" (135, ch.2).

European ideas about language have been shaped also by the geographical discoveries of the fifteenth century. Benedict Anderson points out in his *Imagined Communities* that "from the earliest days Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish seamen,

missionaries, merchants and soldiers had for practical reasons – navigation, conversion, commerce and war – gathered word lists of non European languages to be assembled into lexicons" (70). Thus it comes as no surprise that the missionary enterprise in Kerala from the eighteenth century onward was of predominantly linguistic nature. The efforts of Jesuit and Carmelite missionaries who came to Kerala in the early eighteenth century were by no means the scientific comparative study of languages, nor were they mere word lists that the early colonizers made. It was by producing tracts in Latin and Italian on a variety of topics relating to Malabar (as they called the present geographical area of Kerala), by writing grammars, comparative and otherwise, by compiling dictionaries, by attempting the classification of local languages into families that they contributed, albeit unwittingly, to the establishment of Orientalism as a corporate institution and added to the Orientalist discursive formation.

In the eighteenth century which was when the Orientalist discursive formation gathered momentum, the missionary enterprise in Kerala turned toward defining, describing and refining their slice of the Orient. Latin texts like *Nomenclator Missionariorum* and *Hierarchica Carmelitana* are replete with details of the literary and linguistic efforts of the Carmelite missionaries in the eighteenth century. P. J. Thomas and Pallath, both experts on this period, between themselves, provide us with the names of about thirteen missionaries, eight of whom compiled dictionaries, five of whom wrote grammars and at least two of whom wrote philological treatises and thus contributed to what we now recognize as an Orientalist discourse. The lexicographers tried all permutations and combinations of the languages of Malayalam, Sanskrit, Portuguese and Latin beginning with the modest *Malabarico-Latinum Dictionarium* of Angelos Francis and going on to the ambitious *Dictionarium Lusitanico-Samscorda -Latino-Malabaricum* of Stephanus a S S Petro et Paulo, the first multilingual dictionary to be compiled in Kerala. Published, according to Pallath in 1744, and containing only 107 pages it seems to have been a modest affair, as dictionaries go, but the important point is that he performed this singular linguistic feat.

The discursive formation may be said to begin roughly with the activities of Fr. Sebastiani, the first Archbishop of the Malabar Vicariate. Born on 21 February 1623, Hieronymus Sebastiani joined the Carmelite order in 1640 and took the name Joseph a Sancta Maria but later came to be known as Fr. Joseph Sebastiani. He mastered philosophy and theology and was teaching novices in his province when fifty four years after the uneasy truce reached at the Synod of Diamper, he was appointed by Pope Alexander VII to a four member Carmelite mission to Malabar, to deal with a quarrel (actually the events leading to the Koonan Cross Oath but euphemistically referred to as a 'schism' by Catholic commentators) which arose between the Syrian Christians of Kerala on the one hand and Francis Garzia, the third Jesuit Archbishop on the other in 1653. Fr. Sebastiani reached Kochi on 2 February 1657 in the company of Fr. Matthaeus of *Hortus Malabaricus* fame.

Sebastiani confined himself to general topics while his compatriot Fr. Matthaeus pursued botanical studies with single minded devotion and collaborated with Van Rheede in the monumental *Hortus* project. Sebastiani wrote various books in Italian and Latin but two Italian ones, *Prima Speditione All Indie Orientali* and *Seconda Speditione All Indie Orientali* in Italian may be said to be of special interest in an Orientalist context. The former, consisting of three parts describes how the schism arose in Malabar, his journey thither, the places he visited on his way, his efforts to bring the schismatics back to the fold and his return to Rome. The latter describes the second journey to Malabar and contains valuable information on Archdeacon Thoma, leader of the Syrian Christians, and also on his own efforts at reconciliation.

He was followed by Dr. Angelos Francis a Sancta Maria (1650-1712), another Italian Carmelite. Sebastiani only attempted to describe Malabar for the benefit of his countrymen. Of much more importance in an Orientalist context is the name of Angelos Francis who wrote what is considered by many to be the first ever modern grammar of Malayalam. It is with his work that the missionary enterprise in Kerala enters a definitely linguistic phase. He set himself to learn Malayalam soon after

his arrival in Kerala as a Carmelite missionary in January 1676. Whereas the practice in the past had been to acquire working knowledge of the language so as to facilitate missionary work, Angelos acquired real mastery in the language. He wrote *Grammatica Linguae Vulgaris Malabaricae*, which has been hailed by some as the first grammar in Malayalam, to aid the newly arrived missionaries in learning the local language. There is some confusion regarding the language in which Angelos Francis wrote his grammar. Pallath states that Angelos Francis wrote his grammar of Malayalam in Latin but Rev. Fr. George Kurukkoor, who possesses a copy of the book said when interviewed, that he wrote it in Portuguese. Since a *Grammatico Linguae Malabaricae* figures among the list of his works compiled or rather culled by Pallath from *Nomenclator Missionariorum,* it is quite possible that he wrote one in Portuguese and the other probably in Latin. He certainly did not write his grammar in Malayalam for a Malayali audience. Angelos' text was perhaps the first "modern" grammar of Malayalam written for a non-Malayali audience and as such, cannot be thought to have aided in fixing and standardizing the language.

It should be noted that there was hardly any previous effort in the area which he could emulate. There was of course *Leelatilakam*, which provides, according to Rich Freeman, "the only premodern metadiscourse on . . . linguistic relations" (447). Written in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, this text on grammar and rhetoric deals with *manipravalam,* the highly Sanskritized Malayalam used for literary composition. The name itself, a compound of two Sanskrit words, *mani* meaning "ruby" and *pravalam* meaning "coral," signifying Malayalam and Sanskrit respectively, gives some idea about the exalted status of its subject matter. In the *ezhuthupalli*s which catered to the non Brahmin youth and thus formed the backbone of the education system before the advent of the British, pupils were taught the three R's, the *kavyas* and a little bit of astrology and astronomy. (Sreedhara Menon 175). Malayalam does not seem to have figured as a topic of study. Thus it fell to the missionaries to teach the native speakers of the language that Malayalam could constitute a field of study.

What makes the text unique or in a sense modern, is its emphasis on the language as spoken by the common people, indicated by the "*vulgaris*" in the title. In 1846 Benjamin Bailey would make the same distinction between colloquial and literary forms of the language in his *A Dictionary of High and Colloquial Malayalam and English*. Angelos' grammar became the starting point for many later texts of the same ilk by missionaries. It also has the merit of having recognized the umbilical connection – not easily detectable given its vocabulary with a high quotient of Sanskrit words – that Malayalam has with Tamil. This is an early instance of the application of the principles of comparative philology – an emerging field at the time – to Malayalam. Given its objective of getting the message across to the widest possible audience, the preoccupation with the common or garden variety of language in preference to more exotic forms of it was quite natural for the missionary enterprise in Kerala. At the same time a contrary view also prevailed within it. Those who gravitated towards a more literary endeavour criticized Angelos' pioneering text. For instance one of the most scholarly and gifted among the missionaries Fr. Paulinos complained that Angelos' *Grammatica* catered only to colloquial Malayalam and not to the highly Sanskritized literary language. This is hardly surprising as Paulinos is full of admiration for Johann Ernestus Hanxleden (popularly known as Arnos Padre) who wrote his grammar of Malayalam on the assumption that the latter was an offshoot of Sanskrit. This again reflects two basic approaches to language in relation to proselytizing prevalent among the missionaries since Francis Xavier: one privileging the spoken language (as indicated by the *vulgaris* in Angelos' title) and the conversion of the lower castes and the other gravitating towards Sanskrit or at least the high flown literary language with a heavy admixture of Sanskrit and the conversion of the higher castes in an early version of the downward filtration theory, only the context was different.

Fr. Angelos Francis also wrote two books in Malayalam: one on catechism and the other a collection of speeches. In the list of his works the former figures under its Latin title *Catachisimus Doctrinae Christiane in Lingua Malabarica,* but it is much better known by its Malayalam title: "*Nasranikal Okkekkum Ariyendunna*

Othinte Saram." The latter called *Conciones in Lingua Malabarica* is a collection of speeches written in Malayalam. It is not clear whether he ever delivered them to an audience or whether they were a closet affair, penned mainly as a literary exercise. The text would almost certainly have inaugurated a new genre in Malayalam.

Johann Ernestus Hanxleden (1681-1732) or to give him the name by which he came to be widely known in his country of adoption, Arnos Padre, came to Kerala in 1701, at a time when European intellectual circles were waking up to the existence of Sanskrit and its antiquity. Whether he was driven by intellectual curiosity or not, one cannot say on the basis of records available, but he seems to have been the first, in Kerala at least, to employ a technique that was to be perfected by the British, namely that of employing "native Brahmin pundits" in his pursuit of Eastern lore and learning. Given the caste-ridden, inward looking and xenophobic nature of intellectual circles of early eighteenth century Kerala, it would not have been easy for him gain the trust of the local Brahmins, the *nampoothiris*. But he was able to secure the unstinted support of two *nampoothiris* belonging to Angamaly, Kunjan and Krishnan by name and with their help he acquired the kind of mastery over both Sanskrit and Malayalam, which it would be difficult to replicate for one not to the manner born. Everything he did after his arrival, like moving out of the Ambazhakkad seminary where he stayed initially to Velur, near Thrissur which had the reputation of being a centre of Sanskrit learning in those days, was directed toward this purpose.

In a small volume in Latin called *De Manuscriptis Codicibus Indicis R.P. Joannis Earnesti Hanxleden* which grew out of a letter he wrote about the manuscripts left behind by Hanxleden to Fr. Alexius, another Carmelite, who expressed a desire to learn about them, Fr. Paulinos says that the first Sanskrit text that Arnos Padre learned was *Yudhishtira Vijayam*. He went on to study almost all the major Sanskrit texts. Thus it was that he came to write certain Latin tracts on the antiquity of Sanskrit and the relationship in which it stood to the classical languages of Europe. This predated the findings of Sir William Jones the pioneer

Orientalist by at least half a century. In fact Scaria Zacharia claims that the honour of being the first Indologist belongs to Hanxleden. Having done this, he moved on to other interesting (to him) pursuits, never bothering to publish his findings. We have it on the authority of Max Mueller that, had he done so, he would have earned a name for himself among European scholars of the day (Thomas 110). As it is, it was left to Paulinos to draw attention to his work.

