

BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY CHAPLAINS  
AND THEIR ENCOUNTERS WITH HINDUS AND MUSLIMS IN INDIA, 1785-1813

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By

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the writings and activities of several chaplains who were employed for the British East India Company (EIC) between 1785 and 1813 by focusing on their encounters with Hindus and Muslims in India. The four chaplains chosen for my research (Revs. David Brown, William Tennant, Claudius Buchanan, and Henry Martyn) sought to spread Protestant Christianity throughout British India. However, instead of evangelizing to Hindus and Muslims, these chaplains more often engaged in alternative forms of interreligious encounter that allowed them to closely interact with and learn about India's religious culture without going against the EIC's policy which prohibited missionary activity in its territory prior to its 1813 Charter Renewal.

Building on the research of other historians of Christianity and interreligious relations in British India, as well as focused studies of the chaplains, this thesis analyzes primary documents written by these chaplains to understand their thoughts on Christian missions, evangelism, and their encounters with Hindus and Muslims in India. I have categorized their encounters into three of the most prominent kinds that appear in their writings, and also form the focus of this thesis' body chapters: Anglo-Indian schooling, proto-ethnographic writing about Hinduism, and Bible translation into Indian languages.

From these findings, I argue that while the chaplains had little success in their own time converting non-Christian Indian people, their writings still shed helpful light on interreligious relations in British India and British Protestant perceptions of India's religious culture around the early nineteenth century. These findings remain significant for historians today when critically examining the history of Christianity and interreligious relations more broadly by showing how even though the chaplains' imperial context shaped and constrained their encounters, it did not ultimately determine the more complex, mutual or occasionally collaborative nature of their interactions with Hindu and Muslim people in British India.

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## **Introduction: Understanding the Chaplains' Responsibilities, Vocation, and Ambitions**

On March 15, 1807, Rev. Henry Martyn woke up early in Dinapore<sup>1</sup> to prepare a Sunday worship service conducted in English. As a recently employed chaplain for the British East India Company (EIC), one of Martyn's main responsibilities was to lead Sunday worship services while stationed in India. It was held at seven in the morning for several soldiers of the EIC. The congregation was not more than a handful of men, consisting of a private, a corporal, a sergeant, and a young merchant. At two in the afternoon, Martyn held another service in "Hindoostanee," or Urdu, for over two hundred female congregants who Martyn described as being "Portuguese, Roman Catholics, and Mahometans."<sup>2</sup> It was one of his first attempts at preaching in a major native language of India. To Martyn's encouragement, a Hindu woman visited him a few days later and discussed the words he had preached from the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

Martyn was responsible for conducting other religious ceremonies and providing spiritual counsel for Company employees. He officiated at weddings, prepared and led funerals, and occasionally had to bury the deceased himself. At dinners, Martyn tried to be an intentional presence for British soldiers in the barracks by initiating conversations with them about Christian ideas. Between these interactions, Martyn also devoted much of his spare time to learning the languages of India, studying Muslim and Hindu texts, and pursuing translation work. These activities produced more conversations with Indian locals, such as Martyn's Muslim translators, when they went for evening walks together.

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<sup>1</sup>The British Garrison town of Dinapore is now called Danapur, located in the state of Bihar, India.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Martyn, "Journals, &c.," in *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D., In Two Volumes, Vol. II.*, ed. Rev. S. Wilberforce, M. A. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1837), 36.

<sup>3</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 38-39.

Most of Martyn's time in India was spent either carrying out these aforementioned responsibilities, attempting to form meaningful relationships with those he encountered, or maintaining correspondence with loved ones back in England. The Company expected chaplains, primarily, to pursue fellowship with God and serve Christians in India. Yet, there were also chaplains like Martyn who pursued interactions with their non-Christian neighbours, namely Hindus and Muslims. This was not always the case, however. Prior to 1813, Christians who engaged too closely with Indian people, with the hope of converting them, risked going against the EIC's stance of religious non-interference.

This thesis will explore how several EIC chaplains used their position as Company employees to try and further Christian missionary efforts in India through their interactions with Indian Hindus and Muslims during the decades surrounding 1800. These chaplains, who are the main characters of this study, were Rev. Henry Martyn, David Brown, William Tennant, and Claudius Buchanan. The EIC employed each for varying amounts of time between 1785 and 1813. This was a pivotal period in the Company's history before it lifted its missions ban through its 1813 Charter Renewal. Although the EIC gave the chaplains a number of important responsibilities, this thesis will remain focused on addressing how and why these chaplains sought out different forms of interaction with Indian people, in ways that conformed to the chaplains' desire to communicate the Christian faith. This study will also examine what these different encounters looked like and how they inform our understanding of interreligious relations and evangelism in British India before official Christian missionary activity began in 1813.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>“Christian missions” in this thesis can be understood as the formalized and cross-cultural attempt to spread Christianity to other people groups in which Christians are either a minority or have not heard Christian ideas before. “Evangelism,” by comparison, can be understood as the act of any Christian professing their faith, usually verbally and regardless of context, to non-Christians with the intent to convert them to Christianity. In the chaplains' context, “evangelism” comprised the individual microscopic moments with Indian people which connected with the macroscopic phenomenon of Christian missions in India broadly.

By the end of their employment in India, these chaplains perceived their success in furthering Christian missions (based on the number of converted Hindu and Muslim people to Christianity) to have been fairly minimal. However, their encounters with Hindus and Muslims through Anglo-Indian schooling, proto-ethnographic writing, and Bible translation produced theologically rich and complex pictures of interreligious relations in British India. Despite the imperial context they worked within, the chaplains' encounters were shaped less by conflict or a desire for domination and more by conversation and a desire for understanding. This thesis argues that, even though they had limited success evangelizing to Indian people, the chaplains' activities and writings were interreligious encounters that shed helpful light on British Protestant perceptions of India's religious culture around the start of the nineteenth century—a culture that was largely unfamiliar or misunderstood by most Europeans at that time. These encounters show that while they were shaped and constrained by the conditions of their imperial context, this did not ultimately determine the nature of what the chaplains were trying to do through them: learn about, interact with, and try to understand India's religious cultures to better communicate Christian ideas to Indian people.

The term, “religious culture,” will be used in this study to encapsulate the broader religious landscape of a particular people and region. When mentioning India's religious culture, for example, this can be understood as a self-evident way of life which encompassed India's most prominent bodies of religious believers (Hindus and Muslims).<sup>5</sup> The term “interreligious relations,” by comparison, is meant to connote any type of encounter between a particular faith background with a different faith. This includes people, religious texts, theological beliefs, and their practices. The reason “interreligious” is being used over “interfaith” or “multifaith” relations is because of the chaplains' own terminology in their

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<sup>5</sup>Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012), 1-2.

understanding of “religion.” They more often used the term “religion” when describing and distinguishing the faith of Muslims and Hindus from themselves, which carried a different tone than the more mutual connotations of the term, “faith.” To maintain an accurate understanding of the chaplains’ perspective on different Indian religious beliefs, the term “religion” will be used more prominently throughout this analysis because it is the term chaplains used in their own writings.

Another useful term for understanding the chaplains’ encounters is Robert Frykenberg’s descriptor: “conduits of cross-cultural communication.”<sup>6</sup> Frykenberg uses the term “conduit” to describe the communicative role some Christians played in the history of Christianity in India as missionary *dubashis* (‘go-betweens’ or conduits of information) because of their ability to transmit ideas between British and Indian civilization.<sup>7</sup>

The chaplains can be viewed similarly. Ideas transferred from them about Christianity via schooling, to them about Indian religions via proto-ethnography, and dialogically (as well as collaboratively) with Indian people about language and Bible translation. These modes of communication each exemplify a kind of interreligious encounter in which ideas moved in different directions between chaplains and Indian people. They involved a reciprocal process of intellectual exchange that resulted in chaplains becoming conduits about Indian civilization to their writings’ intended audience. Indian people therefore had an important part to play in informing the chaplains’ understanding of India’s religious culture. In these encounters, chaplains not only described and came to know about Indian religions on the chaplains’ own terms, but at times required the assistance of their Indian interlocutors.

To understand how these chaplains came to be conduits of religious knowledge, more exploration of their place in the EIC’s history is necessary. Daniel O’Connor argues that the

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<sup>6</sup>Robert E. Frykenberg, *Christianity in India from Beginnings to Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 142-143.

<sup>7</sup>Frykenberg, *Christianity in India from Beginnings to Present*, 142-143.

original objective of the Company when it was established in 1600 was to be both profitable through its trading relations with India, as well as pious, which implied that it would provide a means for its personnel to live as morally upright Christians among non-Christian Indians.<sup>8</sup> This second objective was to be accomplished through the employment of chaplains.<sup>9</sup>

Choosing to become a chaplain for the EIC was a major commitment of time and energy. Before departing for India, one first had to be ordained as a deacon, which often required years of schooling. After being ordained and leaving Britain, it took up to nine months to sail to India by travelling around the continent of Africa. Although the position paid reasonably well, chaplains went to India knowing there was a strong chance they would never return home due to the risks involved.<sup>10</sup> They had to adapt to a harsher climate, often leaving them prone to sickness, while growing accustomed to a host culture in which Protestant Europeans were a tiny minority.

As the Company's presence in India and the number of its employees grew, so did their exposure to the country's dynamic and largely Hindu or Muslim religious cultures. In order to maintain good trading relations with India, the Company's governors decided to formalize their stance on Christian missionary activity within their territory. Historians describe this stance as the Company's non-interference policy, which forbade Christian missions in Company territory. Penelope Carson explains that by 1662, "the Company ordered that there were to be no compulsory conversions, no interference with Indian religious prejudices and cow killing was forbidden in 'Hindu' areas."<sup>11</sup> For decades, this

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<sup>8</sup>Daniel O'Connor, *The Chaplains of the East India Company, 1601-1858* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2012), 4

<sup>9</sup>O'Connor, *The Chaplains of the East India Company*, 20-21.

<sup>10</sup>In the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press: 2006), Avril A. Powell notes that one reason Martyn became a chaplain was because of the better wage provided by the EIC compared to the profession of a missionary (2).

<sup>11</sup>Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*, 15.

stance was successful as the EIC employed dozens of chaplains throughout the first 150 years of the Company's operation in India with little to no controversy.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the religious landscape of Britain and its political presence in India were both experiencing notable changes. Robert Clive's victory over the Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 positioned the EIC as a territorial power in India.<sup>12</sup> In Britain, evangelical Anglicanism was on the rise. Gillis Harp explains that Evangelicals were distinguished because they de-emphasized "outward forms and championed an "experimental religion" of the heart."<sup>13</sup> Thus, Evangelical churchmen stressed the need for a conversion experience, while "their biblicism was reflected in their commitment to the divine inspiration, sufficiency, and supremacy of holy writ... and Christ's substitutionary atonement was the centerpiece of their preaching."<sup>14</sup> The EIC's growing presence in India and the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism overlapped in the activities of one notable English Evangelical: Charles Simeon.<sup>15</sup>

Through his position as vicar at Holy Trinity in Cambridge, Simeon recruited evangelically-minded clergymen to be employed as Company chaplains near the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Simeon saw the EIC and its need for chaplains as a platform for furthering Christian missions in India. Avril Powell explains that, prior to the EIC's territorial

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<sup>12</sup>Robert Clive was the first British Governor of the Bengal Presidency from 1758-60 and 1764-67. The Nawab, Siraj-ud-Daulah, was a Muslim prince of Mughal India who ruled over Bengal from 1756-57. By the end of the eighteenth century, the British Empire's presence in India grew to prominence while the Islamic Mughal Empire's power in India was waning. This transition was marked in part by the outcome of the Battle of Plassey.

<sup>13</sup>Gillis J. Harp, "The Strange Death of Evangelical Episcopalianism," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 74, no. 2 (June 2005): 181.

<sup>14</sup>Harp, "The Strange Death of Evangelical Episcopalianism," 181.

<sup>15</sup>The term "Evangelical(s)" is a noun used to identify the specific group of Protestant Christians who adhered to the doctrinal emphases of Anglican Evangelicalism. The term "evangelical" or "evangelically-minded" are adjectives used to describe a particular thought process of Christians, such as missionaries, or, in this case, some chaplains.

<sup>16</sup>Brown, Buchanan, and Martyn were directly influenced by their relationships with Simeon. Tennant was evangelically-minded, which his writings evince, but he did not have any direct contact with Simeon.

control of Bengal, “evangelical circles had identified India, among various other overseas mission fields, as a sphere of particularly momentous possibilities for their message.”<sup>17</sup> The Evangelicals’ emphasis on the need for conversion and spiritual certainty was a message that had grown out of their own neighbourhoods and was “quickly seen to have universal implications” for Christian missions abroad.<sup>18</sup> The major complication, however, was that the EIC forbade missionaries from residing in Company territory. Simeon therefore saw an opportunity for EIC chaplains to do evangelism while respecting the letter of the EIC’s policy of non-interference. Even though the EIC’s stance on Christian missions posed a challenge for Evangelicals like Simeon, it did not completely stop some chaplains from engaging closely with the different religions they encountered while in India.

On the one hand the EIC held political authority in Bengal, on the other hand its chaplains held a kind of religious authority through their knowledge of Christianity. They had to manage a tension between the responsibilities prescribed to them as Company employees, and their Christian vocation as professional ministers to promote the gospel or spread their message of salvation to non-Christians. The EIC’s non-interference policy forced these evangelically-minded chaplains to find alternative ways to engage with Indian people that were often more nuanced, complex and reciprocal than conversion-oriented preaching. Thus, their position as chaplains provided them opportunities to pursue interreligious encounters in the form of schooling, proto-ethnography, and Bible translation.

My process of selecting relevant chaplains for this study required working within an appropriate timeframe leading up to the 1813 Charter renewal. Revs. Brown, Tennant, Buchanan, and Martyn each met the criteria of working in India prior to 1813. They also produced enough relevant writings that shed light on their interreligious encounters in India.

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<sup>17</sup>Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd., 1993), 76.

<sup>18</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 76-77.

There were a few other notable evangelically-minded chaplains, such as Daniel Corrie and T. T. Thomason, but they were also employed past 1813. For the sake of focus, this thesis will only cover the lives of the four chaplains who worked in India exclusively under the EIC's non-interference policy.<sup>19</sup> The policy had created a distinct set of restrictive conditions surrounding interreligious relations in British India. Thus, my timeframe for this study begins in 1785, the year of Brown's departure for India, and ends in 1813, the year the EIC lifted its embargo on Christian missions.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the chaplains' writings were published by either themselves or posthumously by biographers during the early nineteenth century. The types of sources they wrote range from personal journal entries, letters of correspondence with friends, family, fellow chaplains, and Company personnel, as well as sermons they preached in India, and self-published works of research.

Martyn was the most intentional in documenting his daily life by writing in journals and sending letters. Writers like Samuel Wilberforce, an English bishop and the third son of William Wilberforce, were conscientious in their own time to identify the value of recorded experiences by chaplains like Martyn for a broader audience. In 1837, Wilberforce compiled and published Martyn's diaries and memoirs in *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D., In Two Volumes*. Similarly, Brown's private writings were published posthumously in 1817 by Simeon in *Memorial Sketches of the Rev. David Brown: With a Selection of His Sermons, Preached at Calcutta*. I examined a compilation of Brown's diary

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<sup>19</sup>O'Connor's study refers or alludes to at least ten other chaplains (but possibly more) who were employed within this timeframe (106-117), in addition to the four I will focus on. Comparatively, he notes that in 1853 the EIC was employing 121 Anglican chaplains at that time (121). A total of 665 chaplains were employed by the EIC over its 258 years (2).

<sup>20</sup>Brown was in India from 1786-1812, with much of his writings coming from the first decade of his time there. Tennant was in India from 1795-99, with his writings spanning this timeframe. Buchanan was in India from 1797-1808, and most of his writings were composed during this time but published after he returned to Britain. Martyn was in India from 1806-10 and his writings span this four-year period as well.

entries, letters, and sermons, which are presented alongside a biography of Brown written by Simeon.

By comparison, Buchanan published most of his writings himself when he returned to Britain after his employment. Buchanan offers a few relevant works for this analysis, including his 1805 *Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India*, his 1809 sermon, *The Star in East*, and *Christian Researches in Asia: With Notices of the Translation of the Scriptures into Oriental Languages*, published in 1811 from his travels throughout India in 1806. Each text evidently displays Buchanan's strong rhetorical style and revolves around his advocacy for Christian missions, while often condemning many practices and beliefs of India's religious culture.

Like Buchanan's *Christian Researches*, Tennant also devoted his spare time to writing about the history, society, culture, and religious landscape of India while he travelled with his British regiment. Tennant has been given considerably less scholarly attention compared to Brown, Buchanan, and Martyn,<sup>21</sup> but the sources he wrote are more comprehensive concerning a chaplain's perception of India. Self-published during the first decade of the nineteenth century, he compiled three volumes of *Indian Recreations* from his observations while in India. In contrast to the other chaplains' writings, Tennant offers a more formalized perception of India's religious culture, which is helpful for identifying corroborations and contradictions across each chaplain's description of their encounters.

Documents written by Company chaplains provide the focal point through which their perception of the EIC, Christian missions, and their different interreligious encounters in India are examined. There are some challenges to be aware of when analyzing these types of

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<sup>21</sup>Tennant is not mentioned in any of the recent scholarly works used in this study. I have located him in an early nineteenth century British publication, *Public Characters of 1805*, by T. Gilet (London: St. Paul's Church Yard), and an early twentieth century work edited by Kilmaurs D. M'naught, the *Annual Burns Chronicle and Club Directory* (Glasgow: J. M. Munro Limited, 1906). Both provide some biographical information about Tennant.

sources, however. The most apparent is the Protestant and Eurocentric biases which permeate much of the chaplains' writings. To address some of the gaps posed by these biases, my analysis of these intercultural encounters has been shaped by a couple interpretive approaches which help grapple with their complexities.