Once he had acquired mastery over the two tongues, he turned his attention to creative writing. Curiously enough, his career follows an "adopt-adapt-adept" trajectory. He seems to have felt a need for poetic texts with Christian themes in imitation of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and he applied his considerable genius to adapting Sanskrit literary modes to Christian themes. According to Paulinos he wrote eight poetic texts in all, of which *Chaturantyam* and *Misihacharitram: Puthen Pana* deserve special mention. They are important from a literary historical perspective not as literary curiosities but as poetic texts in their own right. That he reached the 'adept' stage is attested to by the number of anecdotes illustrative of how the rapier thrust of his wit reduced his opponents –invariably scholarly *nampoothiris* – to discomfiture. The classic instance is the one in which a *namputhiri* who addressed him as *Gajamukha-vahana-ripu-nayana* (an oblique reference to his light eyes) was paid back in kind with a *Dasaratha-nandana-sakhi-vadana* (an equally oblique reference to the *namputhiri*'s unprepossessing visage). This and other anecdotes illustrate the subversive use of language to question the monopoly the caste hierarchy of the day had on knowledge in any form. The other Jesuit and Carmelite missionaries, except perhaps for Fr. Paulinos, live mostly in the pages of *Nomenclator Missionariorum*, but Fr. Hanxleden as Arnos Padre lives in legend and lore, in the hearts and lives of people.

Much more significant in the context of Bible translation is the fact that Arnos Padre compiled the first dictionary of Malayalam, even if it was a Malayalam-Portuguese dictionary. Considering that as late as 1582 Richard Mulcaster was making a plaintive appeal that "some well learned and as laborious a man,

wolde gather all the words which we use (sic) in our English tung unto one dictionarie" (qtd. in Crystal 66) and considering also that the first authoritative dictionary in English appeared only in 1755, it is certainly not to the discredit of Malayalam that its first dictionary appeared in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The Malayalam-Portuguese dictionary was called *Vocabularium Malabarico Lusitanum*. No greater testimony of its importance is called for than the fact that the Kerala Sahitya Akademi brought out an edition of the dictionary in 1986, nearly three centuries after it was compiled. He also wrote a grammar of Malayalam in Portuguese, a short fifty five page affair that dealt exclusively with the morphology and syntax of the Sanskritized literary language (or the "high Malayalim (sic)" of Bailey).

Going by the compilation that Pallath made from the two Latin texts mentioned earlier, from the second decade of the eighteenth century, (i.e. following the death of Angelos in 1717 and that of Arnos Padre in 1720), to the arrival of Claudius Buchanan in the first decade of the nineteenth, we have records of hectic missionary activity of a purely linguistic nature. For instance, Dr. John Baptist A Sancta Theresa, an Italian Carmelite like his illustrious predecessor, who became the Archbishop of Verapoly five years after the death of Fr. Angelos Francis, wrote a grammar of Malayalam which *Nomenclator* lists as *Grammatica Malabarica* and compiled a dictionary listed as *Dictionarium Malabaricum*. He also wrote, Pallath says, *Synopsis Doctrinae de Sacramentis* "in the old Malayalam style" on the seven sacraments and a text listed as *Theologia Moralis in Lingua Malabarica* which Pallath describes as a book on ethics. This last could be the first of its kind in Malayalam. Stephanus a S S Petro et Paulo(1692-1767) another Italian Carmelite who reached Verapoly in 1721 compiled a Malayalam–Sanskrit dictionary (*Dictionarium Malabarico-Grandonicum*) the manuscript of which was completed in 1741. Mention has already been made of his multi- lingual dictionary. He also wrote, like most of his successors were to do, books on the fundamentals of Malayalam language and its alphabet called respectively *Linguae Malabaricae Rudimenta* and *Alphabeticum Malabarico Grandonicum.* He also wrote a litany of Mary in the Malayalam language and script. Based on a Latin original and

listed in the *Nomenclator* as *Sanctae Mariae Virginis Litania* it also contained the Latin equivalents. Another effort of his on the same lines was *Hymnus Ave Maris Stella* a book on the famous hymn, giving the text in both Malayalam and Latin.

Fr. Germaniani of St. Octavia, according to Pallath, is another Italian Carmelite, who reached Verapoly in 1733 and achieved another milestone in lexicography with *Diccionario Lucitano Malabarico* which was a 146 page Portuguese dictionary in Malayalam. Pallath, on the basis of his studies in Rome, adds *Rudimenta Linguae Malabarico Samoscardamicae* which despite its misleading title, dealt with the basics of Malayalam and Sanskrit in devanagari script and *Mappa Geographica* showing the ports, rivers and cities between Calicut and Goa also to his achievements.

By the time Clement Pianius, another Italian Carmelite came to Kerala, it seems almost to have become *de rigeur* for missionaries to produce a grammar or dictionary or both. Pianius is credited with having written at least three, not all of which have been published. What makes his *Alphabatum Grandonico Malabaricum sive Samscrudonicum* which was printed at Rome in 1772 notable is the preface in Latin in which he expatiates on the linguistic situation in Kerala. This is a valuable document helpful in understanding the development of the language and the linguistic situation prevailing in Kerala in eighteenth century. In the preface he states that three languages were in use in Kerala at the time of writing, these being Sanskrit, *Grandha* (the *Grandonica* of his title) and *Malayazhma*. Of these, he says, there was very little difference between and *Grandha* and Sanskrit; that Brahmins used the latter for literary composition but employed *Malayazhma* for purposes of ordinary communication.

But it is as the author of *Samkshepavedartham*-or to give it the full Malayalam title, *Nasranikal Okkekkum Ariyendunna Samkshepavedartham*-the first book in Malayalam to be printed, that he won lasting fame. It is called *Compendiosa Legis Explanatio Omnibus Christianis scitu Necessaria* in Latin, a circumstance which earned it the title of *Kumpendi* (a corrupt form of *Compendiosa*) among the Syrian Catholics of Kerala. Pianius wrote the book

while at Verapoly but he took the manuscript to Rome in 1764 where the Polyglot Press of the Vatican came to his rescue. He himself fashioned the Malayalam font and got the book printed in 1772. He returned to Kerala in 1774 with a number of copies of the book and distributed them among Syrian Christians.

Fr Paulinos a Sancta Bartholomaeo holds a special place among the scholar missionaries who contributed in a significant way to the Orientalist discourse formation in Kerala. An Austrian Carmelite, he was deputed to Kerala in 1774 and reached Verapoly the same year. For the next twelve years Verapoly became the centre of his activity. It was a particularly troubled period in the history of the church in Kerala. His role in many of the controversies of the day has been in question but his scholarship which ran more on the lines of Sanskrit and the classical forms of Indian literature has never been in question. He tried his hands at a variety of genres including church history, biography, and travelogue but what is of interest in this context is the grammars of various languages he wrote, the dictionaries he compiled, the maps he made and the various studies on comparative philology he undertook.

Paulinos wrote the first grammar in Sanskrit to be printed. He completed it in 1790 and it was published by the Propaganda at Rome in January 1791 in a single volume along with a historical and critical study of Sanskrit and its antiquity. Called *Sidharoopam* (*Grammatica Samscridamic*a in Latin), it would be some kind of a *tour de forc*e in typography because fonts of Malayalam *Grandha*, Telugu, two kinds of *Nagari*, not to mention the Tibetan script were used for printing it. Since Paulinos favoured the "*manipravala*" style with its heavy admixture of Sanskrit in his Malayalam writings, it was no wonder that he gravitated towards Sanskrit. He followed this fourteen years later with another grammar for which he says he made use of the manuscripts left behind by Hanxleden. Another milestone was achieved in 1799 with the publication of *De Antiquitate et Affinitate Linguae Zendicao Dissertasio* which was a short disquisition running into eighty six pages on the antiquity and mutual affinity of the Sind, Sanskrit and German languages. In 1802 he published another volume

called *De Latini Sermonis Origine et cum Orientalibus Linguae Connectione Dissertatio* on much the same lines but examining the origin of the Latin language and its connection with the Oriental languages. He wrote grammars of Tamil and Chaldean Syriac and compiled a multi -lingual dictionary (Latin, Malayalam and Sanskrit) called *Dictionarium Latino Malabarico Samscrudamicum*. Another significant achievement, in fact a pioneering effort as far as Malayalam was concerned was *Adagia Malabarica*, a collection of proverbs in the language. It listed the proverb in Malayalam followed by its Latin translation in the next line. The first one to be listed is: "Should a proverb prove false, even milk might taste bitter", followed by its Latin translation: "*Si adagio falsitas subesse potest, etiam lac amarum esse potest*".

Last but not least, the name of Robert Drummond needs to be mentioned. We have been witnessing a discourse formation on Orientalist lines meant mostly for consumption by Western missionaries so far. Robert Drummond was a surgeon in the service of the East India Company who also doubled as the Company's Malayalam translator. Published on 16 December, 1799 and called *A Grammar of the Malayalam Language* it represents a new stage in the Orientalist discourse formation. Alone among the array of grammars that we have been looking at so far, this text is the one which is likely to have aided in the first translation of the Bible in 1811. It was even printed at the same press – the Courier in Bombay – where the first Malayalam translation of the Bible was printed. An extant copy of this grammar P. J. Thomas informs us, may be found in the library of the India Office in London.

In the last decades of the eighteenth century the British were beginning to consolidate and legitimize their power in India. One important way in which they sought to do this, as Warren Hastings told the Directors of the East India Company in 1772, was by endeavouring to adapt British regulations to the "Manners and Understanding of the People, and the Exigencies of the Country," adhering as closely as they were able to "their ancient uses and institutions" (Cohn 289). This necessitated the close study of both Sanskrit and the "native" vernaculars in an effort to discover the ancient laws of the country. Thus the

British linguistic enterprise in India was not driven solely by scholarly concerns. Drummond's grammar, expressly written for instructing East India Company officials in Malayalam and dedicated to Jonathan Duncan the Governor of the Company, was part of the British Orientalist project in India.

The text also embodies a smooth transition within the missionary enterprise in Kerala. In his preface Drummond talks about acquiring with difficulty "a sufficient knowledge of the Language" and staying with the Rt. Rev. Louis, the Carmelite Archbishop of Verapoly in August 1799. He found "the worthy prelate" to be "entirely exempt from bigotry or prejudice of any kind," who allowed him access to "all his store of manuscripts with an injunction to render them as subservient as possible to the end of diffusing a knowledge of Malabar tongue among the Honourable Company's representatives" (Thomas 106). It is no wonder then that Drummond's Grammar exhibits unmistakable signs of having been influenced by the *Grammatica* of Angelos Francis which he duly acknowledges in his preface. The topics dealt with — alphabet, gender, number, pronouns, verbs, orthography — faithfully follow the methodology adopted by the Carmelite fathers in writing their texts. The font is the same as the one used for printing *Samkshepavedartham*. The unique feature of the text is the illustrative examples drawn mainly from the *Samkshepavedartham* and printed in Malayalam fonts.

The Carmelites, in a manner of speaking were relinquishing the reins to the Protestants who were to dominate the missionary enterprise in the next century.

Section III

> . . . the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that everyman heard them speak in his own language: Acts 2:6

The Buchanan translation of 1811 is usually studied and placed in a limited historical context as the first translation of the Bible into Malayalam. The discussions involving it usually proceed on the assumption that it was an isolated act of translation of no

particular significance except may be in an ecclesiastical context, or, at a pinch, in a literary historical one. Its significance in the wider context of British imperialism has generally received scant attention. But the fact remains that Claudius Buchanan, who was the prime mover behind it, viewed the translation project as part of a bigger imperialist project.

As Hobsbawm says, the age of the empire was definitely the classic age of massive missionary endeavour and at no time was the missionary enterprise wholly divorced from the imperialist (71). The success of the Lord was definitely a function of imperialist advance. Though the missionary was not exactly the minion of imperialism that he was made out to be in later narratives, he definitely was heir to the same sense of superiority and paternalism that the average imperialist was heir to. J. W. Gladstone relates how in 1895 the missionaries unanimously and vociferously vetoed a suggestion for including an Indian minister in the Travancore District Committee of the London Missionary Society (LMS). They told the Board of Directors that "... we have not amongst our Native ministers or workers any one man of such acknowledged outstanding abilities, character and influence" (185). Not surprisingly, there were points at which the twain—the missionary and the imperialist - met. One of them was a shared perception of the need for perpetuating British rule in India.

Tapan Raychaudhuri in "British Rule in India: An Assessment" describes British policies in India as "*ad hoc* and shifting" (164). In the infancy of their empire, British policies in India were definitely so. Thus in the early days of their Empire in India, there was a time when the British imperialist as well as the missionary, viewed evangelization as good a means of establishing and perpetuating hegemony as any. Since Scripture translation is an important part of Protestant missionary activity, in certain parts of the country (especially in the south) Scripture translation projects came to enjoy some kind of official British patronage in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

What is interesting about this period is the colonizer's attitude towards religion. Evangelization as a means of perpetuating

British rule in India did not enjoy universal approbation among the servants of the East India Company. Kerala, with a sizeable Christian presence seemed a suitable candidate for the experiment. The British actually were not the first to realize the possibility of using native Christian agency in establishing and maintaining hegemony. In the previous section we saw, how, well before the British came on the scene, Visscher drew up a blue print on these lines. Whereas the powers that be in the upper echelons of the Dutch East India Company were too busy fighting one another to pay attention to blue prints for a Dutch empire, Buchanan's translation enterprise in Kerala enjoyed the patronage of the British resident in Travancore, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Macaulay who in Claudius Buchanan's view, was "a gentleman of a highly cultivated mind, of much various learning, and master of several languages." More importantly, he added to these attainments "a quality which does not always accompany them," viz. of being a "friend of Christianity" (*Christian* 133).

That the British envisaged their empire in India as a civilizing mission entrusted to them is a truth universally acknowledged. For Buchanan "civilization" was synonymous with Christianization/evangelization but many, including those within the evangelical fold drew a distinction between the two arguing that the "untutored minds" of the heathens have not been prepared to comprehend "the sublime doctrines of the gospels" (Porter 599). In fact the debate on whether, and particularly, which, of the heathens were capable of being evangelized remained current even in late Victorian Britain and was at times carried to ridiculous extremes as when, in 1887, Isaac Taylor, Canon of York, informed the audience at a Church conference that Christianity being too spiritual and lofty for the lower races, Islam was "eminently adapted to be a civilizing and elevating religion for barbarous tribes." Canon Taylor denigrated missionary enterprise as being connected with the "extension of European trade" which in his view was "the extension of drunkenness and vice and degradation of the people" (Prasch 51). The lower virtues which Islam inculcates, he argued, "are what the lower races can be brought to understand." He also provided a list of evils that the propagation of Islam would supposedly cure: paganism, devil worship, fetishism, cannibalism,

human sacrifice, infanticide, alcohol abuse, "immoderate dances," and "promiscuous intercourse" (Prasch 51).

As the title of his 1805 tract-*Memoir of the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India both as a Means of Perpetuating the Religion among our own Countrymen and as a Foundation for the Ultimate Civilization of the Natives*--amply demonstrates, Bucahanan thought of the ecclesiastical establishment as having twin objectives: one, to perpetuate the Christian religion among his countrymen and the other, to civilize the natives. He was convinced that any extensive establishment for the instruction of the natives could not possibly be organized to efficient purpose, without the aid of the local church (*Memoir* 22). Once such an establishment was put in place, translation of the Scripture was to be an integral part of any "improvement" project to be carried out under its aegis. Translation of the Scriptures was "grand work" (*Memoir* 70) the reason being that

> …wherever the Scriptures are translated into the vernacular tongue, and are open and common to all, inviting enquiry and causing discussion, they cannot remain a dead letter; they produce fruit of themselves, even without a teacher.… The learned man who produces a translation of the Bible into a new language, is a greater benefactor to mankind than the prince who founds an empire. (*Memoir* 70)

The only thing that distinguishes Buchanan from other dyed-in-the-wool imperialists is the rhetoric - the imperialist idiom leavened with the evangelical – which he generally employs. His Anglicanism may also have been a contributing factor to this because William Carey, who was a Dissenter, seems to have steered clear of this kind of rhetoric, though the two shared the same theological views *vis-à-vis* Bible translation as a means of Christian missionary outreach.

That Buchanan attached greater importance to the first of the two objectives mentioned in the title of his *Memoir* is obvious. He insisted that an ecclesiastical establishment for the British would before long benefit their Asiatic subjects. "When once our national church shall have been confirmed in India," he declared, "the men of that church will be the best qualified to advise the

state as to the means by which, from time to time, the civilization of the natives may be formed" (*Memoir* 22).

That Buchanan did so is not surprising either. The overwhelming desire to put one's house in order is a common enough motif in early colonial discourse. It stems from one of the most enduring, recurrent anxieties of the British Raj in India, namely of giving in to, in Wellesley's words, "the habitual indolence, dissipation and licentious indulgence" which were the "natural consequence" of living in close proximity to the "peculiar depravity of the people of India"(Bayly, *Indian* 83). In support of his demand for an exclusive ecclesiastical establishment for India, Buchanan cites nothing more serious than a laxity in observing the Sabbath or instances of marriages, burials and even baptism being performed by the civil magistrate or a military officer and adds: "After a residence of some years at a station, where there is no visible church and where the superstitions of the natives are constantly visible, all respect for Christian institutions wears away" (*Memoir* 14). It is the fear of Oriental licentiousness that lies behind his concern, though he does not explicitly mention it. Along with his paternalism *vis-à-vis* the "natives," his perception of them as being predisposed to corruption and venality and his belief in climatic determinism, this anxiety marks Buchanan's complicity in the British imperialist enterprise.

John William Kaye whom the Wikipedia describes as "a British military historian" but who should more properly be styled historian of the Empire, quotes Edward Terry on the profligacy of the early British settlers in his *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative*. Terry (1590-1660), who accompanied Sir Thomas Roe on his travels as his chaplain, is probably the first Anglican clergyman to visit India. In one of those rare passages in colonial writing in which the native's perception of the white man is voiced, Terry writes:

> It is a most sad and horrible thing to consider what scandal there is brought upon the Christian religion by the looseness and remissness, by the exorbitances of the many who come among them, who profess themselves Christian of whom I have often heard the natives who live near the

> ports where our ships arrive say thus, in broken English, which they have gotten, *Christian religion, devil religion; Christian much drunk; Christian much do wrong; much beat, much abuse others.* (Kaye 41-42)

This passage, says Kaye, is often quoted to illustrate the immorality of the first Englishmen who went out to trade with the people of India, or were sent there by their friends "so they might make their own graves in the sea, or else have graves made for them on the Indian shore" (42). William Dalrymple presents a different side to the jeremiad on the immorality of early colonials which appears to be a mid-Victorian construct in *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth Century India*. "Going native" did not make poignant love stories all the time. In *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, Niall Ferguson gives an inventory of instances to the contrary:

> George Bogle, sent by Hastings to explore Bhutan and Tibet, had two daughters by a Tibetan wife and wrote admiringly of the distinctive Tibetan style of polygamy (in which one woman could take multiple husbands). John Maxwell, a minister's son from New Achar near Aberdeen who became editor of the *India Gazette*, was no less intrigued by the (to his eyes) luxurious and effeminate ways of Indian life; he had at least three children by Indian women. William Fraser, one of five brothers from Inverness who came to India in the early 1800s, played a crucial part in subjugating the Ghurkas; he collected both Mughal manuscripts and Indian wives. According to one account, he had six or seven of the latter and numberless children, who were 'Hindus and Muslims according to the religion and caste of their mamas.' (41)

The other issue was conversion but in an unusual and interesting context. Kaye adds in a footnote to a discussion on the missionary intent of the charter granted to the East India Company in 1698, the following observation: "There were occasional conversions, but unhappily, they were entirely in the wrong direction." One of these was the conversion of the son of an English noble man to the Catholic faith. Kaye mentions the public scandal that this

conversion created in Bombay and adds, "the grief occasioned by the fall of this misguided young gentleman was nothing in comparison with that resulting from the occasional apostasy of some of our people, who were attracted by the conveniences and enticements of the imposture of Mahomed." He cites the case of an Englishman who, in 1691 vexed the factors at Surat "by openly embracing Mahomed" (56). Their report is hardly the conventional conversion narrative:

> In addition to our troubles, there is one of our wicked men by name John Newton that came out in the *Royal John and Mary*, and came from Umboor yesterday, and went immediately to the Cossys and declared his intention to turn Moor and before we possibly could have an opportunity to send to the Governor, the business was done, and he circumcised, which was past our remedy for retrieving his wicked soul. (56)

Buchanan begins his *Memoir* by observing that with the reduction of the Mysorean and Mahratta empires, the greater part of India has come under the dominion or influence of the British Government and it is looking submissively for British civilization. He not unnaturally swells with pride listing all the factors that Britain has in its favour:

> "Our extensive territorial acquisitions within the last few years, our recent triumph over our only formidable foe; the avowed consequence of India in relation to the existing state of Europe; and that unexampled and systematic prosperity of Indian administration, which has now consolidated British dominion in this country," - all of which seemed to make the present era, "as that intended by Providence, for our taking into consideration the moral and religious state of our subjects in the East and for Britain's bringing up her long arrears of duty and settling her account honourably with her Indian Empire" (xi-xii).