The first interpretive approach uses what historian N. T. Wright describes as an “epistemology of love.”<sup>22</sup> In the context of history, this epistemology insists that “understanding the past means entering sympathetically into the minds of people in cultures very different from our own.”<sup>23</sup> While pure objectivity or subjectivity in one's interpretation of a particular history will either appraise from a distance or “gratify one's own whims or desires,” Wright believes that love transcends both approaches. In other words, when studying people of the past, “[l]ove means not just allowing others to be themselves but *relishing* them as being themselves, as being both other than ourselves and other than our initial hopes and expectations of them.”<sup>24</sup> As this historical study primarily focuses on the thoughts and actions of people, my interpretation of their encounters seeks to enter as best as possible into the minds of chaplains and their interlocutors with the aim of better understanding how they interacted with each under a range of conditions placed on them by their context. That includes systems of authority and power dynamics filtered through authoritative structures, such as the EIC's policies or India's caste system.

Alongside human subjects, and their perspective of the world they lived in, was the place of religion within that world. Importantly, scholars should seek to determine how to make sense of discrepancies between what the chaplains wrote regarding their interreligious

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<sup>22</sup>N. T. Wright, “Loving to Know,” *First Things* (February 2020).

<sup>23</sup>Wright, “Loving to Know.”

<sup>24</sup>Wright presents the same idea of a “hermeneutic” or “epistemology of love” another way in his book, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992): “When applied to reading texts, this means that the text can be listened to on its own terms, without being reduced to the scale of what the reader can or cannot understand at the moment” (64).

encounters (what they thought they saw), what was occurring from a Hindu or Muslim's standpoint, and whether the historian can form a better understanding of what was *really* happening between both sides of these encounters, regardless of critiques or misunderstandings they produced.<sup>25</sup>

In order to make sense across differing religious perspectives, this study uses the interpretive approach of critical realism as it is described by Christian Smith in his work, *Religion: What it is, How it Works, and Why it Matters*. Critical realism provides historians conceptual distinctions for making sense of reality, with one important distinction for this study being "between the real, the actual, and the empirical."<sup>26</sup> In short, Smith explains that the real "is what exists: material, non-material, and social entities that have structures and capacities," the actual "is what happens in the world, when entities that belong to the real activate their powers and capacities."<sup>27</sup> Finally, the empirical "consists of what humans experience or observe, either directly or indirectly."<sup>28</sup> These distinctions are also found in interreligious relations of the past. In the chaplains' encounters with Hindus and Muslims, the real comprised (among many other material and non-material things) the human participants, the religion of the participants, as well as other cultural structures to which they belonged. The actual was what occurred during these encounters, such as different forms of dialogue or religious practice. The empirical was the experiences of each chaplain and the observations they later wrote down about those experiences.

An epistemology of love alongside critical realism's distinctions both help to contextualize and analyze the chaplains' interreligious encounters. By attempting to enter their minds, a historian seeks the chaplains' worldview which, in turn, influenced their

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<sup>25</sup>Christian Smith, *Religion: What it is, How it works, and Why it Matters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). 8-9.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *Religion, What it is, How it Works, and Why it Matters*, 9.

<sup>27</sup>Smith, *Religion, What it is, How it Works, and Why it Matters*, 9.

<sup>28</sup>Smith, *Religion, What it is, How it Works, and Why it Matters*, 9.

empirical observations (writings) about the actual (interreligious encounters) as a product of the real past (people, culture, religious beliefs). The result is an interpretive approach that is simultaneously critical and trusting of the past reality portrayed through the chaplains' sources. It recognizes, from a critical standpoint, that not all information from the past can be taken at face value, while at the same time holding these sources with an open hand and trusting that they were formed out of intentions that can be identified through a thoughtful analysis of the text.

Exploring Christian-Muslim or Hindu relations historically does not come without its own limitations as well. The study of interreligious relations in general strives to accomplish a balanced analysis of each participating religious perspective by using (in this context) sources written by Christians, Muslims, and Hindus themselves.<sup>29</sup> This would ideally require a strong comprehension of languages such as Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, which is beyond my current skill set as an historical researcher. My discussion of Indian Hindu or Muslim perspectives in this thesis is therefore limited primarily to their portrayal through the chaplains' writings in English. Although Indian people likely came to know more about Christianity and the Bible through the chaplains' encounters with them, I am also not in a position to identify or describe what these impressions were by using a largely British Protestant source base. To address some of these limitations, I have done my best to contextualize where necessary the social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of Hindus and Muslims that chaplains encountered by using Indian histories. A few works that have helped accomplish this are Arvind Sharma's, *Sati: Historical and Phenomenological Essays*,<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>In her book, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, Avril Powell discusses the challenge of "gaps" and "inevitably some imbalance" that comes with her study's source base of Christian and Muslim texts, and the importance of using sources that are "sufficiently abundant, varied and, most important, two-sided, to re-create the evolving dynamic of the interchange" between missionaries and Muslims in British India (5). Her aim for a fair, two-sided account is good historical practice for studying interreligious relations of the past.

Gulifshan Khan's, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West during the Eighteenth Century*,<sup>31</sup> M. Mujeeb's, *The Indian Muslims*,<sup>32</sup> as well as C. A. Bayly's influential studies of Indian society during this period.<sup>33</sup>

The Company chaplains' encounters with Muslims and Hindus in India overlap with other historiographies as well, including the history of the EIC, Christianity and Christian missions in India, and, perhaps most pertinent to this study, interreligious relations in India.

Among the many histories of the EIC, those with a political or economic focus have been predominant in the scholarly realm. Philip Lawson notes in his attempt at a "more compact survey" in, *The East India Company: A History*, the range of studies that have already gone into understanding the events, historical trends, and power structures that developed during the Company's two-and-a-half-century existence.<sup>34</sup> In his book, Lawson argues that through the EIC's trading and territorial presence in India, "the East India Company changed its own *raison d'être* and introduced profound changes to the subcontinent and the part played by Britain in the global trade and diplomatic networks of the time."<sup>35</sup> He does leave some space for religion, however, in a short section titled, "Anglicanism versus Orientalism."<sup>36</sup> It offers a brief overview of how religion factored into the EIC's operation as a trading and governing power, and during its shift between these two identities.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Arvind Sharma, *Sati: Historical and Phenomenological Essays* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988).

<sup>31</sup>Gulifshan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West during the Eighteenth Century* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>32</sup>M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967).

<sup>33</sup>C. A. Bayly's works, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (India: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996) both examine this British Indian context at length.

<sup>34</sup>Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1993), ix.

<sup>35</sup>Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, ix.

<sup>36</sup>Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 149.

<sup>37</sup>Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 149-56.

Compared to Lawson's history and the many other political or economic histories he mentions, noticeably less focus has been given to the EIC and its relation to religion. This could be because the Company's main identity as a trading and later governing power has made the examination of its economic, political, or social history a more obvious path of inquiry than a religio-cultural approach. Penelope Carson's, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*, helps bridge this gap by exploring how the Company approached religion among its own personnel, how it treated the religion of Indian people, and how the Company's policy toward religious toleration in India and the dissemination of Christianity changed over the course of the Company's existence.<sup>38</sup> Carson also explores the larger dynamics and pressures between the British church, state, and public over the place of religion within the EIC's operations. She notes that the Company's policy concerning religion was affected by the "world of domestic politics" in which "the Established Church, Church Evangelicals, Dissenters, Government and the Company pursued complex aims," as well as "the world of British India," in which "territory was held by a mainly sepoy army and one in which the distance from England precluded close oversight of the actions of Company officials."<sup>39</sup> Both worlds were influential factors in how the EIC decided its stance on religion.

A couple noteworthy studies have been devoted to analyzing the Company chaplains as well. In *The Chaplains of the East India Company, 1601-1858*, Daniel O'Connor provides a survey of their role, which spans the Company's entire history. Taking a chronological approach, O'Connor interweaves developments related to the Company's role in India with the role that chaplains played in different contexts which ranged from voyages to garrisons to factories (trading establishments).<sup>40</sup> His study provides a helpful entry point for

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<sup>38</sup>Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*, 2-4.

<sup>39</sup>Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*, 4.

<sup>40</sup>O'Connor, *The Chaplains of the East India Company, 1601-1858*, 2, 24, 44, 95.

understanding who the chaplains were, why they were employed, and what their activities looked like within the Company. He also admits that his work is preliminary and that there are many more questions still to be asked of the chaplains.

Among these questions are those about the handful of “evangelical chaplains,” which Scott Ayler uses as the focus of his dissertation, “The Evangelical Chaplains in Bengal, 1786-1813.”<sup>41</sup> Carrying some topical overlap with my own analysis, Ayler explores five noteworthy evangelical Company chaplains who were employed under Charles Simeon’s direction, including Brown, Martyn, and Buchanan. His research, which takes a Church-history approach, is helpful for understanding the place chaplains had within Anglican Evangelicalism, and their impact on the history of Christianity in India. Where our analyses diverge is over my increased focus on the chaplain’s place within interreligious relations in India—an aspect that is recognized by Ayler but not given as much focus as his study of the chaplains’ unique contributions to Protestant Christian missions in India during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

There are also a few notable histories of Christian-Muslim and Christian-Hindu relations in British India. Among scholarly efforts to explore the subject, Avril Powell’s work, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, is exemplary.<sup>42</sup> She applies the Islamic tradition of *munazura*, a form of Muslim debate, to interpret encounters between missionaries and Muslims in India and how their dialogue was a product of this medieval rhetorical tradition.<sup>43</sup> Her work is insightful for understanding how Christian-Muslim relations played an important part in British Indian history, with the EIC providing an opportunity for chaplains like Martyn to engage with Muslims in India and Persia.

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<sup>41</sup>Scott D. Ayler, “The Evangelical Chaplains in Bengal, 1786-1813,” PhD diss. (University of Wales, 2009).

<sup>42</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 1-5.

<sup>43</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 12.

Alongside Powell's study is Brian Pennington's critical examination of Hinduism in India and its construction in the British imagination through European contact with Indian religion. In his work, *Was Hinduism Invented?: Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion*, he sheds light on how the British perception of Hinduism changed around the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> He argues that Britain's increased contact with Indian people had far-reaching implications for how both Britons and Indians *thought* about Hindu religious beliefs, and also how primarily Hindus *practiced* them.<sup>45</sup> Pennington and Powell's work both provide a detailed analysis of how British Protestant Christians engaged with Hinduism and Islam in India, but the chaplains' place within the broader history of Christianity and missions in India also requires some attention.

The chaplains' evangelistic activities are part of a larger history of Christianity in India dating back far earlier than they may have recognized in their own time. In *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*, Robert Frykenberg notes that Christianity in India long-preceded contact with European people via trading in the early-modern period.<sup>46</sup> Christianity is instead traced back to its missionary foundations in India during the earliest centuries C.E. His book follows a complex and dynamic process where political change, interreligious exchange, colonialism, education, and missions all played significant roles in the development of uniquely Indian forms of Christianity by the time of the EIC.<sup>47</sup>

While some studies have focused on interreligious dynamics in British India between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, or the rich history of Christianity in India, only studies like O'Connor's preliminary survey and Ayler's dissertation are devoted to understanding who the chaplains were, what they did, and why they are important for the history of the EIC and

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<sup>44</sup>Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?: Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-4.

<sup>45</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 4.

<sup>46</sup>Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*, 3.

<sup>47</sup>Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*, 6-7.

Christianity in India. This study will continue in their vein of research by addressing the aforementioned questions regarding the chaplains' engagement with India's religious culture, how these encounters impacted their efforts to further Christian missions, and why they are important for the history of interreligious relations in British India.

To begin to answer these questions, this thesis' chapters are thematically organized. Each one focuses on a particular form of interreligious encounter the chaplains participated in. Chapter One focuses on the chaplains' role in education to Indian people through their position as teachers, providing Anglo-Indian schooling for Indian youth and Company employees, as well as their proposals for educational models in an effort to spread Protestant Christianity in India. Chapter Two focuses on the chaplains as inquirers of Indian religious beliefs and practices, paying close attention to how their writing about Indian religion reflected a kind of proto-ethnography that produced differing stances among the chaplains toward Hinduism in particular. Chapter Three examines the chaplains' role as translators of the Bible into Indian languages, including their efforts toward learning the major languages of India, and the collaborative dynamics that occurred between chaplains and the Hindu *pandits* and Muslim *munshis* they depended upon throughout the translation process.

Education, proto-ethnography, and Bible translation were not the only kinds of interreligious contact chaplains had in India, but they are among the most prominent in their writings. Education was one of the earliest examples of these chaplains' formal exposure to the culture of Indian people. It was also an interreligious encounter that overlapped with the ambitions of the EIC, resulting in a strained dynamic between Company officials and Evangelicals over what the EIC defined as Christian missionary activity. To better understand this dynamic, a closer consideration of the Company's policies is required. For it is under these conditions that evangelically-minded chaplains used their appointed role as teachers to interact more closely with Indian people than they had prior to the late eighteenth century.

## **Chapter One: Teachers and Learners: EIC Chaplains and their Formative Exposure to Indian Religions through Anglo-Indian Schooling**

As the British East India Company (EIC) expanded into a territorial power in Bengal during the latter part of the eighteenth century, its administration addressed whether aspects of British culture ought to be introduced to their Indian subjects. Should English learning be offered? Should there be opportunities to share Britain's religious belief system? As a territory of Britain's empire, should British ideals and ways of life be introduced? These were the types of questions the EIC had to seriously consider as a new governing power in India. It was no longer just a trading company.

The history of the EIC's shift from a trading power only to a governing power is fraught with complexities, particularly as it relates to the role of religion within the Company. Penelope Carson notes how the Company attempted "to conduct itself as a sovereign power" in a foreign territory by wanting "interference to be kept at a minimum."<sup>1</sup> Its stance of non-interference implied a prohibition on Christian missionaries residing in its territories as early as 1662. This policy was part of the EIC's effort to maintain trading loyalties with Indian rulers who were usually either Hindu or Muslim. Evangelicals called for changes to the EIC's policy by the end of the eighteenth century, however. Desiring a Protestant Christian influence among the Company's own personnel via chaplains, while simultaneously respecting the predominant indigenous religious beliefs they had territorial control over, resulted in what Carson calls an "An Imperial Dilemma" for the EIC.<sup>2</sup>

The Company's governors faced two contrasting interests. On the one hand, the EIC sought to maintain its established policy which banned any Christian missionary activity within its territories, thereby maintaining non-interference with Indian ways of life. Any

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<sup>1</sup>Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion*, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Penelope Carson, "An Imperial Dilemma: The Propagation of Christianity in Early Colonial India," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 18 (May 1990), 1.

effort to introduce Christianity to Indian peoples was usually viewed by Company authorities as a threat to stable trade relations.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Evangelicals within the Company and back in Britain both advocated for the “improvement” of Indian society. For Evangelicals, social improvement correlated closely with their religious convictions. As Avril Powell notes, Evangelicals carried “the impulse to point out to others the errors of their ways, and the means after repentance, to achieve a state of spiritual certainty.”<sup>4</sup> For Evangelicals, the conversion and improvement of India ultimately depended on its people understanding and adopting the English language and Protestant Christianity.

Further complicating matters, the Company recruited Indian-born employees as early as the seventeenth century. This partly occurred because of employees marrying Indian women. Daniel O’Connor explains that “[t]he numbers of such ‘country-born’ children associated with the Company would ultimately far outnumber the Europeans in India.”<sup>5</sup> With the prospect of more Indian-born employees, the Company introduced a new clause directed at chaplains in its 1698 Charter Renewal. It stated that ministers “shall apply themselves to learn the native language of the country where they shall reside, the better to enable them to instruct the Gentoos,<sup>6</sup> that shall be the servants or slaves of the same Company, or of their agents, in the Protestant religion.”<sup>7</sup> This clause, in turn, provided a means for Company chaplains to interact much more directly with India’s religious culture despite being prohibited from missionary activities.

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<sup>3</sup>Carson, “An Imperial Dilemma,” 1.

<sup>4</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 76-77.

<sup>5</sup>O’Connor, *The Chaplains of the East India Company*, 88-89.

<sup>6</sup>The word “Gentoo” was a European term used to distinguish Indian people from Muslims prior to the use of the term “Hindoo.” In this chapter, the term “Hindu,” or, more broadly, “Indian people,” will be used instead.

<sup>7</sup>*The Law Relating to India, and the East-India Company; with Notes and an Appendix*, 4th ed. (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., Leadenhall Street, 1842), 4.

Yet, this concession to Christian instruction in native languages also raises the question: What *did* the EIC consider to be Christian missionary activity? From what O'Connor, Carson, and Powell have noted, missionary activity, in the Company's eyes, appeared to be anything that resembled explicit acts of preaching or evangelism in an effort to convert Indian people who were not Company servants, thereby interfering with India's culture and religious traditions.<sup>8</sup>

This definition left ambiguities, which allowed chaplains to pursue alternative means of engaging with India's religions without participating in overt acts of evangelism. Their responsibility as teachers of Indian people provided one notable method, which led to a direct exposure and interaction with indigenous India's religious systems. Chaplains accomplished this in part by either theorizing about or attempting to directly communicate Christian ideas in a variety of classroom contexts, most often to Hindu and occasionally Muslim students.

Rev. Brown, Tennant, Buchanan, and Martyn each went on to play influential roles in either developing or participating in systems of Anglo-Indian schooling, which combined aspects of both Indian and English learning about subjects such as reading, writing, or religion. Notably, each chaplain's perception of India's religious system changed and matured through their efforts to provide schooling for Indian students. Anglo-Indian schooling contributed to their larger goal of legalizing Christian missions to India, thereby factoring into the broader and much-debated effort to disseminate British Christian ideas to Indian people.

This chapter will chronologically evaluate how these four chaplains' involvement in Anglo-Indian schooling factored into their larger effort to evangelize Indian people, including

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<sup>8</sup>This definition intentionally conflates these historians' interpretations with the EIC's understanding of Christian missionary activity. Based on what Carson, Powell, and O'Connor note about Evangelicals' emphasis on conversion, the Company's religious non-interference stance, and the growing number of Indian-born servants, the EIC held parameters that were slightly ambiguous concerning what was Christian missions or evangelism.

the alternative forms of interreligious encounter which occurred across different educational contexts. In the end, schooling provided as much of an intellectual foundation for Indian students learning to read and write as it did for the chaplains' own cross-cultural education. The result of schooling was a formative exposure to India's religious culture where, in the classroom, chaplains were often learners as much as they were teachers.