It now behoved the British government to put in place an ecclesiastical establishment to ensure the perpetuity of the Christian faith among Europeans in India, and the civilization of the natives. It should also be noted that the aim was ultimate "civilization" of the natives, not their ultimate emancipation.

In the 1857 edition of Buchanan's *Christian Researches in Asia*, the editor, the Rev. Foy, Missionary Chaplain at Gwalior Cantonment, who seems to have entertained some strange notions about the duties and prerogatives of an editor, reveals more fully Buchanan's complicity in the British imperialist project. Published immediately after the 1857 Revolt, it is dedicated affectionately to the "Memory of those Officers of the Gwalior Cantonment who fell Victims to the Mutiny on June 14, 1857 and as a record of the Christian Zeal of the Officers, who made Sacrifices to Supply their own Spiritual Wants." Buchanan's text is embedded within Foy's commentary. Interestingly enough, the title of Foy's edition reads *Christian Researches in Asia: With the Rise, Suspension, and Probable Future of England's Rule as a Christian Power in India* whereas the original title was *Christian Researches in Asia: With Notices of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages.*

The new title proclaims quite unabashedly the importance of the ecclesiastical establishment in maintaining the well-being of the British Empire in India while the original one highlighted the importance of scriptural translation in perpetuating the Empire. The connection between the two implicit in Buchanan's arguments, comes to the fore here, in preference to the dissemination of Christian knowledge through translations. In the preface the editor says that in republishing a new edition of Dr. Buchanan's *Christian Researches in India*, he has ventured, "in deference to the wishes of many friends, to incorporate his own thoughts on Christian missions in connection with England's empire in India". This, he is perfectly aware, is "a presumptuous step" but he has taken it in the hope that "by resuscitating and illustrating the opinions and researches of the above-named eminent divine it will be seen that the principle on which the Marquis of Wellesley, Dr. Buchanan, and like-minded men desired to govern India, would have secured the Divine protection . . ." (vii).

Neglecting "those principles" of late has led the British as a nation to being "bowed down by the heavy hand of God's displeasure" (vii). He apportions the blame equally among the

local government, the church and the crown who, "seem all alike to have retrograded, since 1807, in matters affecting the highest interests" and sounds a dire warning:

> unless we act for the future *less presumptuously as conquerors, and more consistently as Christians,* there seems no reason to doubt, as the mutiny of 1857 had been preceded by the massacre at Vellore and the Cabul disaster, so it may be followed by a more terrible warning and final punishment for our unfaithfulness at the time the natives predict—1864. (viii)

Rev. Foy unmistakably links Buchanan's evangelical mission in India with the imperialist project of Governor General Wellesley. We are given to understand that the statesman, the cleric and other "like-minded men" were desirous of governing India on Christian evangelical principles. The perception of the Mutiny as divine chastisement for the Empire's failure in evangelizing India is a commonplace in evangelical and missionary discourse at home and in India but the prediction of an end to imperial rule in 1864 by the natives—if that is what "a more terrible warning and final punishment" signifies—is extremely intriguing.

Another tract which is of interest in the context of translation as an imperial tool is *A Dissertation on the Propagation of Christianity in Asia in Two Parts* written by the Rev. Hugh Pearson and published in 1808. It deals mostly with the key concepts in Buchanan's theology. This is not surprising since the text is the prize winning essay in a competition conducted by the University of Oxford for which Buchanan himself provided the topics for discussion. Actually the prizes had been instituted by Buchanan himself who appropriated a sum of sixteen hundred and fifty pounds out of his pocket for the purpose in 1803. This was part of an effort to place his views before the British public and call their attention to the necessity for evangelizing India. He wrote to the members of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and to the senior scholars of the principal public schools of England proposing certain subjects of prize composition, on civilization and the moral and religious improvement of India. "This appeal to the flower of the British nation" says Hough in his *Christianity*

in India: From the Commencement of the Christian Era," met with a response "that must have satisfied the munificent proposer's expectations" (172).

Buchanan repeated the exercise in 1807, this time offering in addition to £500 each for prize winning essays from both Cambridge and Oxford, thirty guineas to a preacher of each university for a sermon on the translation of the Scripture into the Oriental languages. The prize winning essay from Oxford was by Pearson. Though written by Pearson, it actually enshrines Buchanan's views on the relationship between the Empire and Evangelization. The text carries an extract from a letter by the "Rev. Claudius Buchanan, D. D. Vice-Provost of the College of Fort William in Bengal, to the Rev. the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, dated June 4, 1805" proposing three subjects of Prize Composition for the best work in English Prose of which the first two immediately capture one's attention:

> I. The probable Design of the divine Providence in subjecting so large a portion of Asia to the British dominion.
>
> II. The Duty, the Means, and the Consequences of translating the Scriptures into the Oriental tongues, and of promoting Christian knowledge in Asia.
>
> III. The third requires the entrants to provide "A Brief Historic View of the Progress of the Gospel in different nations, since its promulgation" (xi).

The Rev. Pearson inverts the order of Subjects as proposed by Buchanan, beginning with "A Brief Historic View of the Progress of the Gospel in all nations since its first promulgation," but otherwise sticks faithfully to the mandate given him as a contestant. Part I of the second chapter is a lengthy discussion "On the probable Design of the divine Providence in Subjecting so large a portion of Asia to the British dominion" (xiii). He regards the very location of the empire - in the East - as significant because the East has been - and he quotes from Dr. White's Bampton Lectures here - the great scene of revelation. It is where prophets uttered their predictions and where the Son of God illustrated

and fulfilled them. Regrettably, says White, it is also where "the imposter Mahomet has erected his standard." Pearson adds to White's list, "the votaries of Brahma" who in his view are "more ignorant, though scarcely more deluded and debased," and who through the still longer lapse of ages have been groaning beneath the "fetters of the caste." The British owe a debt of gratitude to the East, "as the primaeval fource (sic) of nature and revelation," which they have been tardy in acknowledging (86).

After this stirring rhetoric the conclusion that he reaches at the end of Part I is predictable enough. Every circumstance, of which he provides a list - extensive and uncontrolled dominion of India, the increased confidence and lessening prejudices of the natives, a more intimate acquaintance with the religion, laws, literature, and science of the natives, the very direction of the public attention to this subject at the time—concurs "in shewing (sic) the leading design of the Divine providence, in subjecting so large a portion of Asia to our dominion, to be *the diffusion of Christian knowledge* amongst the many millions of its unenlightened inhabitants, as the means of promoting their temporal and eternal welfare and happiness" (89).

The passage reflects Buchanan's own perception of the empire as being a divinely ordained entity with a duty to diffuse Christian knowledge in the dominions under it. This diffusion of Divine knowledge was to be achieved through translations of the Scriptures into the various Oriental tongues and so translation became central to his project of evangelization. The passage also reflects many of the fears and anxieties that the British administration in India was heir to in the last decade of the eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth century. The one which concerns us most is its quest for legitimacy. It was by bestowing divine sanction on British rule that the evangelicals sought to justify and legitimize the empire.

Gaining legitimacy was important to colonial and imperial powers and the evangelical groups alike. The roots of British colonialism, and later, imperialism, like those of other European varieties, lie in adventuring. Empire building, at least in the beginning, was not a premeditated activity. In *Culture and*

Imperialism for instance, Said states that "neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition" (8). Said also refers to the "curious but perhaps allowable idea propagated a century ago by J.R. Seely that 'some of Europe's overseas empires were originally acquired absentmindedly…'" (9). As an empire grew in stature from sporadic acts of plunder and rapine into an organized system of the same, the perpetrators of such acts felt the need for legitimacy. Religion was one of the means by which they manufactured legitimacy and justification for colonial and imperial acts of aggression and subjugation. The Portuguese colonizers, followed closely upon the heels by the Spanish, also found a potent rationale for imperialism in religion. The so called "religious card", the Portuguese, played in India, with a singular lack of tact and finesse. The British showed both in abundance (except when their authority was seriously threatened, as for instance, at the time of the first War of Independence/ Sepoy Mutiny), playing it deftly when it suited their purpose and downplaying it subtly when it did not.

In "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument", Linda Colley shows how young Britain was as a nation and how:

> in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Britishness was forged in a much wider context. Britons defined themselves in terms of their common Protestantism as contrasted with the Catholicism of continental Europe. They defined themselves against France throughout a succession of major wars with that power. And they defined them against the global empire won by way of these wars. (316)

Thus, the British Empire being no less a product of Protestantism than the national identity, it would have been entirely natural for it to seek a rationale for its existence in its commitment to spread Protestantism in its dominions. But things were never so straight forward given the vastness of the land, its teeming millions and the hold that Hinduism, that amorphous conglomeration of customs, traditions, rituals and ceremonies that goes by the name of religion, had on the people. Right from the beginning the British administrators found themselves treading uncertain territory. The assorted stakeholders in the Empire - free

traders, Orientalists, Utilitarians and Evangelicals - all had their own ideas on the proper governance of the country and it was not easy to accommodate their often conflicting and contradictory views.

For the East India company the transformation from "The Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies" into "Masters of Hindostan," and a consequent shift from the sword to the word was not very easy. The East India Company, even though it had professed in its founding charter "a desire to extend the Christian religion," (Hooper 30) was not always willing to accommodate the demands of the Evangelicals. When, in 1793, a provision for sending out "sufficient number of school masters and missionaries to be maintained by the Governments of all the Presidencies" - the so-called Pious Clause - had been sought to be introduced in the revised the Charter of the East India Company, it vigorously opposed the move, saying it held

> the sending out of missionaries into our eastern possessions to be the maddest, most extravagant, most costly, most indefensible project which has ever been suggested by a moonstruck fanatic. Such a scheme is pernicious, imprudent, useless, harmful, dangerous, profitless, fantastic. It strikes against all reason and sound policy, it brings the peace and safety our possessions into peril. (Hooper 30)

Metcalf notes in his "*Ideologies of the Raj*" that the East India Company, whose rule was in some ways little more than that of a "garrison state" in the early nineteenth century, was loath to do anything that could be construed as disturbing the bases of religious authority or interfering too openly with intimate personal relations (37). Under the Hastings dispensation, a policy of non-interference was zealously followed. Percival Spear states that essentially it was to

> leave things as they were. The Company should govern in the Mughal and general Indian tradition, that is, providing a framework of security beneath which traditional society could continue its wonted course. Peace would promote trade and trade would be to Britain's advantage. (121)

This perception was behind the Company's refusal to countenance missionary activity on its territories and also behind its reluctance to suppress such inhuman religious practices as *sati*. Without license the missionaries could neither sail on English ships nor work on Company territory. This policy remained in force for about twenty years.

The attitude of the British public to proselytizing was also not much better as William Carey, a shoe maker turned Baptist minister, discovered when in 1786 at a meeting of Baptist ministers he mooted the idea of a missionary enterprise for propagating Christianity among the heathen. Castigating him as "a miserable enthusiast," the chairman of the meeting said:

> Sit down, young man; when it pleases God to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help: certainly nothing can be done before another Pentecost, when an effusion of miraculous gifts, including the gift of tongues, will give effect to the commission of Christ, as at first. (Hooper 29)

Carey did not wait for another Pentecost but won public opinion over to his side through his sermon on the twin points from Isiah 54:2-3, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God." The sermon so moved his audience that the Baptist Missionary Society was formed within a few months in 1792. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.-founded 1698) and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.-founded in 1701) had, by then, been in existence for nearly a century. At the time their operations were still on a relatively small scale. The figures in their annual budgets speak for themselves: at the end of the eighteenth century the total expenditure of the S.P. C.K. in South India was £1000 while that of the Society for the Propagation of Gospel was £800 (Hooper 72-73). With the East Company refusing to grant him a license, Carey had to sail on a Danish vessel to Calcutta in January 1793 where he eventually founded the Serampore Mission with Joshua Marshman, a school master and William Ward, a printer.

By the time Buchanan arrived in India the Company's attitude to the missionary enterprise had thawed thanks in a large measure to the efforts of such men as Charles Grant, member of

the Council of Bengal and afterwards a Director of the Company. Grant was able to bring this about because of the emergence of the Evangelicals and the Radicals as pressure groups in British politics. The policy of non-interference had supporters among the right wing Tories. The Radicals believed passionately in humanism, the power of reason and Western enlightenment. Evangelists believed equally passionately in the power of the Gospel to redeem mankind. They occupied different ends of the political spectrum but were united in their efforts to extend the benefits they themselves were enjoying in Britain to the British subjects in India. The Evangelicals, though closer to the Tories on the political spectrum had a different take on the situation in India. To quote Spear again:

> They [the Evangelicals] had a horror of idolatry and India was the land of idolatry par excellence. They had a thirst for souls and here were millions rushing to perdition without a chance of Christian salvation. They had a humanism which they believed to be part of the Gospel and had led them on crusades against slavery, and here were practices like *suttee* crying out for redress. They believed it to be their duty to preach the gospel whose light would dissolve the mists of superstition and cruelty enshrouding the Indian people . . . . Their programme was, bring the Christian West to the East, and India will reform herself as a flower turns to the sun. (Spear 121-22)

Spear might give one the impression that the evangelization project of the British was entirely altruistic. But from very early on, it came to be linked to British economic interests. In 1822, William Ward, who wrote a three volume to me titled *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos,* to run down the iniquity and depravity of the community and their religion held that once "Hindoosthan"(sic) received that much needed higher civilization and European literature became transfused into all her languages, "then the ocean, from the ports of Britain to India, will be covered with our merchant vessels . . ." (liii).

Bayly says in his Introduction to *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars,* that a mature colonial system was established only after 1857

though the British had established dominance over the heartland of Mughal India by 1808 (1). The period of "transition between the heyday of the last indigenous states and the establishment of the mature colonial system" (2) was crucial in establishing the nature of that empire. It was during the early part of this period that the evangelization project enjoyed a measure of official patronage. As Tejaswini Niranjana says in the introduction to *Siting Translation*, the entire "Eastern Hemisphere" was to become Christian and in the age of the expansion of capitalism, interpretation and translation was to help "create a market for European merchandise." She goes on:

> As the missionary texts help us understand, translation comes into being overdetermined by religious, racial, sexual, and economic discourses. It is overdetermined not only because multiple forces act on it, but because it gives rise to multiple practices. The strategies of containment initiated by translation are therefore deployed across a range of discourses, allowing us to name translation as a significant technique of colonial domination. (21)

Born in 1766 at Cambuslang near Glasgow, Claudius Buchanan was Scottish. This should come as no surprise given the role - which many historians have commented upon and which is quite disproportionate to their numbers at home - played by the Scots, the Scots-Irish and the Anglo-Irish in empire building. He came to India in 1797 as a chaplain under the East India Company "after a stormy and adventurous youth" according to Hooper (15). Buchanan joined as the Vice Provost and classical professor in the College at Fort William, founded on 10 April 1801 to equip civilian officers of the East India Company for the better discharge of their duties, by Lord Wellesley. The Provost was the Rev. David Brown. The civilian officers of the East India Company, mostly young lads of sixteen, were enjoined to study the Oriental peoples and their languages, and generally improve their minds.

The enterprise ran into rough weather right from its inception. The Directors of the Company had not been notified

of its foundation. Wellesley was able to smooth out the resulting confusion for the time being and the college started functioning. It was the sort of setting where Buchanan was in his elements. The college had a department of Biblical translation which employed pundits, "moulvees" and "moonshees" from different parts of India on liberal pay. By 1805 translations of the Scripture into "the colloquial Hindoostanee, the classic Persian, the commercial Bengalee, the learned Arabic the primaeval Shanscrit (sic)" were under way (Buchanan, *Memoir* 55).

It is interesting to note the parallels between the imperial and the missionary discourses in eighteenth century India. As a very small and insignificant part of the British Empire, which was probably the greatest monetary enterprise in human history, the missionary enterprise unwittingly employs the monetary idioms and metaphors connected with the empire. Buchanan in the dedication addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and attached to his 1805 *Memoir* places his own translation project on par with the ancient one which brought forth the Septuagint:

> When Ptolemy Philadelphus, three hundred years before the Christian era, invited to Alexandrian Egypt, seventy two learned natives of Judea, to translate the Scriptures into Greek language, *he could not have foreseen that his translation was divinely intended to be the means of the world's own, by diffusing the knowledge of the true God; or that the Messiah promised therein, would in a future age quote its language as the canonical version of the sacred original. (viii)

In a foot note marked by the asterisk in the text, he adds that the expense of the ancient project has been "computed by Prideaux to have amounted to two million sterling." This incidental remark made while expatiating on the sublimity of his own translation project *vis-à-vis* the ancient one, might seem a descent to the bathos but it reflects on the position of the missionary enterprise within the larger imperial one. Buchanan, himself engaged in a translation project of considerable magnitude, with very little institutional support would naturally have an eye to the expenses involved. Again, apropos the translation project at

Serampore, Firth says, that the mission compound at Serampore became the home of what may almost be called “a translation industry.” To prove his point he quotes from a letter Ward wrote to his cousin in 1811 in which he describes the translation activity at the Serampore mission in such terms that he might as well be describing the scene at one of the English “factories.” To quote Ward:

> As you enter, you see your cousin, in a small room, dressed in a white jacket, reading or writing, and looking over the office, which is more than 170 feet long. There you find Indians translating the Scriptures into different tongues, or correcting proof-sheets. You observe, laid out in cases, types in Arabic, Persian, Nagari, Telugu, Punjabi, Marathi, Chinese, Oriya, Burmese, Kanarese, Greek, Hebrew and English. Hindus, Mussulmans and Christian Indians are busy-composing, correcting, distributing. Next are four men throwing off the Scripture sheets in the different languages; others folding the sheets and delivering them to the large store-room; and six Mussulmans do the binding. Beyond the office are the varied type-casters, besides a group of men making ink; and in a spacious open walled-round place, our paper mill, for we manufacture our own paper. (Firth 151)

This ambitious translation project was meant to bring forth, in Carey’s own words, the “Word of God translated and printed in all the languages of the East within fifteen years” (Firth 150). The project was based on a “Prospectus” drawn up by Buchanan by which the work was to be done at the college at Fort William. The Prospectus was signed by the Serampore missionaries and presented to the Governor General and circulated among the Directors of the Company, the Bishops, the universities and other influential bodies in England. This was in 1803 under Wellesley’s patronage. Wellesley’s tenure as Governor General came to an end in 1805 and in 1806 the directors of the Company decided to wind up the translation department and even normal academic activity at the College was curtailed. Ever resourceful, the missionaries now relied on private channels and the work did not grind to a halt.

In 1806 Buchanan decided to devote "the last year or two of his residence in the East to purposes of local examination and enquiry" (7). He set out upon a tour of South and West India "to ascertain what have been the actual effects of Christianity in those interior provinces of Hindostan where it has been introduced by Christian missionaries; and to compare them to such other countrymen as remain in their idolatry" (Buchanan, *Christian 17*-18; Foy 3). No mention is made of translating the Scriptures at this stage. This tour was more in the nature of a fact finding mission or a survey. Such surveys formed part of a paradigm shift when, in the words of Bayly, "the eighteenth century concern with belief and systems of value" gave way to "the empirical documentation of known facts, the creation in social studies of analyses and taxonomies which distantly reflected the norms of Linnean botany" (*Indian* 89). About the same time Colin Mackenzie and Francis Buchanan were making "the first of those detailed surveys that were to define the subsequent British comprehension of India's lands and peoples" (Metcalf 25). The East India Company certainly was not interested in the condition or the spiritual or even the material well being of the Christians of India. So in keeping with the evangelical agenda for perpetuating British rule in India by civilizing the natives, Buchanan undertook his own survey, the results of which were published in a book in 1812: *Christain Researches in Asia: with Notices of the Translations of the Scriptures into Oriental Languages.*

Since it was standard colonial to practice to locate anything in a historical context, he begins his disquisition on the Syrian Christians by tracing the history of Christianity in Kerala which he refers to as Malay-Ala. To him it is a choronym, a term that denotes a region, which in this case is the "territory between the mountains and the sea from Cape Comorin to Cape Illi or Dilli" (107). It has nothing to do with the language of the people. The language of this extensive region, he makes clear in a footnote, is called Malayalim (sic) and sometimes Malabar (107). He prefers the latter as being easier of pronunciation. It should be noted that it was with the Jacobite Syrians that he opened his dialogue and that the term "Syrian" in his account stands for the Jacobite Syrians only. His account is partisan, highly skewed and most

probably based on Jacobite Syrian oral sources and not on hard historical facts. It ends with the heroic efforts of the community to resist "popish" blandishments and threats. Since nothing has been heard from the Syrian Christians for two hundred years many in the West doubted whether they existed at all; but if they did, "it was thought probable that they must possess some interesting documents of Christian antiquity." It was this circumstance that prompted Buchanan to include Malay-Ala in his schedule. Again his objectives were two fold. Firstly he wanted to investigate the literature and history of Syrians and to collect biblical manuscripts. Secondly, he wanted to explore the possibility of making the Syrians "instruments of illuminating the Southern parts of India," in other words, engaging them to translate their Scripture into "the native languages." He says he had reason to believe that this had not yet been done. The translation project was contingent upon certain conditions: he should find them to be an intelligent people and they must have demonstrable mastery over the Syriac language (110).