Rev. David Brown was one of the first notable Company chaplains to take on the additional role of teacher. Prior to his arrival in India, Brown pursued his education at Hull grammar school and Magdalene College at Cambridge University.<sup>9</sup> Before graduating from university, he accepted a position as superintendent of the Bengal Military Orphan Asylum in February, 1785. He was married shortly after on March 4, 1785, and ordained as a deacon before making the long voyage to India later that same year.<sup>10</sup>

Not long after his arrival to Bengal in June, 1786, Brown was appointed garrison chaplain alongside his role of superintendent for "the care of a further 500 boys at the orphanage."<sup>11</sup> Shortly after, he voluntarily took on the responsibility of providing more Anglo-Indian schooling where he was stationed at a boarding school that he opened for "Hindu famine-orphans."<sup>12</sup> It was largely a self-directed project which relied heavily upon his own financial resources and those back in Britain he convinced to support the endeavour. By September 1787, Brown wrote with a sense of pride and enthusiasm to a friend at Cambridge that he was "beginning a native school of young Hindoos, who will not only be my scholars, but my family and property."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>A. J. Arbuthnot and Katherine Prior, "Brown, David," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>10</sup>Arbuthnot and Prior, "Brown, David," 1.

<sup>11</sup>Arbuthnot and Prior, "Brown, David," 1.

<sup>12</sup>Arbuthnot and Prior, "Brown, David," 1.

<sup>13</sup>David Brown, "To a Friend at Cambridge, Rev. M. H., Extract relative to Education, &c. of Natives, Orphan House, 10th Sept. 1787," in *Memorial Sketches of the Rev. David Brown: With a Selection of His Sermons, Preached at Calcutta*, ed. Charles Simeon (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1816), 224.

In many ways, Brown's educational project was a predecessor to future educational models that developed in British India during the early nineteenth century, such as fellow chaplain Henry Martyn's, as well as Thomas Macaulay's, who was a Secretary to the Board of Control in charge of overseeing the EIC. Macaulay was later "convinced of the cultural and religious importance of English," and advocated for Western learning in India during the 1830s.<sup>14</sup> Unsurprisingly, Western forms of education, together with Brown's own evangelical ambition, shaped much of his teaching approach and content used in classrooms.

One intrinsic motivation for Brown's orphan school was to provide Indian students with the knowledge of both the English and Bengali languages, as well as reading and occasionally writing. Each of these skills could serve as a necessary building block for transmitting and comprehending Christian ideas. This was Brown's hope. He considered his school to be "the first seed of Christianity sown on the native soil of Bengal..."<sup>15</sup> His reflections suggest that he was largely unaware of Christianity's well-established history throughout India by this time, likely due to there being so few Indian Protestant Christians where he was stationed. Nonetheless, the school was meant to further Brown's aim of spreading the Christian gospel. He expressed in his journal that "I have great opportunity here of speaking his word of truth..."<sup>16</sup> To his dismay, Brown saw little "fruit of it except in one person — a Teacher under me."<sup>17</sup> Nothing else is known about what Brown's relationship to him was like, but the chaplain did note that "[o]n his mind the gospel seems to have produced a gradual and abiding effect: this is encouragement amid my too fruitless labours."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Arthur Berriedale Keith, *A Constitutional History of India 1600-1935* (India: Halcyon Press, 1961), 162.

<sup>15</sup>Brown, "To the Rev. Mr. E. Chelsea, 1787," in "Extracts from Journal," 226.

<sup>16</sup>Brown, "To the Rev. Mr. E. Chelsea, 1787," in "Extracts from Journal," 226.

<sup>17</sup>Brown, "To the Rev. Mr. E. Chelsea, 1787," in "Extracts from Journal," 226.

<sup>18</sup>Brown, "To the Rev. Mr. E. Chelsea, 1787," in "Extracts from Journal," 226.

Evangelical sensibilities concerning sharing the gospel drove Brown and two other evangelical sympathizers, Charles Grant and William Wilberforce, to write up “A Proposal for establishing a Protestant Mission in Bengal and Bahar” in 1787.<sup>19</sup> Directed to the “Honourable East India Company,” Charles Simeon wrote in Brown’s biography that the proposal urged “the duty of imparting to [Indian people] the privileges which we enjoy, as well in a religious as in a civil point of view. He recommends the measure of translating the Scriptures into the different languages of the East, and the sending forth Missionaries to instruct them.”<sup>20</sup> Brown’s proposal called for a focused effort from which church and missionary activities could operate and spread throughout India. This lobbying was also yet another responsibility Brown took upon himself while managing his regular duties as garrison chaplain and superintendent alongside his orphan school.

As he toiled over the mission proposal, Brown continued to channel his evangelical ambitions into his teaching. To this end he described in detail the religious background of students and the type of curriculum taught at his orphan school. In one letter from 1787 “[t]o the Rev. Mr. M.,” Brown wrote that the school was

composed of Hindoo children at the age of about four years, forsaken in a time of dearth by their destitute relations: some are entirely orphans. They will be taught to read English and Bengalee. A translation of the New Testament by an able hand, a pious and learned gentleman, is now carrying on for this purpose; so that I hope they will soon read the scriptures in their own and the English language.<sup>21</sup>

Brown’s school was a kind of hybrid model of education, where aspects of both English and Indian learning were undertaken. The higher motivation, however, was always to transmit Christian principles, ideally in the form of Christian scripture, as Brown’s mention of incorporating a translated New Testament suggests. Brown’s model of Christian education

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<sup>19</sup>Charles Simeon, “Memorial Sketches, &c.,” in *Memorial Sketches of the Rev. David Brown: With a Selection of His Sermons, Preached at Calcutta*, ed. Charles Simeon (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1816), xiii.

<sup>20</sup>Simeon, “Memorial Sketches, &c.,” xiii.

<sup>21</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal,” 235.

was also primarily a one-directional mode of knowledge transmission, where the teacher communicated either languages or religious ideas to students. One might imagine the linguistic hurdles Brown faced as an English speaker who had to manage the teaching of a local Indian language, as well as English, to young children who were not very familiar with either. It was an ambitious goal, but Brown was up for the task despite many additional challenges.

Brown attributed the most imposing challenge to the broader intellectual state of most Indian people, whom he classified as being “sunk in ignorance.”<sup>22</sup> Here Brown’s European upbringing evidently influenced his own understanding of Indian forms of knowledge. Enlightenment thinking, coupled with Protestant evangelicalism, often starkly differentiated between contrasting categories, such as reason and ignorance or truth and superstition. For Brown, his confidence in the correspondence between reason and Protestant evangelicalism was, like many Enlightenment philosophies, “generally paired with suspicion or hostility toward other forms or carriers of authority (such as tradition, superstition, prejudice, myth and miracles), insofar as these [were] seen to compete with the authority of one’s own reason and experience.”<sup>23</sup> This suspicion of non-Protestant religion was a long-standing habit in Britain and other Protestant states. William Bulman argues that Christians emerging out of the Anglican Enlightenment “were eager to spot idols, superstitions, and other corruptions all over the world – among fellow Christians and infidels, in the past and in the present, and at home and abroad.”<sup>24</sup> The exercise of reason, as Brown understood it, scarcely existed among Indian people whose religious culture he believed was filled with superstitions and idolatry.

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<sup>22</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal, Calcutta, 1787,” 240.

<sup>23</sup>William Bristow, “Enlightenment,” in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

<sup>24</sup>William J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 215.

Brown's philosophical perspective was integral to his mission proposal. He argued that the "ignorance" of Indian people "form[s] a serious barrier to their conversion. They seem first to need improvement of intellect, to enlarge their number of ideas, before they have even a capacity to be instructed in Christianity."<sup>25</sup> For this reason, Brown wrote that "schools [were] the present favorite purpose" in his mind, hoping that "many [would] approve and promote the scheme at home."<sup>26</sup> His proposal also reflected a historical trend from Protestant England that often linked Christian missions and education together. Bulman explains that "[m]any of the English institutions and practices that were essential to later forms of outreach had been present in one form or another since the early seventeenth century."<sup>27</sup> Protestant evangelicalism paired with Western-style schooling formed a notable component of Britain's approach to missions,<sup>28</sup> so Brown's proposal for schools was not particularly innovative. It was, however, important within the context of the EIC's stance toward missions. His evangelical strategy through schooling did start to gain traction. Even though his proposal was turned down at the Company's Charter renewal in 1793, its ideas shaped discussions surrounding the EIC's stance on Christian missions in the early nineteenth century.

Brown's writing also reveals that he had other challenges in managing the orphan school beyond his pupil's religious outlook. For much of the time he struggled to keep it in operation and get enough financial support. This was due to a lack of success. Few Hindu children learned the languages, let alone Christianity. He reflected in one letter from September 10, 1787, to a friend at Cambridge that "[t]hey have much of the parrot, can easily

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<sup>25</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Journal," 241.

<sup>26</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Journal," 241.

<sup>27</sup>Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment*, 63.

<sup>28</sup>This was true for British Christian missions outside India as well. Bulman notes that, "The earliest acts of cooperation between Christian evangelism and English empire were focused on the northwestern Atlantic littoral" (63). One example of this cooperation was through education, which produced "praying Indians" among Indigenous peoples.

imitate and follow, but cannot go forwards of themselves.”<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Brown needed assistance in managing the school so he could fulfil other duties of his chaplaincy. He was therefore in an ongoing struggle to find suitable teachers, describing in one letter from 1789 that “the great difficulty is in finding a sober person to manage a school... I have had two masters, but they both proved profligate...”<sup>30</sup> Of all these challenges, the difficulty in finding proper support teachers was one of the main reasons Brown eventually suspended any further plans for the orphan school.<sup>31</sup>

While his need for adequate teachers was seldom met, Brown’s criteria for their qualifications sheds light on his view of one notable aspect of India’s religious system, Brahminism. He wrote that teachers should “possess such a share of science as may make their conversation interesting to the learned Brahmins...”<sup>32</sup> Brahmins were the priestly caste in India’s social structure, who carried high religious standing and authority. They were also a group of Indian people Brown distinguished as “learned,” and became a target of criticism in many of the chaplains’ writings on Hinduism. Clearly, Brown desired teachers who had the necessary skills to teach Hindu children but could also engage in intellectually stimulating dialogue with “the religion of the learned.”<sup>33</sup>

After a few years attempting this model of education at the orphan school, Brown chose to end it in lieu of new responsibilities he had taken on at a local British Indian church. He wrote in late 1789 that, “I am at present obliged to suspend this design, partly owing to the change in my affairs... and partly from a want of proper teachers.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal,” 239.

<sup>30</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal,” 253.

<sup>31</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal,” 253.

<sup>32</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal, 1789,” 251.

<sup>33</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal, On the Hindoos, 1792,” 258.

<sup>34</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal,” 253.

Even though his school yielded few results, it did contribute important groundwork for his mission proposal, particularly concerning the necessity of schooling for communicating Christian ideas in India. Scott Ayler observes that schooling implied a more “gradualist view” compared to other forms of missionary evangelism.<sup>35</sup> Gradualists held that “progressive exposure to Western thought and philosophy would eventually facilitate the rejection of other religions and the embracing of Christianity as part of a wider enlightenment.”<sup>36</sup> For this reason, in his proposal, Brown promoted the idea that schools could be “preparatory to the main business of giving Christian light to this land sitting in heathen darkness.”<sup>37</sup> While not evangelizing in accordance with the Company’s rules, Brown’s orphan school provided a form of interreligious engagement that exposed him albeit slightly to India’s religious culture, and gave him an increased awareness of and ability to engage with Hindus at an intellectual level. The slow but direct transmission of Christian ideas via schooling was a form of interaction also discussed several years later by Rev. William Tennant.

Tennant was another Company chaplain who advocated strongly for schooling and other educational strategies for Indian people. In 1795, the young and classically educated Tennant took on a military chaplaincy in Bengal, serving the king’s 78th regiment.<sup>38</sup> This occupation meant that he often moved throughout India to serve the religious needs of British soldiers. One biography notes that this frequent movement “afforded him an opportunity of exploring the country, and conversing with the native inhabitants, along a line of march of

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<sup>35</sup> Ayler, “The Evangelical Chaplains in Bengal, 1786-1813,” 253.

<sup>36</sup> Ayler, “The Evangelical Chaplains in Bengal,” 253-254.

<sup>37</sup> Brown, “Extracts from Journal, Calcutta, 1789,” 248.

<sup>38</sup> “Reverend William Tennant, L. L. D. One of His Majesty’s Chaplains in India,” in *Public Characters of 1805*, ed. Richard Phillips (London: T. Gillet, Crown-court, 1805), 398.

several thousand miles.”<sup>39</sup> Tennant’s “inquiries made upon the spot”<sup>40</sup> about Indian life and culture, published in the first volume of his *Indian Recreations*, later evolved into much more pointed and rhetorical statements concerning India’s intellectual state in the third volume he wrote back in England. Comprised of sections such as, “Inducements to Attempt the Improvement of the Condition of the Natives of India,”<sup>41</sup> schooling for Indian youth formed one integral part of his argument for India’s “improvement.”

Tennant’s journal entries indicate that he noticed educational activities already present in India, especially those led by Brahmins for “those of better fortunes.”<sup>42</sup> While in Calcutta, he wrote in 1798 how this teaching occurred in “a *pandal*, or room, made of beams and leaves of the palm tree. The youth sit on mats spread upon the floor. The books are made of leaves; and the pen is usually a pointed instrument, with which the letters are engraved.”<sup>43</sup> Indian-led education for youth, comprising entirely young boys, also had important economic and vocational motivations attached. From learning arithmetic, as well as reading and writing, “the Hindoo youth [was] prepared to enter upon his professional duty”<sup>44</sup> which, from among the “trading classes,”<sup>45</sup> would often be a mercantile job. While many of the literary skills Brahmin teachers provided their students were like the ones presented at the chaplains’ own schools, their intentions and purposes were very different. Rather than preparing for a

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<sup>39</sup>“Reverend William Tennant,” in *Public Characters of 1805*, 398.

<sup>40</sup>William Tennant, *Indian Recreations; Consisting Chiefly of Strictures on the Domestic and Rural Economy of the Mahommedans and Hindoos, Vol. I.* (Edinburgh: C. Stewart, 1803), vii.

<sup>41</sup>William Tennant, *Indian Recreations; Consisting of thoughts on the Effects of the British Government on the State of India: Accompanied with Hints Concerning the Means of Improving the Condition of the Natives of that Country, Vol. III.* 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1808), 37.

<sup>42</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations, Vol. I*, 196.

<sup>43</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations, Vol. I*, 196-197.

<sup>44</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations, Vol. I*, 197.

<sup>45</sup>Kenneth Ingham, *Reformers in India 1793-1833: An Account of the Work of Christian Missionaries on Behalf of Social Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 56.

family profession, Tennant believed British-led schooling could be an important and essential means for India's religious and moral reform.<sup>46</sup> Evangelically focused education could therefore play an important role in subverting the Brahmins' authority and simultaneously build Indian students' literacy for comprehending Christian ideas.

Both of these models—schooling for learning and applying vocational skills and schooling for comprehending religious doctrine—intersected in Tennant's strategy for instructing Hindus in the Protestant religion, what he described as “pure religion.”<sup>47</sup> Like Brown, Tennant wanted “to increase the influence of pure religion among the natives.”<sup>48</sup> To accomplish this, he wrote in December of 1796 that “you must begin by improving their knowledge; which can only be effected by instructing the youth.”<sup>49</sup> He believed that the minds of youth were the most impressionable, and therefore had to be prioritized over other age groups. A key opportunity he identified toward schooling young Indian boys came from their own families.

Tennant observed that some Indian parents did not oppose their children learning under European teachers. In fact, they could be quite eager to have their children acquire the skills of reading and writing English, “as the means of enabling them to prosecute some lucrative branch of trade, or of introducing them as upper servants in the employment of the British.”<sup>50</sup> Tennant appreciated that an Anglo-Indian schooling model was not only a means for communicating religious ideas to Indian people. It simultaneously served the socio-

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<sup>46</sup>Tennant appeared to only focus on one Indian form of education, while retired Major B. D. Basu noted in *History of Education in India Under the Rule of the East India Company* (2nd. ed. Calcutta: R. Chatterjee, 1867) that there were several present in India prior to 1813: “the instruction given by the Brahmanas to their disciples; the *tols*, or seats of Sanskrit learning; the *maktabs* and *madrasas* for Mohamedans; and schools in almost every village of note” (1).

<sup>47</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 214.

<sup>48</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 214.

<sup>49</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 214.

<sup>50</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 214.

economic ambitions of Indian families, often from “those of better fortunes,”<sup>51</sup> who invested in their children’s future profession.

Schooling was also a means, comparable to missionary evangelism and preaching, through which religious ideas could spread more efficiently and effectively. This was also a very Protestant notion at work in Tennant’s argument, which was that Christian faith was a set of propositions or beliefs that could be taught to Indian people. He asserted this by writing that through schooling provided by suitable European teachers, “the children of half a million of people in Calcutta might be taught to read and write: and a foundation laid for putting into their hands plain instructive books of morality and natural religion.”<sup>52</sup> Similar to Brown’s 1787 mission proposal, Tennant advocated for a system of schooling that, in theory, appeared very promising for evangelical goals. But the practical application of the theory was not easy. Tennant was quick to note the challenge of finding “sober and diligent Europeans, willing to confine their prospects to the painful drudgery of teaching in India.”<sup>53</sup> Although Tennant believed he had identified a key to successfully disseminating ideas of an improved religious and moral system for India, the human resources required in the form of teachers ultimately prevented ambitious attempts from actually happening, especially before the Company’s 1813 Charter renewal.

Not only did schooling appear more potentially effective than evangelical preaching for religious instruction, Tennant also believed that it needed to supersede other forms of evangelism if Christian ideas were to be comprehended by Indians properly. He went as far as to assert that “neither the zeal of our preachers, nor that of their employers, have been guided by requisite knowledge.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, Tennant believed that missionary efforts

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<sup>51</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 196.

<sup>52</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 215.

<sup>53</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 215.

<sup>54</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 269-70.

conducted thus far in India were being done in vain without putting in place a foundation of requisite learning for Indian people. This need for providing an intellectual basis to Indian people was like Brown's. It required them to learn languages, reading, and writing before presenting them with Christian ideas.

Tennant's educational strategy was therefore two-fold.<sup>55</sup> First, the current religious and intellectual state of India had to change so that, second, Christian ideas complemented by a new morality could be introduced with greater chances of success. Tennant asserted that "before the influence of true religion can be felt by the natives of India, we must reverse the order of proceeding, and begin the work hereafter, not by haranguing the multitude, but by teaching the youth—by increasing their knowledge, and improving their understanding."<sup>56</sup> As Brown and later Tennant had observed, Brahminism was a major cultural and religious force that hindered them from conveying Christian religious ideas convincingly to Indian people. Tennant lamented that "[u]nfortunately for the Hindoos, their Brahmins will not permit them to exercise the small portion of intellect which they are known to possess."<sup>57</sup> Tennant thought that, for Hindus, "every departure from the customary rites is held up by them as of all things the most sinful," and, as a result, "the attachment of a Hindoo to his faith and worship, is guarded equally by his ignorance and fear."<sup>58</sup> From Tennant's perspective, Brahminical authority did little to teach Hindus religious ideas, but instead "preserve[d] ignorance,"<sup>59</sup> thereby imposing a perceived intellectual barrier to "pure religion."

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<sup>55</sup>Although Tennant's following argument for schooling in India was written in 1808 for his third volume of *Indian Recreations*, much of it is based on his inquiries while he was in India from 1796-1799. In some instances, he incorporated passages verbatim from his first volume, published earlier in 1803.

<sup>56</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 278.

<sup>57</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 275.

<sup>58</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 275.

<sup>59</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 275.

In order to break down this barrier, Tennant's model of schooling proposed different levels of education. Schooling for Indian youth began by teaching literacy, and then a moral foundation that would encourage students to critically evaluate Brahminical teachings. Thereafter Christian ideas could be introduced. To support this notion, Tennant observed that "...the establishment of district and parochial schools, has proved, in Europe, the most successful method of communicating information, and, what is still more valuable, moral principles to the great body of the people."<sup>60</sup> His observation evinces a pedagogical hierarchy, revealing distinct levels of education that were taught in succession. Rather than coupling Christian ideas closely together with Western-style schooling, as Brown had previously attempted, Tennant's model worked its way up through each level of learning.

Tennant mapped a pattern of learning using this pedagogical hierarchy. His strategy became more apparent when he suggested that with "seminaries, of the kind now recommended, generally established in the country...The scriptures, and cheap books on morality and religion, might then be put into their hands."<sup>61</sup> Schooling needed to first address literacy and morality in order that Indian people "would be more able to regulate their own conduct, and to appreciate the truth and value of the Brahmanical doctrines."<sup>62</sup> Interestingly enough, it appeared that Tennant did not view Brahmanical authority or traditions as entirely bad. He still intended for Indian students to engage with Brahminism, and did not fully dismiss their teachings. His two-fold strategy therefore demonstrated the "gradualist view" that was in line with what Ayler identifies among the chaplains' schooling models.<sup>63</sup> After acquiring skills in reading and writing, the intent was for Hindus to morally reason with their own beliefs before hopefully adopting Christian beliefs instead. Although Tennant and

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<sup>60</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 279.

<sup>61</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 280.

<sup>62</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 280.

<sup>63</sup>Ayler, "The Evangelical Chaplains in Bengal, 1786-1813," 253.

Brown's underlying motivation for schooling was to spread Christian ideas, Tennant's hierarchical approach to education and its two-fold strategy of replacing Brahminical authority with Christian ideas appeared very much his own.

Unlike Brown's proposal, Tennant also looked outside Christianity. He wanted to know how Muslim teachers employed educational strategies to successfully spread religious knowledge in their territories. While writing Volume III of his *Indian Recreations*, Tennant referred in 1808 to "a report to a committee of the House of Commons, from the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company" from which he learned that in the Mandingo country of West Africa Muslim professors "formed seminaries, in which the Arabic language and the doctrines of Mahommed were taught."<sup>64</sup> The success of the Muslim teachers' efforts was evident because, within these societies, "the customs of Islamism were adopted... laws founded on the Koran were introduced... and in spite of many internal convulsions a great degree of comparative civilisation and security were introduced."<sup>65</sup> Not only was schooling with religious aims effective in his own familiar British Christian context, Tennant saw the method achieving success for another monotheistic faith. In his mind, the necessity for schooling for an indigenous population was shown by the fact that it worked across different geographic contexts and religious doctrines.

Although Tennant was not a teacher himself, his observations of India's intellectual state, the religio-cultural influence of Brahmanism, and his argument about the necessity of schooling to reform Indian morality and religion exhibits a theoretical discussion that few chaplains matched. Like Brown's proposal, Tennant argued that "virtuous habits, as well as useful knowledge may be communicated to the people, by establishing in each district, proper seminaries of education."<sup>66</sup> His argument differed from Brown's through its proposed

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<sup>64</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 337.

<sup>65</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 337.

<sup>66</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 351.

execution, however. Instead of using Christian materials and ideas to teach literacy, Tennant wanted to begin with literacy and progress up to teaching Christian doctrine once the requisite skills of reading and writing, and then morality, were acquired. He believed that schooling by British teachers would help towards “improving the condition of the natives of India,”<sup>67</sup> thereby bringing them closer to Britain’s ideal form of civilization for India.

If there was any doubt towards “the efficacy of that scholastic discipline,”<sup>68</sup> Tennant pointed his readers to another educational development already yielding promising results in Bengal: the College of Fort William, where “[m]any of the natives have already been taught, not only reading, writing, and philology, but are considerably versant in mathematics and history.”<sup>69</sup> The College was a Company-supported institution, at which another chaplain, the zealous Claudius Buchanan, was very active.

In contrast to Brown and Tennant, Buchanan’s early life was instead characterized by rebellious fervour; leaving his Scottish home with an incomplete university degree and travelling across Europe, unbeknownst to his parents.<sup>70</sup> His obstreperous character developed into a strong and expansive religious zeal when Buchanan turned his focus back to completing his Cambridge education. There he was influenced by friendships with rector John Newton, the Anglican clergyman and well-known “Amazing Grace” composer, as well as Charles Simeon. They both encouraged him to go to India as a chaplain.<sup>71</sup> He began this journey after completing his degree in 1795 and being ordained a deacon that same year.

After his arrival to India early in 1797, and in contrast to Tennant’s preoccupations travelling with his regiment, Buchanan’s initial years stationed in Barrackpore were

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<sup>67</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 351.

<sup>68</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 363.

<sup>69</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 363.

<sup>70</sup>Penelope Carson, “Buchanan, Claudius,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>71</sup>Carson, “Buchanan, Claudius,” 2.

spiritually challenging and unhappy. This was primarily because “[t]here was no church and no British regiment quartered there, and the climate was debilitating.”<sup>72</sup> The situation changed when Buchanan’s religious work as a chaplain came under the eye of Bengal’s governor general, Richard Wellesley, and his new educational project of Fort William College, established in 1800.

Rather than seeking to educate Indian youth in morality and religion, Fort William College employed a faculty of European and Indian teachers to instruct mainly young European men. The goal was to produce “a culturally sympathetic and responsive class of public servant.”<sup>73</sup> This aim to train prospective officers of the EIC was built upon the growing Orientalist movement, often comprised of scholars or political figures from the West who had a fascination and appreciation for the languages, cultures, arts, and literature of the “East.” This movement was promoted by the former governor general of Bengal, Warren Hastings, whose convictions shaped an influential credo of Orientalists in British India: “to rule effectively, one must love India; to love India, one must communicate with her people; and to communicate with her people, one must learn her languages.”<sup>74</sup> These orientalist goals could be bridged together with the evangelical sensibilities of several of the College’s teachers. Yet, Governor-General Wellesley pointed the College towards a socio-economic end. His overall vision was for the college to be an “Oxford of the East,”<sup>75</sup> preparing students to become both loyal British Indian subjects and personnel for the EIC.

Buchanan played a key educational role at the College. Impressed by his teaching abilities, Wellesley gave Buchanan the position of Vice-Provost; Rev. Brown was appointed Provost. Buchanan and other Evangelicals thought the College could provide a potential

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<sup>72</sup>Carson, “Buchanan, Claudius,” 2.

<sup>73</sup>David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 95.

<sup>74</sup>Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 21.

<sup>75</sup>Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 45.

means for evangelizing India. Buchanan's perception of himself as Vice-Provost thus fell in line with Brown and Tennant's thinking. The three chaplains viewed schooling as an important platform for Christian missions, with the College providing them a pertinent evangelistic tool. According to Hugh Pearson, a compiler of Buchanan's memoirs, Buchanan took this new responsibility with both sincerity and positivity. He expected the College to "enlighten the oriental world, to give science, religion, and pure morals to Asia."<sup>76</sup>

The College of Fort William, however, represented a different educational approach from the ideas proposed by Brown and Tennant. Its constituency included not only Evangelicals, and their missionaries and chaplains, but also prominent members of the British government. With the government directly involved, this meant more sufficient funding for a full-fledged academic institution. The other chaplains' educational models, schools, and breadth of learning materials, such as those attempted by Brown, paled by comparison to what the College offered. Compared to Brown's European-led orphan school, the College included a mix of English and Indian teachers, subjects, and students.<sup>77</sup> The execution of its curriculum and how it ran also drew notable contrasts from Brown's orphan school.

Firstly, Buchanan's memoir provides insights about the College's distinct goals for teachers and students. With the goal of "the better instruction of the junior civil servants of the Company,"<sup>78</sup> Buchanan was put in charge of professorships that were established "in the languages chiefly spoken and used in the different provinces of India, in Hindoo and Mohammedan law," as well as classes "in political economy, and particularly the commercial institutions and interests of the East India Company, and in various branches of literature and

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<sup>76</sup>Carson, "Buchanan, Claudius," 1-2.

<sup>77</sup>Kopf notes: "Between 1801 and 1805, the college... had evolved into an institution where fifty or more civil servants were being intellectually exposed to India in classrooms..." (67).

<sup>78</sup>Hugh Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan. D. D.* (New York: The American Tract Society, 1837), 154-155.

science.”<sup>79</sup> Secondly, the College employed a group of “learned natives,” who were expected to teach students, write translations, and compose “original works in oriental tongues.”<sup>80</sup> Two noteworthy figures, *munshis*, who were often Muslim native language teachers, and *pandits*, who were Hindu scholars, made up this body of Indian instructors. Within the learning environment of the College at least, chaplains were willing to cooperate with Hindus and Muslims over joint educational objectives. Thus, under the authority and endorsement of Lord Wellesley, the College began to shift British schooling efforts in India from solely European-led learning towards a collaboration with Indian scholars.

With the expectations of teachers and students established, Buchanan gave promising reports about the initial success of Fort William College. He wrote in one letter from 1801 that “[s]ome of the college students have already made most distinguished proficiency in the oriental languages,”<sup>81</sup> and he was also encouraged to see there were “some instances of a serious spirit of religious inquiry among the students.”<sup>82</sup> Even though Buchanan was not permitted to evangelize to Hindu or Muslim pupils, since it was “inconsistent with the rules prescribed to him as a chaplain of the Company,”<sup>83</sup> he still viewed his role as chaplain and Vice-Provost as a way that he had been “honoured as the instrument of the conversion of souls in India.”<sup>84</sup> Buchanan wanted to promote his evangelical views while working at the College. In fact, he tried to utilize the clause for religious instruction in the Company’s 1698 Charter to further his cause. He wrote later in 1806:

If by not disturbing the natives in the exercise of their religion it is meant that we are to use no means for diffusing Christianity among them, then... this pledge has been violated by every government in India, and has been systematically broken by the East India Company from the year 1698 to the present time. The charter of 1698

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<sup>79</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 155-156.

<sup>80</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 156.

<sup>81</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 160.

<sup>82</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 160.

<sup>83</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 163.

<sup>84</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 163.

expressly stipulates that they shall use means to instruct the Gentoos, &c. in the Christian religion.<sup>85</sup>

Buchanan expanded this line of argumentation during the early nineteenth century, producing a handful of works from his own observations that advocated for the establishment of Indian churches and sending of missionaries to Bengal.<sup>86</sup> Eventually, Buchanan did influence the role of religion within the EIC's jurisdiction, but not before his position at the College was terminated as a result of his overbearing zeal, O'Connor suggests.<sup>87</sup> The contrast between the religious views of evangelically-minded chaplains and orientalist-minded Company authorities went on to be displayed more prominently as the former's advocacy for Christian missionary activity in India continued until the 1813 Charter Renewal. Before then, however, schooling in either small-scale or larger institutionalized contexts appeared to be the most effective means for chaplains to directly disseminate Christian ideas to Indian people.

The College of Fort William's inaugural form only lasted until 1806, largely due to the establishment of Haileybury College in England. Despite this, Wellesley, and Buchanan under him, managed to keep the College operating under the reduced aim of Indian language learning and translation.<sup>88</sup> This form of educational institution was like what Brown and Tennant had argued for, one where reading and writing were fundamental to understanding religious knowledge, albeit more towards European than Indian students at the College. Even in its reduced form, however, Fort William College continued a trend in co-learning with Indian scholars. This collaborative teaching effort was displayed more prominently through the schooling attempted by Rev. Henry Martyn, who arrived in India in 1806.

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<sup>85</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 142.

<sup>86</sup>A couple of Buchanan's most influential works regarding this topic was his *Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India* (1805) and his *Christian Researches in Asia* (1811).

<sup>87</sup>O'Connor, *The Chaplains of the East India Company*, 114.

<sup>88</sup>O'Connor, *The Chaplains of the East India Company*, 114.

Historians have noted that while the evangelical chaplains “were not missionaries... the missionary spirit was strong with them.”<sup>89</sup> Martyn most clearly displayed this spirit. He longed to go to India as a missionary more than any other profession, but his financial circumstances resulted in him taking up a Company chaplaincy instead, once more under the guidance of Simeon.<sup>90</sup> After his time at Cambridge, Martyn made the journey to India, arriving at Calcutta in early 1806. He was then posted to military cantonments to serve his chaplaincy over the next several years.<sup>91</sup> Martyn’s first post was in Dinapore, where he initiated his own effort to engage with Indian people via education.

In October, 1806, while Martyn was stationed at Dinapore, he recalled a conversation with another chaplain, Rev. Marshman. Martyn wrote out the details of what Marshman thought Martyn’s best purpose was while working in India: “to stay in Calcutta a year to learn the language, and when I went up the country to take one or two native brethren with me, to send them forth, and preach occasionally only to confirm their word, to establish schools, and visit them. He said I should do far more good in the way of influence, than merely by actual preaching.”<sup>92</sup> This directive led to Martyn’s involvement in schooling for Indian students, which embraced a more cross-cultural format than any other chaplain examined thus far. What Brown had first attempted, Tennant had formally proposed, and Buchanan had zealously promoted, Martyn executed in a more comprehensive way: schools for Indian boys where languages and religious instruction were taught. Martyn’s role in schooling provided a notable entry point into his engagement with India’s religious culture. He had to deliberate

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<sup>89</sup>John W. Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company; A History of Indian Progress* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), 631.

<sup>90</sup>Avril A. Powell, “Martyn, Henry,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>91</sup>Powell, “Martyn, Henry,” 2.

<sup>92</sup>Henry Martyn, “Letters, &c.,” in *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D., In Two Volumes, Vol. I.*, ed. Rev. S. Wilberforce, M. A. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1837), 450.

carefully what he taught, and bear in mind with whom he was teaching, and those he was teaching to.

Even by Martyn's time in India, only six years prior to the Company's 1813 Charter Renewal, efforts to convert Indian people were met with mixed reactions by both Company personnel and native local Indians. While the general trend suggested that religious content and the use of Christian material to teach in Anglo-Indian schooling became more relaxed through the early nineteenth century, the EIC's ban on missions was very much still in effect. For this reason, Martyn recounted an EIC officer who "took upon him to call in question the lawfulness of interfering with the religion of the natives"<sup>93</sup> when Martyn had brought up the "practicability of establishing schools."<sup>94</sup> In another conversation Martyn had with a colonel, however, "[t]he colonel recommended my going much among them,"<sup>95</sup> referring to Martyn interacting with Indian people. At the outset of 1807, when Martyn began building a school at Patna, he was also met with a positive response by Hindu scholars. One *pandit* noted that "the people were glad at my building a school for the children, that this was an act of great holiness."<sup>96</sup> Being met with mixed reactions, Martyn still had to navigate the religious sensibilities of the students, and their families, he intended to instruct.

Martyn expressed concerns for how his educational plan would actually unfold, due to his audience's understanding and expectations of the school. When Indian people began affirming to Martyn the "noble" deed of "endow[ing] an institution for the instruction of young men in their own shaster,"<sup>97</sup> Martyn feared that parents would be apprehensive to send their children "when they find what it is the scholars are to be taught."<sup>98</sup> To counter the

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<sup>93</sup>Martyn, "Letters, &c.," 487.

<sup>94</sup>Martyn, "Letters, &c.," 487.

<sup>95</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," in *Journals and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn*, 1.

<sup>96</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 5.

<sup>97</sup>A "shaster," or *sha'ster*, was a treatise used to explain the Vedic texts of Hinduism.