Buchanan speaks in glowing terms about how, as soon as he presented a short memoir on the subject to Marquis Wellesly the Governor-General in 1805, the latter was "pleased to give order that every facility should be afforded to him in the prosecution of his enquiries"(110). Wellesley was in a position to give orders to this effect because on 2 May 1805 he had ratified a treaty, consisting of ten articles, "settled and concluded at the fortress of Teeroovanandapooram in Travancore by Lieutenant-Colonel Colin Macaulay, on behalf and in the name of His Excellency the most Noble Marquis Wellesley, Governor-General-in-Council, with the Maharajah Ram Raja Bahadoor . . ." (Kusuman 191) The fifth article of the treaty even gave the Governor-General in Council the full power and right "either to introduce such regulation and ordinances as he shall deem expedient for the internal management and collection of the revenue or for the better ordering of any other branch and department of the Government of Travancore . . ." (188). This treaty, says K.K. Kusuman in *A History of Trade and Commerce in Travancore,* "raised a hue and cry and turned the then Dewan, Velu Tampi extremely unpopular with the masses as well as the sovereign"(167). Travancore ceased

to exercise any political or commercial power. Hence forth, the Maharajas of Travancore would have the British Resident breathing down their neck and wielding all political and commercial power in the state.

It is significant that it was at this juncture that the British begin to evince an interest in the spiritual well being of the Syrian Christians of Kerala. In fact Buchanan was not the first Anglican cleric to visit Travancore. In 1806 Richard Kerr the Senior Chaplain with the Madras Government had visited Kerala supposedly at the behest of Colonel Macaulay who was a signatory to the treaty of 1805 on behalf of the Company Dr. Kerr's mandate had been to enquire into the means "best adapted to lead to an improvement of the moral character of the Hindoos, to augment their attachment to their British rulers; . . . finally to the means by which the blessing of the Gospel might be extended to the Indian subjects of Great Britain" (Hough, *A History* 159).

Buchanan arrived in Kerala towards the end of the same year but made a considerably longer stay. If, in their Memoir Messrs Ward & Conner followed a secular trajectory by describing the topography and the geography and the flora and the fauna and the people of Travancore, Buchanan essayed a spiritual one, seeking and describing centres of Christianity, expending the same care and attention to details as the former. At a place which he names as Ranniel his eye takes in the detail that the bells of most of the churches were within the building and not in a tower. He faithfully reports the explanation given by the native Christians: when a temple happens to be near a church, the "Hindoos" do not like the bell to sound loud, because they claim that it frightens their god (121). The ultimate result of this painstaking quest was the first ever translation of the Bible into Malayalam.

The situation in Kerala was unique. As Hooper remarks in his *Bible Translation in India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, Malayalam being the language of the Syrian Christians, "the first urgent call for Scriptures was not, as elsewhere in India, that they might be made available for the great masses of the non-Christian population, but that Christians themselves may have the Bible" (79). While

discussing translation of the Scripture into the Malay language Buchanan also concedes the point (*Christian* 106).

Buchanan's account is based on a certain perception that European Protestants seemed to have formed about Syrian Christians i.e. as a pure and simple people, the custodians of an ancient form Christianity who, when beleaguered by the Portuguese, had taken refuge in the hills of the Western Ghats. This was, more or less, also how Visscher projected them to the Governors of the Dutch East India Company. This notion also continued to infuse the Church Missionary Society (CMS) efforts in Kerala down to 1836 when at the Synod of Mavelikkara the Syrians decided to dispense with British aid in reforming their community. But Buchanan goes one step further; he detects signs of "political depression" in their visages (117). For instance, in November 1806 during one of his early encounters with the Syrian Christian community at "Chinganoor," he is particularly reassured by the presence of women in the gathering and remarks: "In every countenance now before me I think I could discover the intelligence of Christianity; but at the same time, I perceived all around, symptoms of poverty and political depression" (119). The signs of poverty are easily identified; but how does one identify those of "political depression" on someone's countenance unless you fancied you saw them there? The account provided by the senior priest implies that the "air of fallen greatness" was caused as much (if not more) by economic reasons than political. The explanation could not have suited Buchanan's agenda more had he scripted it himself:

> About three hundred years ago, an enemy came from the West, bearing the name of Christ but armed with the Inquisition, and compelled us to seek the protection of the native princes; and the native princes have kept us in a state of depression ever since. They indeed recognize our ancient personal privileges, for we rank in general next to the *nairs*, the nobility of the country, but they have encroached by degrees on our property till we have been reduced to the humble state in which you find us. The glory of our Church has passed away but we hope your nation will revive it. (117)

Buchanan responds to this overture by assuring them that "the glory of the Church could never die, if it preserved the Bible" (117). The priest informs Buchanan that since the "Hindoo" princes never touched "their liberty of conscience," they have been able to preserve the Bible but they have not been very conscientious about the Christian duty of conversion. Thus the Syrians having made all the right responses, Buchanan shows them a copy of the printed Syriac Bible which takes the former completely by surprise, being accustomed only to manuscripts. One of the Syrian priests remarks that their Church languishes for want of the Scriptures and sums up the linguistic situation thus:

> the language that is most in use among the people is the Malayalim (sic) or Malabar, the vernacular language of the country. The Syriac is now only the learned language and the language of the Church; but we generally expound the Scripture to the people in the vernacular tongue. (118)

Buchanan broaches the topic of a Malayalam translation. The reception is enthusiastic. The Syrian priest thought that a version could easily be made with "critical accuracy for there were many of the Syrian clergy who were perfect masters of both languages" (119). In the event of a Malayalam version of the Bible materializing, Buchanan promises to get it printed at his own expense and distributed to all fifty five churches at a nominal price. Now that they have established that the greatest blessing that the English church can bestow upon them is the Bible, Buchanan probes them for the next greatest. "Some freedom and personal consequence as a people" is the answer, followed by the statement "We are here in bondage, like Israel in Egypt." Buchanan, interpreting this as a demand for political liberty assures them that "the English nation would doubtless recognize a nation of fellow Christians; and would be happy to interest itself in their behalf" but remembers just in time to add the rider, "as far as our political relation with prince of the country would permit"(119).

At the end of November at "Cande-nad," Mar Dionysius, the Metropolitan of the Syrian Church is equally enthusiastic about

the translation project. He even volunteers to supervise it in spite of his advanced years and failing health. There was a second and as yet unspoken item on Buchanan's agenda, namely a unification of the two churches. This, closely allied to the translation project, was also part of the imperial design. Buchanan reflects on the immense power of the "Romish" Church in India and "our inability to withstand its influence alone" and admits that securing "the aid and co-operation of the Syrian Church, and the sanction of its antiquity in the East" appears to be "an object of great consequence" (128).

Luckily for Buchanan the Metropolitan himself broaches the topic of greater co-operation between the two Churches and deputes two of his clergy to go into the matter with Buchanan. After a long disquisition on theological matters with them concerning the purity of English ordination, Buchanan enumerates the advantages of such a union for the benefit of the Metropolitan. One would be that English clergymen or missionaries ordained by the Church of England might be permitted to preach in Syrian churches and vice versa. The British at any rate had "an immense empire in Hindostan but few preachers; and of these few scarcely any could preach in the native language" (129). The Metropolitan expresses a willingness to make any sacrifice for the sake of such a union provided it did not compromise the purity and dignity of his church.

The indefatigable Buchanan also pays a visit to the Roman Catholic establishment at Verapoly where he "experiences mixed sensations of regret and pleasure to find that so many of the Hindoos have been rescued from the idolatry of Brahma and its criminal worship; and of regret when I reflected that there was not to be found among the whole body one copy of the Holy Bible" (135). He has "some conversation on the subject of giving the Scriptures to the native Roman Catholics" (131) with Bishop Raymondo, the Pope's Vicar Apostolic in India whose residence was at Verapoly. The Bishop has no objection to the scheme. Buchanan does not say how they proposed to overcome the practical problems involved in making a translation acceptable to both Protestants and Catholics or even whether they discussed these problems. At their third meeting the Bishop warns

Buchanan that "the Inquisition will endeavour to counteract your purposes by every means in their power" (136). Buchanan countered this by investigating the Inquisition at Goa on his way back. One of the objectives of his visit to Goa was to find whether the "Romish" church actually discouraged its adherents from reading the Bible.

There is an account of the first Bible translation into Malayalam from the target language perspective in *Bibilum Malayalavum* by Rosy Thampy according to which the Metropolitan Dionysius, coming to know that a *katanar* (a Syrian priest) at Mavelikkara has translated the Gospel of Matthew into Malayalam, acquired the text from him and based on the model provided by it, translated the rest of the gospels also into Malayalam (67). Whether this *katanar* is the same person as the elder Thomas or Didymos , who, in Buchanan's account, to convince him of the Syrians' earnest desire "to have the Bible in the Malayalam tongue," steps forward to claim that "I have lately translated the Gospel of St. Matthew for the benefit of my children." He also states that his version, though "not in fine language" is much in demand among other families (Agur 82).

The first translation of the Bible into Malayalam was also as much a product of the politics of translation as the other, earlier and more celebrated versions of it were. The encounter between imperial reformism in its Anglican guise and Syrian Christian orthodoxy throws up interesting vignettes. From the very beginning the Syrians dug their heels in and refused to have any version not based on the Syriac *Peshitta*. "But how shall we know that your western Bible is the same as ours?" the aged priest asks Buchanan who suggests selecting a portion of the Scripture at random and critically comparing word for word, the same portion in "Eastern Syrian, Western Syrian and English" Later he convinces them that they should consult the Greek version also "as the New Testament was given to the world in Greek." The result of the careful collation is predictable enough: the English Bible is a faithful translation; the East Syriac agrees with the West Syriac nearly word for word; only Elder Thomas' Malayalam version is faulty (Agur 82).