<sup>98</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 5-6.

families' fears, Martyn opted to have non-Christian Indian schoolmasters managing each establishment he planned to oversee. His model of schooling therefore exhibited a stronger interreligious collaboration with Hindu and Muslim scholars through the professional relationships he formed with them, as well as their shared objective of teaching Indian boys to read and write. Even with these measures in place, there was still "much trouble and delay"<sup>99</sup> in running the schools for Indian children he had built in Dinapore, Bankipore, and Patna due to the cultural barriers between Martyn and Indian families.

Martyn's employment of Hindu schoolmasters as mediators between himself and the Indian students and their families produced a combination of misunderstandings and the need for clear, cross-cultural communication. Martyn was given promising initial reports of the schools being filled with roughly forty students, but these numbers quickly dropped because "the alarm was spread that I intended to make them all Christians."<sup>100</sup> Martyn wrote in his diary that one schoolmaster "very sensibly went to the parents and said, When he has made me a Christian, then do you begin to fear."<sup>101</sup> Similar reports were given to him by another Hindu *pandit*, who said "there was the same fear at Dinapore, till he went to the parents, and brought 10 or 12 himself to the school."<sup>102</sup> Martyn also took it upon himself to address a crowd of Hindu families who shared similar concerns. He explained to them that "it was not my intention to make them Christians as they understood it, i.e., to leave caste and be baptized; but to make them good men, and that if the parents would not send them, it was their fault not mine."<sup>103</sup> Martyn's address to the parents reveals a clear goal for his approach to schooling. He appeared to seek to avoid disrupting India's socio-religious structure through Christian conversion, in accordance with Company policy, while also using areas of

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<sup>99</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 45.

<sup>100</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 27.

<sup>101</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 27.

<sup>102</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 27.

<sup>103</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 27.

moral and religious teaching that were seen in Brown's, Tennant's, and Buchanan's involvement in schooling. Nevertheless, it was only by the assistance of Hindu schoolmasters that a basis of interreligious trust between teacher and student was formed. Without their help, Martyn would likely have failed to establish any contact with the parents at all.

Once the schools were established and finally operating properly, Martyn had to collaborate further with his schoolmasters over what content they would use to teach their students. One conversation with a *pandit*, schoolmaster, and scribe shows that great care and conscientiousness towards Hinduism was prioritized in this process. When thinking about "the books to be put into the children's hands," the schoolmaster suggested that if Martyn were to give a new Christian book while fears were still present, "the children would all fly."<sup>104</sup> Martyn's solution was to take a more gradual approach towards the introduction of Christian material. He used one of the schoolmaster's books, "an old Hinduwee poem, on an Avatar of Krishnu, which I am sure they cannot understand."<sup>105</sup> Not wanting to raise any further alarm, the chaplain was quite surprised at how much his "intentions were misrepresented, and suspected still,"<sup>106</sup> despite the reassurance given to Hindu families by the schoolmasters, Martyn himself, and the use of non-Christian materials for learning.

Another instance concerning appropriate learning materials illustrated Martyn's careful navigation of Indian religious sensibilities. He wanted to use a translation of the Sermon on the Mount to help students learn Indian languages. However, under the recommendation of his Dinapore schoolmaster, Martyn wrote that "with much reluctance I withdrew my book from them, and let them have their own, which is an account of Krishna's birth, or something like it, which if it does no good can do no harm."<sup>107</sup> In June, 1807,

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<sup>104</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 59.

<sup>105</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 59.

<sup>106</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 59.

<sup>107</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 66.

Martyn's translated copies of the Sermon on the Mount were finally "received without hesitation," and, to some encouragement, he wrote that, "I hear they are reading them at the Dinapore school."<sup>108</sup> Later diary entries provide accounts of Martyn hearing the school boys reading the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>109</sup> Martyn's Anglo-Indian schools continued until at least 1809, when he left for Cawnpore.<sup>110</sup>

Martyn's educational project was a successful engagement with India's people and their religious culture. This was largely thanks to his collaboration with both Hindu and Muslim scholars, who helped him navigate the nuances of the students' religious customs, while still accomplishing a shared objective of teaching them to read in their own language. He was happy to report later in a letter to his friend and fellow chaplain, Rev. Daniel Corrie, that "The Bankipore school is also going on well. I do not institute more till I see the Christian books introduced."<sup>111</sup> Martyn displayed cautious optimism with his schools but did not want to give off the wrong impression to the EIC of what he hoped to accomplish through them. The schools, according to Martyn, were supposed to make the students into "good men" by providing an intellectual foundation based upon language learning and eventually religious morality.

Even though Martyn's role as a teacher was a relatively minor endeavour in comparison to Fort William College, this does not discount the significant relationships he formed with both Hindu and Muslim people on a relatively respectful intellectual level. Ayler notes that Martyn's method of avoiding overt evangelism in the classroom and utilizing non-Christian schoolmasters also reflected a "strategy toward gradual social awakening."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 82.

<sup>109</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 311.

<sup>110</sup>Ayler notes that, prior to Martyn's relocation to Cawnpore, the four schools he had set up had approximately 120 students between them (134).

<sup>111</sup>John Sargent, *A Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D.*, 10th ed. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1830), 263.

<sup>112</sup>Ayler, "The Evangelical Chaplains in Bengal," 253-254.

Likewise, this gradualist approach had comprised notable portions of Tennant's argument for schooling, while Brown and Buchanan thought it was important that Western-style schooling comprised parts of their teaching contexts as well, whether small-scale or institutional.

Martyn, however, had the most success as an educator among these four chaplains by managing to eventually introduce Christian texts and their ideas to his Indian students. This was because he gradually introduced Christian ideas to his pupils, but also chose to work closely with Hindu and Muslim scholars in a form of co-learning that emphasized language comprehension, moral education, and religious ideas to Indian students.

Tracing each chaplains' involvement in schooling for Indian people, whether actively teaching, theorizing educational models, or overseeing classrooms, reveals that they found many opportunities to interact with India's religious cultures, even though they were not permitted to evangelize or convert anyone prior to 1813. Their attempts to find nuanced methods of introducing Christian ideas through instruction in languages and writing had varying results. Brown's individual efforts, although futile, and Tennant's formalized argument, both posited the necessity of schooling as an evangelical tool for enlightening and improving British India. Buchanan also advocated for the effectiveness of education under the jurisdiction of the Company and Lord Wellesley at Fort William College, although these efforts were directed more towards prospective European-born Company servants. Martyn's approach synthesized both the role of schooling as a foundational platform for gradually introducing moral and religious ideas, while also working collaboratively with indigenous scholars to effectively communicate these ideas.

Anglo-Indian schooling provided chaplains with a formative primary exposure to the religious cultures of Hindu and Muslim Indians, from a variety of backgrounds. As a result of their cautious approach, the direction in which religious ideas were communicated was much more reciprocal than the chaplains may have intended or were consciously aware. It might

have never occurred to them that there could be an exchange of ideas between teacher and student instead of a solely one-directional mode of transmission.

Over time, the Company's stance on Christian missions appeared to become more relaxed and ambiguous with each new educational project. Schooling overlapped the most with the chaplains' own evangelical ambitions, while the Company continued to assess how schooling could help with governance. During this transitional period, the Company did not carefully define what Christian missionary activity actually was, and chaplains pursued indirect modes of interreligious communication as a result.

The EIC's ambiguous policy also did not prevent any of these chaplains from devoting time to investigating India's religions outside of the classroom. Shifting away from knowledge transmission to Indian students, the chaplains also wanted to extract knowledge from India's diverse range of religious practices and customs. As Anglo-Indian schooling provided these chaplains a formative intellectual foundation for interacting with Indian Hindus and Muslims, their writings also resembled a kind of proto-ethnography that could provide a more effective means for understanding India's unique and highly varied religious culture.

## **Chapter Two: Border-Drawers and Bridge-Builders: How EIC Chaplains' Proto-Ethnographic Inquiries Shaped their Varying Perceptions of Indian Religion**

When William Tennant walked along the streets of Calcutta in March, 1797, he noted in his journal that “[t]he group of inhabitants that meets your eye in passing... is a multifarious mixture of adventurers of every complexion, and from almost every nation in the world.”<sup>1</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, the city of Calcutta was a multi-faith and multi-ethnic centre. Monotheist Christians and Muslims lived alongside people they claimed were polytheists, who came to be called Hindus. Despite the EIC’s policy of religious non-interference, encounters between people from different faiths were almost inevitable. The Company’s Christian chaplains continued pursuing various ways to engage with India’s religious culture outside prohibited activities of evangelism.

Anglo-Christian contact with India’s different people groups produced notable changes in their perception towards each other. The decades around the turn of the nineteenth century were pivotal for British understandings of India’s religious culture. Brian Pennington argues that “[s]ometime between 1789 and 1832, the British perception of Hindu religious traditions underwent a seismic shift.”<sup>2</sup> In just over three decades, the British public went from a state of ignorance toward Hinduism, to acquiring and circulating images, artifacts and stories from European contact with Hindus in India.<sup>3</sup> This contact produced a range of responses among British people.

Orientalists and Protestant evangelicals had contrasting responses concerning Hinduism. In the most general sense, they can be characterized as appreciation versus condemnation. These views continued to develop through the early nineteenth century as

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<sup>1</sup>William Tennant, *Indian Recreations, Vol. I*, 52.

<sup>2</sup>Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 4.

<sup>3</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 5.

each group acquired more information from increased contact with Indian people.<sup>4</sup> The relatively positive orientalist attitude was condemned by Protestant Evangelicals who argued that, “beneath a veil of confusion and contradiction, Hindu traditions operated with clear, regular, and sinister principles that demanded disclosure.”<sup>5</sup> From their writings, some Company chaplains appear also to have held this critical stance. Evangelicals’ observations often, *but not always*, reflected a critical response toward their encounters with Hindu people and practices in India.

A prominent theme throughout the chaplains’ writing was their desire to embark on evangelizing missions to India’s non-Christians. However, if chaplains were not permitted officially to evangelize within Company territory, it is worth asking why they continued to actively seek out and record their encounters with Hindus, especially when their job as chaplains prohibited them from interfering with Indian cultures. It appears that a desire to understand Indian religions coupled with motivations of evangelism and religious reform, most often led them to pursue contact with Indian people. The chaplains’ writings are informative for not only understanding the different reasons why they sought to learn about Indian religions, but also why they pursued the types of encounters they did, and why the chaplains viewed their encounters differently from each other.

There are two key terms which are helpful to consider when analyzing the chaplains’ observations about their interreligious encounters. Firstly, the chaplains’ writings about their contact with Hindus produced a form of “proto-ethnography.”<sup>6</sup> The sort of proto-ethnography

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<sup>4</sup>Although this shift in perception was seen primarily in British understandings of Hinduism, the presence of Islam in India brought with it unique interreligious relationships that also merit consideration, which will be given more focus in Chapter Three.

<sup>5</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 3.

<sup>6</sup>The term “proto-ethnography” is meant to suggest that there are aspects of the ethnographic research process reflected in the chaplains’ writings, but they also long-precede and do not fully align with the modern professional field of ethnography that was established in the twentieth century. Pennington implements the same term in his study to describe some late eighteenth century British works about Indian culture by William Ward as well (79-80).

undertaken by chaplains was a “descriptive study of a particular human society or the process of making such a study.”<sup>7</sup> In the chaplains’ case, their observations and interactions with Indian people, cultures and religions align with the idea of a “descriptive study,” which was either formally made into published works or informally written about in their journals and letters. This broad definition of ethnography accounts for the many kinds of interreligious encounters the chaplains experienced and recounted, and the primary mode in which they learned about their host culture’s religion while following the Company’s non-interference policy.

Secondly, the chaplains’ writings suggest that they held a certain understanding of religion, and Indian religion in particular. This understanding combined the theological beliefs of a people group with the cultural practices through which they lived out in their everyday lives. Christian Smith’s conceptual definition offers further clarity, arguing that religion “is best defined as a complex of culturally prescribed practices that are based on premises about the existence and nature of superhuman powers.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, in this chapter the term, “Indian religion,” means any person, phenomenon, or practice that the chaplains perceived as having to do with superhuman powers.

The chaplains’ reflections about their encounters with Hindus show that they each took differing stances toward Indian religions.<sup>9</sup> In their effort to make sense of Hindu people and the practices chaplains observed, they inhabited a polarity between bridge-building and

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<sup>7</sup>T. Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ethnography," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (December 6, 2020).

<sup>8</sup>Smith, *Religion, What it is, How it Works, and Why it Matters*, 3.

<sup>9</sup>Another useful concept for interpreting the chaplains’ encounters with India’s religions is Mary Louise Pratt’s “contact zone,” which is defined in her work, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992). It is “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). The chaplains’ own encounters displayed some aspects of Pratt’s definition, most notably their geographical and historical separation from Indian Hindus.

border-drawing. These contrasting stances were informed by their theologies and their imagined audiences, ranging from themselves to the evangelical public, up to the British government. Although the chaplains' Protestant evangelical theology with its focus on the need for conversion to achieve salvation suggests they would primarily draw distinctions (borders) between their beliefs and their informants, their observations indicate that they found religious similarities (bridges) between them as well. Despite each chaplain maintaining strong theological boundaries, there were some notable instances in which they attempted to build conceptual and practical bridges between Christianity and what they understood as Hinduism.

When the chaplains observed similarities between Christianity and Indian religions and did so in a way that their Indian interlocutors might recognize, they displayed what Hans-Georg Gadamer called a "fusion of horizons."<sup>10</sup> Gadamer's phenomenological notion of "horizons" and the "fusion of horizons" is especially applicable to the chaplains' perception as religious bridge-builders. Some moments in the dialogue between chaplains and their Indian interlocutors produced an agreement between their differing theological understandings by establishing this common framework or horizon.<sup>11</sup> However, the chaplains' writings also reveal that they perceived significant differences, often with a tone of condemnation. Their Protestant view on idolatry in particular affected their responses to certain rituals and beliefs. As a result, they viewed most Hindu rites as instances of the sin of idolatry.

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<sup>10</sup>Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2006), 305.

<sup>11</sup>In Gadamer's, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2006), he explains that "[t]he horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth" (301). Arriving at what is "common" between two horizons therefore results in the "fusion of horizons," where both sides come to a fuller understanding of the subject at hand.

Henry Martyn's writings show that he held a bridge-building and a border-drawing stance depending on what interreligious context he was in. He left behind a very private, reflective, and candid genre of writing in the form of journal entries written between 1806-1810. Unlike other writings that we will consider in this chapter, Martyn's journal lacked a thematic structure. Furthermore, Martyn did not write his journal to persuade anyone of his portrayals of India or its people. Thus, Martyn reported interreligious encounters in an effort to interpret his experiences mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Martyn wrote often in his journal about interpersonal encounters and relationships. Soon after being stationed at Aldeen, near Serampore in April 1806, Martyn recounted his discussions with educated Indians, including *munshis*, who were employed to help chaplains learn Indian languages. In May 1806, Martyn met with the older Rev. Brown in Serampore, who had provided him a place to stay. During his time there, Martyn had a long conversation with "Mr. Brown's moonshee, a Brahmin of the name of B. Roy" who "came in and disputed with me two hours about the gospel."<sup>12</sup> Martyn's journal provides a detailed description of his impressions from their theological dispute. He noted that Roy intended "to show that Christianity and Hindooism did not materially differ. He asked me to explain my system, and adduce the proofs of it from the Bible, which he said he believed was the word of God."<sup>13</sup> When Martyn asked Roy "about his idolatry, he asked in turn, what I had to say to our worshipping Christ," which led to inquiries about the Trinity, and "after hearing what I had to say, he observed was actually the Hindoo notion."<sup>14</sup> Despite their conflicting theological viewpoints, Roy's assertions appeared to convey Hindu theology in ways that connected with Martyn's own Christian beliefs.

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<sup>12</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 446.

<sup>13</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 446.

<sup>14</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 446.

Martyn's dialogue with Hindu scholars like Roy more often centred on similar theological ideas rather than diametrically opposing beliefs. Their dispute provided them a new awareness of religious similarities, with Martyn and Roy both attempting to build bridges of meaning between their worldviews. Their effort to understand each other's religion enacted a "fusion of horizons," as both reached a common ground of understanding. Martyn's use of evidence from the Bible and Roy's assertion that both theologies were, in essence, the same, broadened their understanding of not only each other's religion, but also their own.

In addition to dialogue, Martyn encountered and observed different Hindu religious practices and customs. For example, his journal describes a few observations of two prominent Hindu practices: the worship of what the British called "Juggernaut" and the burning of wives on their husband's funeral pile, known as *sati*.<sup>15</sup> Both of these religious practices were often criticized by the chaplains and influenced their view of India's religious culture as a whole.

Early nineteenth century Britons like Martyn misunderstood the meaning of Juggernaut, a term that was used interchangeably by British writers to identify the sacred geographic location of temples to Juggernaut, as well as the Hindu deity, *Jagannath*.<sup>16</sup> Some of Martyn's first observations about *Jagannath* occurred shortly after his arrival to India in June 1806, when he witnessed the yearly Hindu festival, *Ratha Yatra*, or Chariot Festival.

On June 19th, Martyn went with Brown for an evening walk to a nearby bazaar. According to Martyn, this bazaar was held during that time of the year "for the use of the people assembling at Juggernaut."<sup>17</sup> Here he viewed the large chariot of *Jagannath* for the

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<sup>15</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 5.

<sup>16</sup>The name *Jagannath* originated from Sanskrit, while the name Juggernaut was an English word derived from it (Pennington, 94-95). The use of the term "Juggernaut" in this chapter will be used when referring directly to the chaplains' descriptions. In most other cases, *Jagannath* will be used instead.