Since in the Syriac churches, the Bible was more an object of worship than a living text that people actually read, they insisted on staying as close to the Syriac as possible, even to the extent of marring its lucidity. To make matters worse, the Tamil Bible was also brought in, apparently because it was quite popular among the Syrians in those days. According to Agur, Buchanan consulted Ringeltaube the pioneer Protestant missionary and received "much advice and help in the matter" (515). It was from Ringeltaube that he got a copy of the Tamil Bible. In a letter addressed to the missionary (from which Agur quotes at length) Buchanan says that "Two hundred thousand Christians are eagerly waiting for the Bible in their own language." According to Buchanan's account in *Christian Researches,* the bishop "prosecuted the translation of the Scriptures into the Malabar language without intermission until he had completed the New Testament." The following year Buchanan visited Travancore a second time and carried the manuscript to Bombay to be printed, "an excellent fount of Malayalim types having been recently cast in that place" (142). He adds that learned natives went from Travancore to superintend the work but do not name them.

For his part, Buchanan took the Tamil scholar Timma Pillay (Timmappa Pillay by certain other accounts) and another person, Kochitty from Kandanad to Bombay to supervise the printing, the expenses for which were borne by the missionary out of his own pocket. Printed on paper donated by the British and Foreign Bible Society, with ink donated again by them, the Bible was nine inches and a half long, eight inches wide and two inches thick and had 504 pages. The four gospels have chapter and verse divisions.

According to Thampy, the translation was a joint effort by Philippose Rampan of Kayamkulam, Ittoop Rampan of Kunnamkulam and Pulikkottil Joseph Malpan, all of whom were scholars of Syriac. A scholar of Tamil, Timma Pillay mentioned earlier, compared the translation, which the Syriac scholars made, word for word, from the *Peshitta* version, with the Tamil version. The result of this exercise in fidelity was that the resultant version inherited a host of ills both from Syriac and Tamil. In their concern for fidelity, the translators forgot that their primary job

was to produce a text which would communicate to the target language audience. The vocabulary is largely an admixture of Syriac and Tamil words. Also, a preponderance of pronouns, again a legacy from the Syriac version, mars the text. In Syriac nouns and verbs have endings indicating gender. The translators retained them in the Malayalam version though the practice is foreign to the very genius of the language. To put it mildly the effect is ludicrous. Orthography is haphazard and proclaims the absence of a standard form of the language. The font which Buchanan admired is square in shape and strikes the modern reader, brought up on the rounded script devised later by Bailey, as clumsy.

Most other translations of the Bible into Indian languages had missionaries who had learnt the tongue actively collaborating in or even single handedly carrying out the process of translation. The Malayalam version was different in that it was mostly *by* the Syrian Christians, *for* the Syrian Christians. Buchanan played the role of a facilitator. Had he played a more active one, the emphasis would definitely have been on communicating the message. No one seems to have taken count of the total number of copies of the 1811 Malayalam Bible extant at present. We also have no record of how the community received it.

We have a few interesting documents from the period relating to Scripture translation into Malayalam. One is a letter dated 21 January 1819 that Colonel John Munro the Resident wrote from Quilon to Marmaduke Thompson, Secretary of the C.M.S. Corresponding Committee at Madras in which he says, "The Version of the four Gospels printed at Bombay is now found, as our Missionaries advance in the language of Malayalim (sic), to be very bad in every respect, in fidelity, meaning, and language, as to be unfit for use . . ." (*CMS Proceedings* 1818-19: 170).

There is a far more interesting reference to Scripture translation into Malayalam in a tract published by Abbé J. A. Dubois in 1823. A secular priest sent out to India by the Paris Society for Foreign Missions, he spent nearly thirty two years in the country, his field of mission being Tamil Nadu till 1799 and then Mysore where he was sent to rehabilitate the Christian populace on the West Coast

after the upheavals caused to them by Tipu's incursions. His tract, a collection of letters which he wrote at various times to friends and acquaintances, has a long and interesting title: *Letter on the State of Christianity of India; in Which the Conversion of the Hindoos is Considered as Impracticable. To Which is Added a Vindication of the Hindoos both Male and Female in Answer to a Severe Attack Made upon them both by the Reverend.*** Apart from offering a supposedly commonsensical and avowedly pessimistic view of conversion in India and the inefficacy of Scripture translation in missionary outreach, it affords us an insight into the Catch-22 kind of situation the missionary enterprise found itself *vis-à-vis* caste. In his letters he discredits many of the fictions circulated by the Protestant establishment. For instance, in answer to the claim that the Hindoos are clamouring for the Bible he says:

> it is to me a scandal to observe that while so much anxiety is evinced to supply the Hindoos with Bibles which they never asked for, and which cannot be to them of the least utility, no voice is raised to supply their actual necessities, and procure them food and clothing, which they ask so clamorously for. (150)

In the rather tongue in cheek dedication addressed to "The Honourable The Court of Directors" of the East India Company, he offers his work as "a Testimony of his most sincere wishes for the temporal welfare of their Hindoo subjects, after having vainly endeavoured to promote their spiritual interests during a long residence of thirty-two years among them, as a religious teacher." He makes a bold distinction between the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Hindoo subjects and vests only the temporal in the Company at a time when, after the renewal of Charter in 1813, the spiritual and temporal welfare of the subjects had both been vested in the Company.

The discussion in the first letter hinges on two questions: one, "Is there a possibility of making real converts to Christianity among the natives in India?" and two, "Are the means employed for that purpose and above all, the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the idioms of the country, likely to conduce to this desirable

object?" (Dubois 1-2). His answer is an emphatic negative to both these "interrogatories." He gives it as his decided opinion that "under existing circumstances, there is no human possibility of converting the Hindoos, to any sect of Christianity. . . ." As for the translation project, it will only "increase the prejudices of the natives, against the Christian religion and prove, in many respects, detrimental to it" (2). Though his views on Scripture translation are different and part of his brief in writing the tract was to defend the Hindoo, both male and female, at times his rhetoric proves that the Abbé, the imperialists and the missionaries were all brothers under the skin:

> It is my decided opinion that to open all at once and without a long preparation, this precious treasure to the Hindoos would be similar to attempting to cure a person laboring under severe sore eyes, by obligating him to stare at the rays of a shining sun, at the risk of rendering him altogether blind, or at least of being altogether dazzled and confounded by an excess of light. It would be the same as administering of solid food to young babes whilst their weak stomachs are hardly adequate to digest milk of the lightest kind; it is exactly (to use the language of the scripture,) "to give that which is holy unto the dogs, and cast pearls before the swine:" it is, "to put wine into old bottles, and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish. (31)

He quotes at length from a letter which a missionary in Travancore wrote to a fellow missionary at Pondicherry about being saddled with a Malayalam Version. Since the Abbé's letter is dated 7th August 1815, the Version in question has to be the Buchanan one of 1811.

> Many hundred sets of the New Testament translated into the 'Malayan' dialect have been sent to us (without our asking for them), to be circulated among our Christians. I have perused their performance: the translation is truly piteous and only worthy of contempt: one cannot peruse four verses without shrugging up the shoulders. This large collection of New Testaments now in our hands places us in

> a very aukward (sic) situation: if we leave them to rot in our apartments, we fear to expose ourselves to the displeasure of those who supplied us with them, who appear anxious to have them located, and if we follow their instructions on the subject we cover ourselves with ridicule. (39)

Having poured as much cold water on Protestant evangelical zeal as he could, the Abbé turns to vindicating his position. He did not run down Scripture translation because he was a catholic. The "unfounded idea" that the reading of the Holy Scripture is forbidden to Catholics is a calumny spread against them and only "misinformed" Protestant would entertain the idea.

We have the usual posse of Protestant clergymen joining issue with the Abbé. What one of them, the Reverend James Hough, the historian, has to say is significant in that it throws light on the *modus operandi* adopted by the missionary translators working on the second translation in Travancore. As for the first, conceding that the Version in question is flawed, Hough begs the indulgence due to a first attempt: "First Versions require and will receive indulgence from all who candidly consider the great obstacles with which Translators have to contend" (133). The "Malayalim" Version, points out Hough, was made not by the agents of the Bible Society but by some Syrian priests (*katanars*) in Travancore. The Protestant Missionaries in that country having discovered numerous inaccuracies in the version, the Rev. B. Bailey a missionary at Cotym(sic), has been employed for about five years, "with the best assistance that the country affords, in giving an entirely new Translation" (131).

George Kurukkoor, who possesses one of the copies of the 1811 text extant at present said when interviewed that a few old families in and around Kottayam possessed copies of it and that it was used along with versions of the liturgy in Tamil. But an incident narrated by G. Priyadarsanan, Head of the Malayala Manorama Research Division, author of many books on little known aspects of Kerala History, seems to indicate that with the advent of other Versions the 1811 one lost whatever popularity it enjoyed. He described how a colleague brought an old book-

more a collection of loose sheets than a proper book- to him for identification and was astonished to be told that it was a copy of the 1811 Bible. The book had been lying in his house for a long time. He didn't even know that it was the Bible.

In his seminal work *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* Mingana observes that the Church of India never had a definite ecclesiastical language and that the Indian Church, even more so than the Persian, has always been Syriac in its language (9). Flawed though his version was, Buchanan bestowed a homegrown ecclesiastical language on the Syrian Church. It remained for them to make of it what they would.

Section IV

My contention is that the text of the Bible is the product of the engagement of the poetics of the text with its politics; that this engagement has almost always been the product of its interaction with various imperialisms of the Levant that later on, spilled over into translations. I also sought to establish that Buchanan's translations of the Bible into Malayalam, in as much as it was made in a period of epistemological shift engendered by British imperialism, are part of a continuum with other major translations of the Bible in the past. The study, though it confines itself to a narrowly defined historical moment and a geographical area, has actually been an attempt to place one of the earliest translations of the Bible into Malayalam in the wider context of imperialism.