<sup>17</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 458.

first time, describing that “[t]he booth or carriage was fifty feet high, in appearance a wooden temple, with rows of wheels through the centre of it.”<sup>18</sup> As the festivities of *Ratha Yatra* continued into late June, Martyn and Brown later witnessed *Jagannath’s* car being pulled back to its pagoda. His journal describes that thousands of people were present shouting “acclamations” at the car which was decorated with numerous flags and carried Brahmins who walked around receiving offerings of fruit for their deities and throwing down wreaths of flowers for worshippers to wear.<sup>19</sup> When the car reached the pagoda, Martyn explained that “the god with one or two attending deities” were let down with ropes as worshippers participated in singing, playing drums or cymbals, and prostrating themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Martyn wrote that these Hindu practices “excited more horror in me than I can well express.”<sup>21</sup> Considering the Reformed ideology that had long characterized Protestant views on the veneration of images in worship, regarded as idolatry, Martyn unsurprisingly held a negative stance toward “the stumps of images” he saw some Hindus prostrating themselves before.<sup>22</sup> Yet, what held him back from wanting to “stammer out in Hindoostanee, ‘Why do ye these things?’ and to preach the gospel,” was not the Company’s policy on cultural interference, but rather his lack of fluency in “Hindoostanee,” or Urdu.<sup>23</sup> This led Martyn to believe he “should not have been understood,”<sup>24</sup> if he turned the crowd’s attention to him.

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<sup>18</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 458.

<sup>19</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 461.

<sup>20</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 461-462.

<sup>21</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 461.

<sup>22</sup>The chaplains’ Protestant evangelical view on idolatry was largely a product of the Reformation. Carlos Eire explains in his book, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), that as “medieval Catholic piety suddenly began to be attacked in some places as “idolatry,” or false religion” (2), iconoclasm later became the “inevitable outcome of Reformed ideology” (279). Reformed ideologies towards the veneration of images in worship had their own evangelical strain which permeated the chaplains’ writings, providing a notable example of how they drew borders between Christianity and Hinduism.

<sup>23</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 461-462.

<sup>24</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 462.

Martyn's description and response to Hindu forms of worship derived from his Reformed Protestant theology. From Martyn's perspective, Hindu festivity centred on *Jagannath* was viewed synonymously with idol worship. It was common for evangelical Protestants encountering Hindu worship traditions to resolve their confusion about what they saw within their own Christian categories, influenced by anti-Catholic polemic. Thus, they correlated Hindu ritual with the idol worship described in the Bible.<sup>25</sup> Martyn's understanding of idolatry from the Bible,<sup>26</sup> as well as his stance on images of the divine, contrasted the Hindu theology of *murti*.<sup>27</sup> Viewed in Hinduism as "the physical object of Hindu worship, various in the forms and names of the different gods and goddesses it assumed"<sup>28</sup> *murti*, literally meaning embodiment, were not gods. Martyn's response to *Jagannath* was therefore more Protestant than Christian. A Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christian, by comparison, may have been more focused on the similarities of rituals around the veneration of statues or images. In this instance, Martyn's theology did not permit him to make a connection, or build a bridge, between his beliefs and those of devout Hindus.

While the ritual of *Jagannath* was viewed by Martyn from the Protestant Christian theology of idolatry, he also viewed the practice of *sati*, which means "good wife" or "faithful wife," as a form of human sacrifice. Martyn wrote a letter to Lydia Grenfell describing his experience viewing the aftermath of *sati*. He told her that "I have been just interrupted by the blaze of a funeral pile, within a hundred yards of my pagoda—I ran out—but the wretched woman had consigned herself to the flames before I reached the spot—and I

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<sup>25</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 19.

<sup>26</sup>The language in Exodus 20:4-5a probably would have influenced Martyn's understanding of idolatry: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them..." (KJV).

<sup>27</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 59.

<sup>28</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 59.

saw only the remains of her and her husband.”<sup>29</sup> In response, Martyn internally cried out “O Lord, how long shall it be? O I shall have no rest in my spirit till my tongue is loosed to testify against the devil,” and afterwards “stammered out some thing to the wicked Brahmins about the judgments of God upon them for the murder they had just committed, but they said it was an act of her own free will.”<sup>30</sup> Martyn further explained to Lydia that “[s]ome of the missionaries would have been there, but they are forbidden by the governor-general to preach to the natives in the British territory.”<sup>31</sup>

The Brahmins who spoke to Martyn tried to bridge the chasm of understanding between the different religions by asserting the widow’s act was of her own free will. The language of “free will” and its theological implications for Christian missions, or perhaps the Christian act of martyrdom as another point of comparison, both could have resonated with Martyn as a Protestant evangelical. Beyond these notions, however, there was little within his theological framework that helped the Brahmins and Martyn arrive at a mutually agreeable interpretation of the practice. To make matters more complicated, *sati* was a contested topic within Hinduism itself. Arvind Sharma notes that the Brahmins held differing stances on the practice historically, with their attempts to dissuade people from the practice before 1600 undergoing a reversal, leading to a revitalization of the ritual by the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>32</sup> Sharma also analyzes the sanction of *sati* through the lens of Hindu literature, noting that “while it is clear the custom of *sati* is alluded to in the Vedic verses, it is equally clear that it was not practiced.”<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, from a Protestant evangelical viewpoint, Martyn could not make sense of any theological significance *sati* had for Hindu widows and their husbands. Instead, he saw it simply as an act of senseless sacrifice encouraged by the

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<sup>29</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 499.

<sup>30</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 499.

<sup>31</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 499.

<sup>32</sup>Sharma, *Sati: Historical and Phenomenological Essays*, 27-28.

<sup>33</sup>Sharma, *Sati: Historical and Phenomenological Essays*, 38.

Brahmins. Martyn drew a border between Christianity and Hindu religion, in contrast to the relatively open-minded, bridge-building Hindu scholars he encountered.

Martyn's account of *sati* encapsulated much of his experience as a chaplain attempting to interact with Indian religious culture, and the broader state of Christian missions in British India prior to 1813. Until the EIC's Charter renewal, chaplains like Martyn could only observe and comment upon Hindu beliefs and practices they deemed wrong in a journal or private correspondence. Other chaplains' letters were later published that informed readers of their restricted position, including Martyn's overseer, Rev. Brown.

Like Martyn's diaries, Brown's letters may be viewed as a kind of informal proto-ethnography. They contained observations about Hindu customs, beliefs, and practices that were still largely unfamiliar to most Europeans. The letters usually contained fairly candid impressions Brown reported back to himself or close friends in England. Brown's *Memorial Sketches*, edited by Charles Simeon, mostly concern his initial years in India—a time when the orientalist attitude of toleration and even appreciation for Hindu culture was predominant.<sup>34</sup> However, more critical stances were also starting to form. Notably, the tone and perspective in Brown's letters vary according to the addressee.

Brown first encountered Indian religion via a combination of learning Sanskrit and reading Indian texts. In 1792, Brown wrote to a friend about these endeavours, suggesting how his job as a chaplain made investigating Indian languages, texts, and religious beliefs, a slightly controversial matter:

It is twelve months since I entered upon the determination of studying Shanscrit. I have found means in abundance, and could have given you earlier notice of my inclination and progress. I get on quietly, and in private, though without affecting to make a secret of the matter. Mr. Chambers knows of it, and so does Sir Wm. Jones; and though I mentioned it to neither, I am encouraged by both. What I acquire, I make no subject of conversation, but as an inquirer.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 149.

<sup>35</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Recent Correspondence," 256-257.

Although Company personnel like Jones were aware of Brown's activities,<sup>36</sup> they did not inhibit his progress, and even encouraged him, because Brown largely kept to himself regarding these subjects. What might have worried other Company personnel, however, was what they thought Brown intended to do with his study of Sanskrit and Hindu texts: evangelism. Nevertheless, Brown pursued this learning privately by acquiring books through "Sir William's pundit," and from Jones himself, reading a copy of his "Hetopades" or Hitopadesha, a text of Indian fables, which was translated into English from Sanskrit. He also received books from "Mahrattas," India's princely caste, and "Cashmerians," inhabitants of North-Western India, in order to "collect materials for a thorough display of Hindooism."<sup>37</sup> His desire to develop a comprehensive understanding of Hinduism eventually led Brown to seek out in-person encounters with Hindus as well.

Despite his efforts to acquaint himself with Hindu texts and observe Hindu customs, Brown realized that there was still much to learn about this religion. He admitted that Hinduism's "system is extremely complex, and it is therefore very easy to misrepresent it. The moral state of the people is more palpable, and the grossness of the lower orders more open to attack. It is a great pity so little is yet known of their book religion, facts would arise out of what is written, that would be the best instruments to overturn their superstition."<sup>38</sup> Although Brown was unimpressed by the moral condition of ordinary Hindu people, especially the lower caste Dalits, he acknowledged his own lack of understanding and did not want to misrepresent Hinduism in all of its complexity.

In this letter Brown also drew a distinction, used formerly in reference to schooling, between "the religion of the learned and that of the common people."<sup>39</sup> He wrote that "the

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<sup>36</sup>Sir William Jones was a philologist and judge for the Supreme Court of Judicature in Fort William in Bengal.

<sup>37</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Recent Correspondence," 257.

<sup>38</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Recent Correspondence," 257-258.

<sup>39</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Recent Correspondence," 258.

learned are as subtle and ingenious as the most skilful of the papists, and require similar arguments to subvert their system.”<sup>40</sup> He changed some of his ideas about Hindus, however. For example, he noted that he saw “less difference than I expected between the natural man within the pale of the church, and among the informed heathen.”<sup>41</sup> This “natural man” likely referred to the apostle Paul’s distinction between the “spiritual man” and the “natural man,”<sup>42</sup> who did not understand or accept the things of the Spirit of God. By this he appeared to imply that he perceived little difference of the understanding and conduct between an educated, highly devoted Hindu, and an uneducated, tepid Christian.

Furthermore, Brown identified certain “scattered rays of truth,”<sup>43</sup> or parallels between Christianity and Hinduism that could be used to foster conversion. In a letter of 1792, he distinguished “the Yogeas,” or *yogis*, Hindu masters of meditation and yoga, from many of the other Hindu groups, describing them as “a wonderful people, purely mystic... they are learned, and, by imaginary excesses, attain heights of enthusiasm that Jacob Bhemmen never could have conceived.”<sup>44</sup> Jakob Böhme, to whom Brown was referring, was a well-known medieval German philosopher, Christian mystic, and theologian. Although Brown may not have shared much of Böhme’s theology, he saw a similarity between Christian and Hindu mysticism which he positively acknowledged in the religious devotion of the *yogis*.

The activities of Hindu *pandits* were also portrayed positively by Brown. He described them as “bookish” and “secluded” as well as “simple, mild, and inoffensive to a great degree.”<sup>45</sup> The lifestyle of *pandits* could have brought to his mind the practices of

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<sup>40</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 258.

<sup>41</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 258.

<sup>42</sup>1 Cor. 2:14-16 (NIV).

<sup>43</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 258.

<sup>44</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 259.

<sup>45</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 259.

monks, who he also appeared to take little issue with.<sup>46</sup> Although Brown had a positive-to-neutral view of *yogis* and *pandits*, they appeared to be anomalies when compared to his descriptions of other Hindu social groups.

Brown thought Brahmins were “ignorant [people]... whose craft, pride, and villainy, outdoes the Jew pharisee.”<sup>47</sup> Here Brown judged some Hindu religious and social structures through a Christian Biblical perspective. The Brahmins were like the Pharisees of the New Testament—a religious group that Jesus often critiqued for excessive adherence to the Torah. The Brahmins’ relation to Shudras, the lowest Hindu caste, also factored into Brown’s interpretation of them. He often used biblical parallels as a means of conveying the Brahmin’s role to his Christian audience.

Brown’s understanding of caste relations in India arose from his visitation and observation of Hindu social contexts. For example, he spent time “at a Bramin’s house.” There he “heard a wonderful man, a Pooranee, explaining their shasters with astonishing address and elocution.”<sup>48</sup> The meaning and religious position of a Pooranee is ambiguous, but the *shas’ters* they read were often treatises or authoritative instructions for Hindus that helped explain the Vedas, the ancient Hindu scriptures. In a letter from 1792, Brown described in detail what he observed while the Pooranee spoke:

...he frequently made the people burst into tears and weep aloud. Whenever their passions were touched with any pathetic passage, the man obtained several rupees, thrown to him both by Bramins and Sudders; the latter attended their donation with a pernaum or act of worship to the Pooranee. The Sudders, as you know, are taught to worship the Bramins, and they do it by pernaum, or a profound reverence, touching the ground with their head while they pronounce the salutation; then the Pooranee, holding out his hand in a converse manner, says, ‘Isho’, i.e. Come; amounting to absolution...<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>There is little mention of Brown’s evident appreciation for the life of a monk, but he does not criticize their lifestyle either. In one sermon, he viewed Martin Luther positively as a monk in the context of the Reformation and the later establishment of the Church of England (Sermon V., January 1, 1809), 392.

<sup>47</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 259.

<sup>48</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 266.

<sup>49</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” 266-267.

Brown appeared to try and make sense of the different Hindu words and gestures dispassionately. However, his negative sentiment or judgement about the Brahmins became apparent afterward, pronouncing the Shudras' worship of them as wrong. He went as far to write that "[t]he Bramins are the true idols, while they carry about with them the power of absolution; and to break off their yoke will not be easy."<sup>50</sup> Brown distinguished here the line between true and false religion: Brahmins and Hindu images were, in his mind, idols.

Brown's Protestant theology informed his stark contrasting of Hindu and Christian customs. His writing suggests an unwillingness to understand what was really happening, from a Hindu's perspective, between Shudras and Brahmins. Instead, Brown believed that amidst Hinduism's many idols was the Brahmin, who he thought missionary-minded Christians ought to be most concerned about. Their "yoke" likely brought to a Christian reader's mind the New Testament's description of Jesus' yoke, or Paul's caution of being "unevenly yoked" with unbelievers.<sup>51</sup> Both allusions aimed to convey the Brahmins as misleading ordinary people from genuine religion. Brown sought to gain knowledge about Hinduism's structure and intricacies that he could use to subvert the authority of the Brahmins.

Having lived in India for seven years by 1792, and after conducting many inquiries via reading, observation, and conversation about Hinduism, Brown acknowledged that "I am such a novice yet, that I am ashamed to say anything; and afraid even of communicating what I have collected, lest I mistake what I state, for want of a more leisurely and thorough investigation."<sup>52</sup> Yet, after Brown's first ten years in India, his writings make little mention of further investigation. Brown's desire for "a collection of authentic facts, and a thorough

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<sup>50</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Recent Correspondence," 267.

<sup>51</sup>Matt. 11:29-30, 2 Cor. 6:14 (NIV).

<sup>52</sup>Brown, "Extracts from Recent Correspondence," 268.

insight both into their books and practice,” did not come to fruition out of his own efforts because more “travel and reading [were] necessary.”<sup>53</sup> His numerous professional responsibilities suggest that he had neither the time nor the energy for such an endeavour. What he had managed to learn from his encounters, however, points to a growth in his understanding of Hinduism. Brown attempted to build bridges of meaning, while also drawing borders between Hinduism and his own Christian beliefs and practices. Fourteen years later, Claudius Buchanan embarked on his own journey through Southern India. He eventually wrote an account of Hinduism that drew even more stark distinctions between his own faith and those of Indian people.

Buchanan’s zealous attitude for furthering the Christian cause in India was on full display in his *Christian Researches in Asia*. While serving as Vice-Provost at Fort William College, he took it upon himself to make two tours throughout Southern India, along the Malabar Coast, in 1806 and 1807.<sup>54</sup> He embarked on these travels using primarily his own financial resources, and later published his findings for the British public in 1811.<sup>55</sup>

Buchanan’s intentions were stated explicitly in the preface to his work. He hoped to “obtain a distinct view of the state of Christianity and of superstition in Asia” that would supersede contradictory accounts that had been provided thus far by other superintendents of Fort William College through their “correspondence with intelligent persons in different countries.”<sup>56</sup> Buchanan aimed to provide what he believed to be an account of “the real state” of both Christianity and different inhabitants of India in relation to the progress and further prospect of Scripture translation into Indian languages. Thus, his travels were devoted “to purposes of local examination and inquiry” of a variety of geographic locations, people

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<sup>53</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence,” from a letter written in 1792.

<sup>54</sup>Carson, “Buchanan, Claudius,” 3.

<sup>55</sup>Carson, “Buchanan, Claudius,” 3.

<sup>56</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 259.

groups, and religions in India and beyond.<sup>57</sup> For the purpose of understanding his contact with and observation of Hinduism, Buchanan's portrayal of "The Hindoos" is the most pertinent.<sup>58</sup>

Buchanan's work is dissimilar from Martyn's and Brown's accounts in important ways. Martyn's journal and Brown's letters contained observations and reflections based on different forms of contact, observations of religious practices and beliefs. Their writings also were a means to make sense of their experience in India as chaplains. As a result, their works are a collection of intermittent observations and impressions of Hindus that were usually informal, candid, and not meant to be shared with a reading public.

In contrast, Buchanan's writing exhibited a systematic approach organized by different religious categories, with the entirety of his work devoted to a kind of proto-ethnographic inquiry. While Martyn and Brown were attentive to interpersonal relations with Indian Hindus, often through conversation and participation in intimate social contexts, Buchanan instead chose to observe at a distance the grandest displays of Hindu religious tradition, by examining "the state of superstition at the most celebrated temples of the Hindoos."<sup>59</sup> Thus, the tone of Buchanan's writing also shifts away from personal observations and towards portrayals of Indian religions that are not only vividly detailed, but also very critical and often polemical. In short, his is the view of a devout promoter of Christian missions surveying his religious adversaries. As will be shown, Buchanan was far less concerned with attempting to build bridges between his Protestant evangelical faith and Hinduism, and instead offered an assessment shaped by the religious differences he perceived.

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<sup>57</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 259.

<sup>58</sup>Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, in *The Works of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, L. L. D.* (New York: Whiting and Watson, 1812), 23.

<sup>59</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 260.

Buchanan discussed the contrast between Indian regions outside of EIC jurisdiction which had been introduced to European Christian missionaries, and areas that “remain[ed] in their pristine idolatry.”<sup>60</sup> Buchanan’s understanding of idolatry is integral for understanding his stance toward Indian religions. Like Brown and Martyn, Buchanan held a Protestant view of images in Christian worship: any semblance of their veneration connoted a form of idolatry. As such, the use of *murti* in Hindu rituals was also viewed by Buchanan as the sin of idolatry, perhaps more explicitly because he categorized it as being in a “pristine” state throughout India. In order to effectively display a comparison of locations influenced by idolatry with those impacted by Christian missions, Buchanan first observed the worship of *Jagannath* at one of its temples in Orissa, south of Bengal.