Unlike their brethren in other parts of the country the missionaries who came to Kerala had to contend with a pre-existing biblical tradition to which the idea of Scripture translation was quite foreign. Left to themselves the CMS missionaries would definitely have worked their way round to Scripture translation sooner or later. I argue that this hypothetical Bible would have looked nothing like the 1811 Version. It would most probably have been a Version instantly recognizable as a logical culmination to the Orientalist discursive formation inaugurated and carried on by the Carmelites in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth

centuries. In my view the Gundert Version, based as it is on the Hebrew and Greek Versions, comes closest to this hypothetical Version. Colonial intervention caused a break in the process and though it hastened the project of translation and facilitated it in myriad ways, it brought to bear the linguistic proclivities of a particular group of native Christians - the Jacobite Syrians - on the project.

The principle of *ab ovo,* I suppose, applies even to conclusions. So let me sum up my study from where I began, viz., with the canon of the Bible.

The biblical canon, more specifically, that of the Old Testament was a long time in evolving. The texts were written by authors who belonged to various ages and strata of society and spoke different languages. But the canon reflects none of these facts. The seamless appearance is actually a construct and is the result of careful revision and editing. As a result, the texts, from the earliest composed probably in the tenth or eleventh century BCE to the latest, the book of Daniel speak to us in the same voice.

The smooth, facile appearance of the canon successfully hides the polyphonic nature of the Bible. Between themselves the Old and the New Testaments span a time period in history which saw the rise and fall of the Assyrian, Persian and Greek (Macedonian and later, its off-shoots like the Seleucid and Ptolemaic) Empires, the rise of Roman Empire and the consolidation of its power over the Mediterranean world. Jewish encounters with these imperialisms shaped both the canon and the languages in which it came to be recorded. The texts had been composed in a period of epistemological shift when the Phoenician alphabets were changing the way speech was recorded in the ancient Mediterranean world. Not only the texts, almost all of its ancient translations also, it can be seen, came about at times of epistemological shifts engendered by one or other kind of imperialism.

The word "canon," the moment it comes to be applied metaphorically to a collection of standard texts, acquires a political dimension. In the case of the Bible canon formation definitely

involved the politics of the text with its poetics. The notion of a canon cuts both ways as "an authoritative collection of texts" and "a collection of authoritative texts." Whichever way it is used the word is loaded, in the sense that it implies selection, a privileging of some texts over others. There had been a lot of texts floating around among the Jewish community in ancient times. When, in the beginning of the Common Era, the Old Testament canon was being stabilized, the Jews were part of the Roman imperium. In two major revolts against Roman authority, during the Jewish War (66-73) and again during the Bar Kochba revolt in132-35, the Jews had been defeated. Naturally text that contained visions of Jewish supremacy and thus likely to incite the Jews to rebellion found no place in the canon.

Another way in which imperialism marked the canon was in the languages in which it came to be recorded, Hebrew for the Old and Greek for the New Testaments. Before their Assyrian exile, the Jews were a Hebrew speaking people. By the end of it Hebrew was no longer a living language. The most ancient translations of the Bible, the *targums* were made into the imperial language of the times, the Aramaic, and thus were made in a period of epistemological shift occasioned by imperial hegemony. Just as in the case of the texts, the politics of translation came to visit its poetics. With the advent of Hellenism translations of the Old Testament began to be made into Greek. The *Septuagint,* the most celebrated ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek, also was made in a hegemonic context. Ptolemy Philadelphus, the king of Egypt commissioned it apparently to understand the rules governing the lives of his Jewish subjects.

Though Jesus spoke to his disciples, non-Hellenized Jews, almost certainly in Aramaic, the story of his life and teachings came to be written down in Greek, which makes the New Testament basically a translated text. The language of the early Church was Greek. Given that the first Christian writings made their appearance barely twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, this linguistic shift is very surprising in its rapidity.

With the advent of Roman imperialism translations began to be made into Latin. The *Vetus Latina*, the Old Latin Versions again became sites of contention, so Pope Damasus commissioned

Jerome to bring out a new version, which later became the basis for the Vulgata, the text of the Western Church. With papal endorsement the Vulgata occupied a central position for far too long and it was only with the advent of Reformation that the Bible re-invented itself in the various vernaculars of Europe, which marks another epistemological shift. Till that time various imperialisms of the Levant and the West acted on the Bible. With the advent of colonialism the Bible metamorphosed into the colonizer's tool and instead of being acted upon, began to act upon other communities, cultures and languages. Colonial powers, irrespective of whether they gave primacy to the text or faith, appropriated it to serve their ends.

One important way in which imperialism establishes hegemony is through rhetoric which incidentally is also the easiest way to manufacture consent. In "Trading Knowledge: The East India Company's Elephants in India and Britain," which seeks to illustrate how hybrid forms of natural knowledge appeared in South Asia as a result of the collaboration between the colonizer and the colonized, Sujit Sivasundaram puts it succinctly: "Rhetorically the British Empire rested on a tradition of rational natural improvement; colonial conquest was justified in part by the divine injunction to rule and subdue" (28-29).

Translation facilitated the trading of knowledge and thus played a stellar role in constructing the British rhetoric on India. It was with British attempts to gain comprehensive knowledge about the land and the people they had accidentally come to govern that translation gained a place in the colonial discourse of Orientalism. Thus under colonial dispensation translation became a space where the colonizer collaborated with the colonized. This came about because the early colonial administrators believed that Indians should be governed by their own laws. They were dependent on *moonshees* and *moulvees* to interpret the laws for them. In an attempt to circumvent the latter in whose integrity the British had the least faith, they started upon projects to translate ancient Sanskrit and Persian texts into English. For instance, the doyen among them, William Jones, as soon as his arrival in India, began "the course of personal study that was to

gather in, to rope off, to domesticate the Orient and thereby turn it into a province of European learning" (Said78; ch. 1). He made a fine distinction in his admiration for things Oriental. He was all praise for the glorious past of the country but full of contempt for its present. His research undermined the exclusive claims of Christianity, but time and again he publicly acknowledged his faith in Christianity.

Hobsbawm says in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* that "there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of the people than to unite them against others" (168). The British forged their nation on the basis of an alterity building exercise. The same strategy stood them in good stead in their colonial adventures, especially in India. They found it very handy in establishing and maintaining hegemony over India. They who followed a policy based on liberal ideals at home had to perforce follow one of oppression in their colonies. The tension arising out of this situation was sought to be alleviated through an alterity building exercise in which the Hindu as well as the Muslim (in colonial discourse the "native" is never an Indian, he is invariably either Hindoo or Mahommedan or is given some other sectarian identity) was cast in the role of the "Other." Early colonial translators in India, mostly cast in the Orientalist mould, who translated Sanskrit and Persian texts into English helped in constructing hegemonic versions of the Other.

In the post-Hastings era, with the rise of Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism the Orientalist discourse slowly gave way to generation of statistical data and taxonomic knowledge about the country. Around this time the East India Company re-invented itself as a moral enterprise. This re-invention was also part of a quest for legitimacy which characterizes colonial enterprises in general. The Portuguese, for instance, had the *padroado* and never sailed anywhere without priests.

The rhetoric of the times enjoined the Company to attempt the 'civilization' of the native. How this was to be achieved became a contentious issue in the early stages of the empire and remained so even in late Victorian times. Porter says that in debates about the policy to be adopted towards India or Africa, or discussions about the best missionary methods, a distinction was frequently

drawn between Christianity on the one hand and civilization on the other (600). The evangelicals argued that evangelization could very well precede civilization. They were especially outraged by the remarks of clergymen who were skeptical of the efficacy of missionary enterprise. But the question whether priority should be given to civilization (defined as a kind of preparation for receiving Christian ideas) or evangelization was never decided one way or the other.

This improvement project was no exercise in altruism. It was designed to create a market for British manufactures in India. The relationship between commerce and Christianity was perceived as legitimate even within the evangelical circle. Scripture translation into the vernaculars of India was one of the means whereby they hoped to achieve wholesale conversion to Christianity.

The Bible has a pre-colonial history in Kerala. It was not one of translation but there had been a discourse formation on Orientalist lines in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Kerala initiated mainly by Carmelite missionaries. The discursive practices of the Carmelites had been primarily designed to fill the linguistic vacuum and equip the language to be a fit vehicle for conveying Christian ideas to the masses whom they hoped to convert. It inaugurated new kinds of knowledge practices in the pre-colonial era which were later appropriated by the major colonial power to serve its own ends. Robert Drummond to whom belongs the distinction of being the first Englishman to write a grammar of Malayalam, acknowledged his debt to the Carmelites. In fact, in 1799, the Rt. Rev. Louis, titular Bishop of Usula, presiding over the Carmelite Mission of Verapoly submitted his store of manuscripts to Drummond with “an injunction to render them as subservient as possible to the end of diffusing a knowledge of Malabar tongue among the Honourable Company’s representatives” (Thomas 106). The Carmelites handed over linguistic material that they had generated as part of an attempt to harness the language for spiritual ends to the British to be made “subservient” in a purely secular enterprise. A few years later Buchanan called on the same prelate during his Christian researches in the south and he too was accorded the same degree of co-operation.

In Kerala the alterity building process had to be tailored to suit the situation. In what must be one of the earliest instances of *divide et impera* the British identified the Jacobite Syrian community as being worthy of British largesse. The Syrian Church, they felt, was ignorant, formal and dead. By restoring it to its former glory, they hoped to make it over into a powerful evangelistic force. In Hunt's words, "if it were a living thing it might convert the whole of South India" (6). This benevolent design was to begin with the evangelization of the Syrian Jacobite community through Scripture translation into Malayalam. The design was provided by the imperialist though the execution of it was to be the missionary's.

The impact of these translations on Kerala society at large was minimal. Though designed as a tool of containment and collusion the Buchanan Version did very little to perpetuate British hegemony. The translations were the product of imperial agency but the form and function of the target text were determined by pre-existing historical conditions which the initiator could neither control nor negotiate. The anxiety of interpretation being inherent in any Scripture translation project since time immemorial, fidelity to the word of God has always been at a premium. Since the poetics of translation in this instance was shaped by its politics it was not fidelity to the content but fidelity to a particular language i.e. the Syriac of the *Peshitta* Version that was given importance. This proved to be the undoing of the 1811 Version of Buchanan and would have proved the nemesis of the 1829 Version too had Bailey been a lesser man than he was.

The Buchanan Version could not have been otherwise than imperfect and flawed. It gained acceptance for the notion of translation and bestowed an indigenous ecclesiastical language on the Jacobite Syrian Church. Scripture translation in Kerala also illustrates that modernity and its institutions did not evolve in a linear, well-ordered fashion. Far from being "the simple emanation from a well-defined centre," it was "the result of adaptation and accommodation of British institutions confronted with the social, political, and economic organization of the countries Britain came to dominate" (Raj 119).

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