Although Buchanan claimed that his account “proposes to state merely what he himself has seen, with little comment or observation,”<sup>61</sup> he did almost the opposite by writing a highly dramatic portrayal of *Jagannath* filled with graphic descriptions and biblical parallels intended to both shock and overwhelm the reader. He recorded on June 14th, 1806:

I have seen Juggernaut... No record of ancient or modern history can give, I think an adequate idea of the valley of death; it may be truly compared with the valley of Hinnom. The idol called Juggernaut, has been considered as the Moloch of the present age; and he is justly so named, for the sacrifices offered up to him by self-devotement, are not less criminal, perhaps not less numerous, than those recorded of the Moloch of Canaan. Two other idols accompany Juggernaut, namely, Boloram and Shubu dra his brother and sister; for there are three Deities worshipped here. They receive equal adoration and sit on thrones of nearly equal height.<sup>62</sup>

Buchanan’s reference to Moloch, the Canaanite god mentioned in the Old Testament, was a prominent thematic device he employed throughout his description of the Hindu worship practices he witnessed. As he interchanged the name, Juggernaut, with “the Moloch of Hindoostan,”<sup>63</sup> and eventually completely replaced it with Moloch, Buchanan evidently

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<sup>60</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 23.

<sup>61</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 24.

<sup>62</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 26.

<sup>63</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 29.

wanted to convey Hinduism as a modern version of the historic idol worship of the Canaanites—an enemy tribe of God and his people, the Israelites.<sup>64</sup> He aimed not only to equate Hindu worship with ancient idolators, but also sought to provide first-hand evidence to support this parallel. Buchanan often wrote about Hindu worship through biblical parallels regarding idol worship that would have resonated with his evangelical readership offering them what Pennington calls a “systemized, coherent, pan-Indian Hinduism.”<sup>65</sup>

Buchanan later described “a scene which I shall never forget” as *Jagannath* was pulled through the streets.<sup>66</sup> He claimed that the “Moloch’s worship” was both “obscenity,” based on his perception of the thousands of people participating in religious song and dance, and “blood,” which was in direct reference to the acts of self-sacrifice he witnessed.<sup>67</sup> One of these acts involved a woman who “devoted herself to the idol. She laid herself down on the road in an oblique direction, so that the wheel did not kill her instantaneously, as is generally the case; but she died in a few hours. This morning as I passed the Place of Skulls, nothing remained of her but her bones.”<sup>68</sup> Choosing to remain fixated on these particular acts of Hindu religious devotion, Buchanan wrote about what he thought would provoke strong reaction from his Christian audience and, in turn, highlight the woman’s death as representative of what the Hindu festival was ultimately about.

Buchanan was highly selective in the practices of Hinduism that he described. They comprised mostly those which he considered very immoral, profane, and idolatrous when viewed in relation to Christianity. After witnessing two instances of “self-devotement” out of the 100,000 worshippers he believed were present,<sup>69</sup> Buchanan used these acts of self-

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<sup>64</sup>Lev. 18:21, 20:2-5 (NIV).

<sup>65</sup>Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 19.

<sup>66</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 29.

<sup>67</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 30.

<sup>68</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 31.

<sup>69</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 32.

sacrifice to condemn Hinduism and the Brahmins *in toto*. Yet, his perception of *Jagannath's* worship did not account for the fact that these instances seemed to be anomalous exceptions during the festival, and not common practice among Hindu participants.<sup>70</sup> In view of the woman who had sacrificed herself, Buchanan instead wrote provocatively: “And this, thought I, is the worship of the Brahmins of Hindoostan! And their worship in its sublimest degree! What then shall we think of their private manners, and their moral principles! For it is equally true of India as of Europe. If you would know the state of the people, look at the state of the temple.”<sup>71</sup> Buchanan’s account of the worship of *Jagannath* conveyed not only what he saw as the essence of Hindu religious tradition, but also the state of Indian society as a whole. It was a religion he believed was defined ultimately by practices of idol worship that were controlled by the manipulative Brahmins.

Buchanan thought the line between Christianity and Hinduism was made most apparent from “the rites of Juggernaut” in Bengal.<sup>72</sup> He told his British readers that the worship of Juggernaut happened not only at the Temple of Orissa, but also “at the very doors of the English, almost under the eye of the Supreme Government.”<sup>73</sup> While in Bengal at “the festival of the Rutt Jattrā in May 1807”—the same festival Martyn had witnessed the previous year—Buchanan described “[o]ne of the victims” who “shed his blood under the

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<sup>70</sup>Of the four chaplains’ writings, few give mention to many acts of self-sacrifice when compared to Buchanan’s fixation describing them. This suggests that, of all the rituals and observances occurring during the worship of *Jagannath*, this did not appear to be a common part of the religious procession. In, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, Pennington further asserts that Buchanan’s choice to highlight these two moments were shaped by his aim to equate his description of Juggernaut worship with the worship of Moloch described in the Old Testament (88).

<sup>71</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 31.

<sup>72</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 34.

<sup>73</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 34.

tower of obscenity” as another act of self-devotement or sacrifice.<sup>74</sup> As this occurred, Buchanan was viewing another “more pleasing scene”<sup>75</sup> across the Ganges River.

He described that near Serampore, “[o]n the other side, on a rising ground by the side of a Tank, stood the Christian Missionaries, and around them a crowd of people listening to their preaching.”<sup>76</sup> From Buchanan’s vantage point, he interpreted “the tower of blood and impurity on the one hand, and the Christian Preachers on the other,” as further reason for “how practicable it is to offer Christian instruction to our Hindoo subjects.”<sup>77</sup> Buchanan’s account made far more explicit than Martyn or Brown the moral imperative for sending Christian missionaries to India.

Buchanan also wrote about “that other sanguinary rite of the Hindoo superstition, the FEMALE SACRIFICE,”<sup>78</sup> or *sati*. Similar to Martyn, Buchanan described the phenomenon as a “horrid tragedy,” and aimed to report an approximation “of the number of women burned within the period of six months near Calcutta.”<sup>79</sup> Buchanan’s inquiries provided quantitative data about Hindu religious practices.<sup>80</sup> His detailed report of the number of occurrences of *sati* “within thirty miles round Calcutta,”<sup>81</sup> alongside his qualitative description of the “Sacrifice of the Koolin Brahmin’s Three Wives,”<sup>82</sup> both contributed to his objective of drawing borders between Hinduism and Christian religious practice in India rather than looking for their similarities. His distinctions also highlighted, in Buchanan’s view, which of the two religions was morally superior.

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<sup>74</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 35.

<sup>75</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 35.

<sup>76</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 35.

<sup>77</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 35.

<sup>78</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 36.

<sup>79</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 36.

<sup>80</sup>Buchanan provided a table in his work which reported a total of 115 “women burned alive in six months, near Calcutta.”

<sup>81</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 36

<sup>82</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 37.

Compared to his interpretation of the worship of *Jagannath*, Buchanan shaped his description of *sati* around the role of both English and Indian governors, thereby turning the practice into a political and legal issue rather than solely a religious one. After describing an occurrence of *sati*, Buchanan turned his focus to those truly responsible for its practice:

...Who WAS GUILTY OF THE BLOOD OF THE OLD LADY? for it was manifest that she could not destroy herself! She was carried to be burned. It was also alleged that the Brahmin who fired the pile was not guilty, because he was never informed by the English Government, that there was any immorality in the action... The Government in India was exculpated, on the ground that the Government at home never sent any instructions on the subject; and the Court of Directors were exculpated, because they were the agents of others.<sup>83</sup>

Addressing the practice of *sati* as a legal issue provided another rhetorical tool for Buchanan. He could simultaneously condemn a non-Christian ritual and the passivity of religious and political authorities. Buchanan's reports on Hindu practices shifted from the cultural to the political-legal domains, writing that, "Until the supreme Government in Bengal shall declare that it is utterly impracticable to lessen the frequency of the immolation of Females by any means, THE AUTHOR WILL NOT CEASE TO CALL THE ATTENTION OF THE ENGLISH NATION TO THIS SUBJECT."<sup>84</sup> Buchanan's dramatic portrayals of Juggernaut alongside his politicized presentation of *sati* made for a powerfully engaging and highly polemical account of Hindu ritual for his Protestant British readership in 1811.

Buchanan's negative assessment of Hinduism in India grew out of his Protestant evangelical framework. He sensationalized practices that disturbed him to win support in Britain for Christian missions rather than describe Hindu people, practices, and beliefs in their complexity. Although Buchanan's travels led to his learning aspects of the religious state of India, his reports lacked the more conscientious approach that Martyn and Brown, who had tried to learn through conversation and observation. Rather than seeking a fusion of

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<sup>83</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 38.

<sup>84</sup>Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia*, 40.

horizons with Indian people, Buchanan's proto-ethnography drew distinct borders between them. His negative view of Hinduism contrasted the positive efforts of Christian missionaries to eradicate idolatrous practices. By comparison, William Tennant's observational writings applied a more balanced approach.

Tennant compiled and published in his *Indian Recreations* a comprehensive proto-ethnographic report of India for his British readership. In contrast to Buchanan, Tennant was not as concerned with the state of Christian missions in India. Tennant focused his attention instead on the people, the practices, and customs of different religious and ethnic groups he witnessed as a travelling military chaplain for the EIC. Published by himself in Edinburgh in 1803, the first volume of Tennant's inquiries was originally written between 1796 and 1799. His writing is divided into many different topics, each pertaining to a particular aspect of Indian culture, society, or history. Although most entries provide a specific location, month and year they were written in, they are not presented chronologically or in any discernible thematic order. But, when viewed as a whole, several notable themes do emerge which solidify Tennant's travel writings as a proto-ethnographic work with both similarities and distinctions from the other chaplains' accounts.

Tennant's writing exhibits a synthesis of different writing styles, observational approaches, and stances identified thus far. The original circumstances under which Tennant wrote were often "the result of personal observation, and of inquiries made upon the spot,"<sup>85</sup> much like Martyn's observations. Yet, Tennant also wrote that his inquiries "were originally made as the means of obtaining better information regarding the condition of a numerous people, living in a state of society and manners to me almost entirely new."<sup>86</sup> As a result,

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<sup>85</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, vii.

<sup>86</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, iv.

Tennant's descriptions carry a more objective tone, which parallels the formality of Brown's letters that had attempted to make sense of different Hindu people and practices.

With regards to his audience, Tennant not only intended to have this information "communicated to the public, with a view of rendering the inhabitants of these remote parts... better known to subjects... in Europe,"<sup>87</sup> he also dedicated his work to the highest authority in England, King George III.<sup>88</sup> Like Buchanan, Tennant wrote with a public audience in mind, but Tennant's direct address to the British monarch also reveals how their intentions diverged from each other. The furthering of Christian missions was at the forefront of Buchanan's mind, while Tennant's writings were influenced by his perception of the progress of civilizations more broadly. He hoped that his observations might contribute to India's overall improvement as part of the King's dominions, so his goals were not solely religious or theological.

In order to provide a persuasive analysis for India's improvement, as well as accuracy in his observations, Tennant used other sources beyond his own observation. This method lent itself to "the conversation and writings of several intelligent natives of India, both Mussulmans and Hindoos."<sup>89</sup> Tennant's consultation with Gholam Hossein Khan, Abu Taleb Khan, and Ram Jeet Sing proved invaluable for his work, especially when writing "[w]hatever [he] found difficult or obscure," as they helpfully provided "more correct information" over any "doubtful points."<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Tennant had developed essential pedagogic skills from his classical education in England, comprising history, literature and language studies, which were not only "necessary to qualify him for his profession" as chaplain, but also rendered him "eminently qualified to describe a people living in a mode of

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<sup>87</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, iii-iv.

<sup>88</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, iv-vi.

<sup>89</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, viii.

<sup>90</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, viii.

association so different from European manners and usages.”<sup>91</sup> This combination of academic experience and collaboration with Indian scholars produced a work of research that is more strongly written and comprehensive in its inquiries than the observations of more evangelical chaplains.

Compared to the theological lens through which Brown, Martyn, and Buchanan viewed their interreligious encounters, Tennant portrayed India through a framework of historical progress. This approach was likely based at least in part upon the Enlightenment view that “the human condition has improved over the course of history and will continue to improve.”<sup>92</sup> As a result, Tennant’s analysis often situated Indian civilization as behind Britain’s. This judgement also reflected a stadial view of history held by contemporary thinkers like the Scottish philosopher and historian, Adam Ferguson, which drew comparisons and contrasts from past histories of western civilizations.<sup>93</sup> Tennant’s efforts to “fuse the horizon” was therefore not limited to the religious domain.

When comparing Tennant’s perception of Hindu practices, such as *sati* or festivals for *Jagannath*, with those of other chaplains, it becomes more evident how his stance was distinct in both tone and content. Tennant interpreted many aspects of India’s social, political and religious domains using a comparative approach and through a lens of historical progress. However, Tennant’s description of “Practical Inconveniences of the Hindoo Superstition,” on “the Knowledge and Virtue of the People,” and “as it Affects Social Intercourse” show that he too judged Indian culture to need improvement.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>“Reverend William Tennant, L. L. D.,” 398.

<sup>92</sup>Margaret Meek Lange, “Progress,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

<sup>93</sup>Fania Oz-Salzberger explains that Adam Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) provided a “non-deterministic historical account of the way nations advance morally and materially towards the state of commerce, refinement, and liberty associated with eighteenth-century Britain” (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004).

<sup>94</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 100, 110, 119.

Tennant thought that Hinduism and its great “number of pilgrimages and rigid penances” were “hostile to the comfort of society.”<sup>95</sup> These negative connotations toward pilgrimages and acts of penance brought Tennant’s Protestant viewpoint to the forefront. Tennant criticized religious practices that paralleled medieval Catholicism’s use of statuary. He also critiqued what looked like going on pilgrimage as an act of penance, evoking long-standing Protestant critiques of indulgences. But rather than providing a religious critique of the worship practices involved in festivals of *Jagannath*, Tennant was more concerned with the overall impact this would have on the livelihood of India’s people:<sup>96</sup>

...vast crowds of the natives, from all places of India, resort to Juggernaut, and other Pagodas of extraordinary sanctity. The distance of those journeys, the expense of support, and the time consumed by them, must prove extremely burdensome. After their arrival, the attendance of such multitudes, and their struggles to obtain admission, cost many of the aged and feeble their lives, by being trode to death in the crowd: the same of superior sanctity is all that these deluded pilgrims carry home. The interested Brahmins, under one pious pretence or another, are sure to deprive them of all the money in their possession.<sup>97</sup>

Although he mentioned people being trampled to death, there are no graphic descriptions of self-devotement, or dramatic accounts of singing and dancing. Tennant instead offered a kind of utilitarian critique which weighed the costs versus benefits over the amount of energy, resources and time that was spent travelling to and participating in these festivals. Tennant’s attention was also drawn to the Brahmins as benefactors of the thousands of Hindus who frequently halted their regular professions and partook in what he saw as an unnecessarily excessive festival of worship that was wasteful of resources. In Tennant’s mind, these religious practices inhibited peoples’ contribution to Indian society, and its wealth, thereby blocking its “development” and further contributing to the Brahmins’ excessive consumption of Hindu peoples’ time and resources.

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<sup>95</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 105.

<sup>96</sup>Tennant’s observation of Hindu festivals and the Brahmins aligned similarly with Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, which criticized the Catholic Church’s use of indulgences.

<sup>97</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 105-106.

Another distinction in Tennant's portrayal of Indian religion is his description of Hindu theology and how it gave meaning to practices like *sati*. After devoting considerable space in his writing about Hindu cosmology, comprising "four *jogues*, or ages, containing together above eight millions of years,"<sup>98</sup> Tennant explained that upon their completion, another creation will begin, which included "other celestial mansions" that are inhabited by those who "all their lives performed some wonderful penance, or died martyrs for their religion."<sup>99</sup> Tennant wrote that the highest rewards "in this great lottery of life," were for those "who have never in their whole life uttered a fiction; and to those women who have burned themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands."<sup>100</sup> Here, the practice of *sati* is given more theological significance, in distinction to Martyn and Buchanan's observations. *Sati* was not perceived simply as an act of murder or self-sacrifice. Instead, Tennant positioned its practice and meaning in relation to Hindu cosmology.

Tennant made further efforts to understand the process of *sati* by considering "female treatment" under the religious structure of Hinduism and the authority of the Brahmins.<sup>101</sup> He explained from his findings:

When a Hindoo of rank dies... his favourite wife assumes the dreadful purpose of burning herself on the same funeral pile with her husband. This resolution is formed with deliberation, and is declared to be voluntary and fixed, three several times in the presence of relations. This is done that no one advantage may seem to have taken of the transient ebullition of frantic grief, and that person devoting herself may have full time to reflect on the important sacrifice she is about to make... No sooner is the purpose finally declared, than it is pronounced irrevocable; and the heroic lady walks with firmness and composure to the funeral pile...<sup>102</sup>

In contrast to Buchanan's or Martyn's accounts of *sati*, Tennant described the widow's participation in a more dignified manner. Having likely gathered information about its

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<sup>98</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 140.

<sup>99</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 146-147.

<sup>100</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 147.

<sup>101</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 190.

<sup>102</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 190-91.

procedure from Hindu scholars, Tennant was able to explain the context of the practice outside of his own Protestant worldview. Regardless of Tennant's personal convictions on *sati*, his description stemmed from an effort to set aside emotional impressions in favour of trying to objectively make sense of what place and purpose *sati* had within Hinduism itself. As a result, Tennant was able to approximate the meaning of *sati* on its own terms, thereby building a bridge between Hindu and Christian understandings of the practice. Compared to many of the other chaplains' observations, Tennant's writings represent a British perception of India that was not as constrained or motivated by evangelical views. His observations instead reveal even more variety in the intentions behind the proto-ethnographic inquiries by Company chaplains, and the differing stances they formed toward Indian religions as a result.

The EIC's policy of non-interference did not prevent chaplains from inquiring about the religious beliefs and practices of those they wished to convert, reform or improve. These overlapping objectives suggest a relatively linear and even unified goal of spreading Christianity to India. As we have seen, the same goal could manifest itself in divergent processes of interreligious exchange and inquiry. Each chaplain's experience and portrayal of India provides an example of Anglo-Christian contact with Indian people and their religion, ranging from seeking to convert, theological debate, observation and assessment, as well as the study of religious texts. These different modes of contact added even more complexity to the chaplains' understanding of Indian religions and their attempts to act as bridge-builders, border-drawers, or a combination of both.

Two other patterns also become apparent from the chaplains' writings about Indian religion. Firstly, there is a distance between the chaplains and their subject which increased from journal writing to letter correspondence, to published observations. It has become evident that the style of writing and their intended audience both influenced how closely the chaplains positioned themselves in relation to the Indian subjects they wrote about. While

Martyn's journals conveyed him as an active, highly emotional participant in dialogue with Indian interlocutors, Tennant attempted to remove himself and his personal convictions from his observations. Secondly, the tone and content of each chaplain's writing also appears to shift as the audience broadens. A candid but humble tone from Brown's letter correspondence produced a notably different portrayal of India's religious culture when compared with Buchanan's publication, which attempted to convince British Evangelicals of the need for more Christian missionaries in India.

These chaplains' writings help us comprehend how and why they sought encounters with India's religion as it was lived out. Their observations can exhibit confusion, misunderstanding, and a sense of disorganization. However, they also show attempts to understand the unfamiliar by using the familiar, sometimes producing notable moments which sought to fuse the horizons of Christian and Hindu worldviews.

Whether they sought to convert souls or argue for religious reform, each chaplain's proto-ethnographic writing tried to imagine an effort to unify India's religio-cultural diversity under the Christian religion. For those like Tennant, this was intertwined with an imperialistic goal of socio-cultural improvement. For others like Martyn, this intention was more fully enveloped in his theology of God's salvation for humankind through Christian missions. In order for these Christian ideas to spread effectively, however, the Bible needed to be translated into India's many languages. As a result, the chaplains' involvement in scripture translation produced a third form of interreligious encounter. Translation entailed a process that not only saw the chaplains more closely interact with Hindus and Muslims, but also exhibit profound moments of dependence and collaboration between themselves and non-Christian Indian scholars.

## Chapter Three: Language, Translation, and Collaboration: EIC Chaplains and Bible

### Translation in India

Claudius Buchanan's 1809 sermon, *The Star in the East*, provided his Bristol audience at the Parish-Church of St. James a profound story of Christian conversion and martyrdom involving "two Mahometans of Arabia."<sup>1</sup> Named Abdallah and Sabat, the latter had shared his story to Buchanan while he was still in India.

Good friends and from noble Muslim families, Abdallah and Sabat decided to travel together to visit foreign countries after completing their pilgrimage to Mecca. They travelled through Persia and later arrived at the city of Kabul. There, Abdallah "was appointed to an office of state under Zemaun Shah, King of Cabul,"<sup>2</sup> while Sabat continued on his journey through "Tartary," or central Eurasia. During Abdallah's time in Kabul, Buchanan recounts that "he was converted to the Christian faith by the perusal of a Bible (as is supposed) belonging to a Christian from Armenia."<sup>3</sup> Abdallah's conversion experience after reading Christian scripture would mark a significant turning point in the trajectory of his life.

Buchanan reminded his congregation that "in the Mahometan states, it is death for a man of rank to become a Christian," and because of this, Abdallah decided to flee in disguise from Kabul for some of the Christian churches located by the Caspian Sea.<sup>4</sup> He arrived at the city of Bukhara where he encountered Sabat, who recognized him in the streets but had also heard of his conversion and subsequent flight and "was filled with indignation at his conduct."<sup>5</sup> Recognizing this, Abdallah pleaded with Sabat to let him escape alive, but Sabat, in his own words, "had no pity."<sup>6</sup> Instead, Sabat "caused [his] servants to seize him" and

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<sup>1</sup>Claudius Buchanan, *The Star in the East; A Sermon*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, Hurst, & Co., 1809), 28.

<sup>2</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 29.

<sup>3</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 29.

<sup>4</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 29.

<sup>5</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 29.

<sup>6</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 30.

sentenced Abdallah to death.<sup>7</sup> At his execution, Abdallah was offered to live if “he would abjure Christ,” but he refused, and while looking at Sabat with “countenance and forgiveness,” both of his hands were cut off before he finally “bowed his head to receive the blow of death.”<sup>8</sup> Sabat was struck by Abdallah's steadfastness and lack of anger towards him for allowing his execution, which was soon followed by grief and remorse once he faced the reality that his good friend was dead.

Filled with deep regret, Sabat began traveling again. Eventually, he visited India and arrived in Madras around 1804. There Buchanan explains that Sabat was “appointed by the English Government a Mufti, or expounder of Mahometan law.”<sup>9</sup> It was during this time that Sabat also converted to Christianity in a process similar to his friend Abdallah's:

While he was at Visaga patam,<sup>10</sup> in the Northern Circars, exercising his professional duties, Providence brought in his way, a New Testament in the Arabic language. He read it with deep thought, the Koran lying before him. He compared them together with patience and solicitude, and at length the truth of the word of God fell on his mind, as he expressed it, like a flood of light.<sup>11</sup>

Although there is some historical controversy surrounding Sabat's conversion, including whether it was genuine,<sup>12</sup> he still went “by invitation to Bengal” after his baptism. Buchanan explained that “he is now engaged in translating the Scriptures into the Persian language”<sup>13</sup> alongside Rev. Martyn. The intersection of Sabat and Martyn's lives, and their work together, incarnated the trajectory of the chaplains' involvement in scripture translation: it was a collaborative effort involving people of different languages, cultures and religious

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<sup>7</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 30.

<sup>8</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 30.

<sup>9</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 31.

<sup>10</sup>Visakhapatnam is an Indian port city located on the Bay of Bengal.

<sup>11</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 31.

<sup>12</sup>Maulavi Abdul Wali's *Life and Work of Jawad Sabat, An Arab Traveller, Writer and Apologist; Together with a review of his Romantic Career, as a Christian and Muslim* (1925) provides a contrasting analysis of Sabat's conversion, suggesting that he did so in order to better understand and refute Christianity from a Muslim's standpoint.

<sup>13</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 31-32.

backgrounds. At the same time, scripture translation also aimed to further chaplains' efforts toward opening Company territory to Christian missionaries and disseminating the gospel.

Buchanan's sermon largely sought to provide evidence for the viability of the chaplains' efforts. For Buchanan, the story of Abdallah and Sabat captured much of his sermon's purpose behind using "the star in the East" described in the New Testament.<sup>14</sup> Within Western Christian tradition, the magi, or wisemen, were believed to have come from the regions of Persia, Arabia, and India to bring gifts and worship "the one who has been born king of the Jews."<sup>15</sup> The magi were understood to be Zoroastrians, and their adoration of the infant baby Jesus symbolized to Christian readers that his arrival was for people of all nations. In Buchanan's interpretation, this Biblical account paralleled Sabat's and Abdallah's conversion experiences, leading him to assert that "the time for diffusing our religion in the East is come."<sup>16</sup> Likewise, his inclusion of the two Persians' stories shows the significance that the chaplains, and Protestant evangelicals in general, placed on the role of scripture in relation to Christian conversion. When presented in the reader's native language, they believed scripture possessed a transforming power.

The chaplains' theology held that the Holy Spirit through scripture could convert the reader. Buchanan reflected this sentiment in an earlier publication, asserting 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."<sup>17</sup> Although preaching, evangelism and schooling could help communicate the Christian gospel, it was ultimately the word of God in scripture,

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<sup>14</sup>Matt. 2:1-12 (NIV).

<sup>15</sup>Matt. 2:2 (NIV).

<sup>16</sup>Buchanan, *The Star in the East*, 34.

<sup>17</sup>Claudius Buchanan, "Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India," in *The Works of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, L. L. D.* (New York: Whiting and Watson, 1812), 233.

translated into the vernacular, that Protestant evangelicals deemed one of their most important tools for converting non-Christians.

This chapter will chronologically explore how the chaplains factored into the translation of Christian scripture in India, with particular focus on moments of interreligious encounter in this work. Although Bible translation in India around the turn of the nineteenth century was largely a Protestant evangelical initiative, the result was often a product of cross-cultural collaboration, seen most evidently in the chaplains' efforts to learn the languages and literature of India, to advocate for the translation of scripture, and to work alongside scholars of different religious and cultural backgrounds. During these efforts, the chaplains remained dependent on the expertise of Indian, as well as Arab and Persian, scholars to succeed in one of their most significant contributions toward the spread of Christianity in India.

The history of Bible translation spans many centuries, geographic contexts, and languages. Within India, this history also long-preceded these particular chaplains. Instead, they entered into an ongoing effort that had been initiated by Christian missionaries a few centuries prior. Hephzibah Israel effectively surveys this history, noting that Jesuits of the mid-sixteenth century are considered the first to translate Christian texts into Indian languages. Their earliest efforts comprised translations of the Catholic catechism and prayers into Tamil.<sup>18</sup> Protestant missionary efforts to translate the Bible began in India during the mid-seventeenth century, when Philip Baldeus attempted to translate the Bible into Tamil, albeit incompletely, with further translation work being done by Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plutschau in the early decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

The cultural phenomenon of Protestant Bible translation into non-European vernacular languages continued to expand alongside improvements in printing technology

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<sup>18</sup>Hephzibah Israel, "Protestant Translations of the Bible in Indian Languages," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 2 (February 2010): 87.

<sup>19</sup>Israel, "Protestant Translations of the Bible in Indian Languages," 87.

during the early eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> As a result, learning and translating vernacular languages became significant for Protestant missions primarily because “[t]he historic shift in the reception of Christianity involved paying close attention to local materials and ideas if mission was to achieve its goal of conversion.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, Protestants believed that Indian receptivity to the Bible required sufficient comprehension of Indian languages and their cultural meaning.

More recent translation efforts that overlapped with the chaplains’ time in India were seen through the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society at Serampore in 1793. The Baptist missionary, William Carey, helped translate the Bible into forty different languages.<sup>22</sup> While this was in itself a remarkable linguistic achievement, many Indian languages lacked a translation of Christian scripture. As the EIC’s chaplains’ own experiences showed, learning just a few of India’s major languages was a daunting but necessary task to undertake for effective engagement with Indian people and their religions.

The number of languages and dialects chaplains heard while in India was staggering and often completely unfamiliar to them. It has been reported that, “there are more than 1,652 languages spoken by different social groups, sometimes spreading beyond socio-cultural barriers, in India,” but “only a very few languages have their own scripts and written records available in different forms.”<sup>23</sup> Each of these languages can be categorized within four different families, with one in particular, Indo-Aryan, comprising most of the languages that the chaplains engaged with. However, the learning of Indo-Aryan languages, such as Sanskrit, Urdu, and Bengali, and the translation of scripture into these languages extended

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<sup>20</sup>Lamin Sanneh, “Bible Translation, Culture, and Religion,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, ed. Lamin Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2016), 266.

<sup>21</sup>Sanneh, “Bible Translation, Culture, and Religion,” 268.

<sup>22</sup>Israel, “Protestant Translations of the Bible in Indian Languages,” 89.

<sup>23</sup>K. Regu, “Bible Translation in the Indian Context,” *IJT* 42, no. 2 (2000): 125.

beyond the chaplains' own capacity. Translation also demanded local interlocutors. John B. Carman importantly notes the insufficient acknowledgement in the work of Bible translation to contributions made by non-European scholars, especially Indian *munshis* and *pandits*, in the work of Bible translation.<sup>24</sup> The process of translation thus produced another notable form of interreligious encounter, marked by scholarly cooperation toward a shared goal, which Carman identifies as an "unrecognized dialogue."<sup>25</sup>

William Carey had already experienced some success working with Hindu *pandits*, and the chaplains sought to join in this evangelical cause shortly after their arrivals to India as well. As their efforts demonstrated, the translation process was not simple or straightforward for anyone involved, with many linguistic and religious challenges regularly surfacing between scholars.

The chaplains' earliest efforts to acquaint themselves with the languages and literature of India reveal a slow trend of growing familiarity and understanding of the nuanced interconnection between India's different languages, as well as initial reflections on how the acquisition of them might be integrated into the translation of the Bible. In important ways, Revs. Brown and Tennant's writings provided preliminary work to the actual process of translation that was undertaken by later chaplains like Martyn in the early nineteenth century. Their observations came from their initial exposure to Indian languages, which display some of the chaplains' first attempts at understanding their use throughout the Indian subcontinent.

Brown's diary and letters recount some of his initial efforts to engage with Indian languages. As early as his voyage to India in 1785-86 he wrote in his diary that he "[a]ppplied regularly to the Moors grammar" on a few occasions.<sup>26</sup> In these entries, he was likely

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<sup>24</sup>John B. Carman, "Protestant Bible Translations in India: An Unrecognized Dialogue?," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 4, no. 3 (January 1991): 11.

<sup>25</sup>Carman, "Protestant Bible Translations in India," 11, 15.

<sup>26</sup>David Brown, "Extracts from Journal," 187, 203.

referring to his study of the book, *A Short Grammar and Vocabulary of the Moors Language*, first published in London in 1771 by George Hadley.<sup>27</sup> “Moors grammar” was a European term used to describe the “Hindoostanee” language, which is now called Urdu.

Alongside Brown’s study of Urdu, he also attempted to take up other languages. Writing in early December of 1786, he claimed to have “[d]evoted much of this day to Bengalee. I hope the Lord will enable me to acquire this language, in order that I may translate the scriptures of truth for the poor benighted heathen of this land.”<sup>28</sup> During Brown’s earliest years as a chaplain, he expressed the desire to not only learn major Indian languages like Urdu and Bengali but utilize them in the translation of scripture. It was an ambitious desire that influenced his other responsibilities, including his own evangelical pursuits beyond them.

Among the learning materials Brown wanted to incorporate for Hindu children at his “native school,” he often mentioned the desire for portions of translated scripture to be used to help students learn languages. In one letter “To the “Rev. Mr. M.,” in 1787, he explained that “[t]hey will be taught to read English and Bengalee. A translation of the New Testament by an able hand, a pious and learned gentleman, is now carrying on for this purpose; so that I hope they will soon read the scriptures in their own and the English language.”<sup>29</sup> However, in the *Memorial Sketches of the Rev. David Brown*, Charles Simeon is also quick to note that the one who first attempted this work was “the late Wm. Chambers, Esq. He made little progress in the design, through many public avocations, and his early death.”<sup>30</sup> This trend would continue throughout Brown’s letter correspondence which show translation work being undertaken by other Europeans. For example, he mentioned “Dr. Watson’s wish to have the

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<sup>27</sup>George Hadley, *A Short Grammar and Vocabulary of the Moors Language* (London: W. Flexney, 1771).

<sup>28</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Journal,” 217.

<sup>29</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 235.

<sup>30</sup>Charles Simeon, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 235.

gospel of Mark translated,” and another letter further affirming that “[a] translation is going forward... the ablest person in this country has entered upon the work.”<sup>31</sup> Who this able translator was is somewhat vague, and although Brown gave promising initial reports, nothing ever seemed to come of them. Despite this, he continued his study of Indian languages, achieving greater competence concerning their structure and Hinduism in general.

Brown soon came to realize the linguistic importance of the Sanskrit language for understanding India's other languages, and its foundational use for translating scripture. Writing from Calcutta in 1789 to a friend, Brown reflected on “the great advantage that would arise to missionaries from accurate knowledge of Schanscrit,” and believed it ought to be a primary goal of theirs because “it is the basis of the Bengalee, as well as of several other eastern tongues, and it contains the mythology, laws, history, and literature of the Hindoos. A knowledge of the Shanscrit is necessary for giving a pure translation of the scriptures.”<sup>32</sup> In the history of written languages, Sanskrit is among the oldest known and documented, being used in the ancient form of “Vedic Sanskrit” around 1,500 B.C.E. in the Vedas.<sup>33</sup> Bengali, by comparison, emerged only as early as the seventh and as late as the tenth century C.E., borrowing from the Sanskrit vocabulary but becoming its own distinct language over the following centuries.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Brown appropriately considered Sanskrit to be a “basis” of Bengali, while also recognizing its importance for understanding much of the ancient literature of India. It was for this reason that he continued devoting his attention to Sanskrit.

Brown desired a translation of the Christian scriptures and also Hindu scriptures. In June 1794, when writing to a friend who was an “East-India director,” he commented on the prospect of being able to “lay open Hindooism” by using “instruments” in order to “get the

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<sup>31</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 239.

<sup>32</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 250.

<sup>33</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica* (2009), s.v. “Sanskrit language.”

<sup>34</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica* (2009), s.v. “Bengali language.”

Vedas themselves translated.”<sup>35</sup> By this time, Brown had been in India for nearly a decade, which had allowed him to build his knowledge of India’s languages and Hindu literature. However, his regular duties as a chaplain once again limited any time he could seriously devote to the project, commenting that, “if my daily cares were fewer, and my leisure and ease in circumstances were greater”<sup>36</sup> he might actually be able to accomplish these goals. Brown wrote about a way he saw himself assisting with such a project, believing that he “could superintend an object” toward “a translation of the Christian Scriptures, together with an unveiling of the contents of the Vedas.”<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately he lacked the means and funds to implement this idea. Brown would later play a key role as overseer in the process of translation, helping coordinate efforts within an evangelical network of chaplains and missionaries in the early nineteenth century. Until then, he could only advocate for translation to occur, and encourage the necessity of learning India’s languages. He had also attempted to do this a few years prior in his proposal for establishing a mission in Bengal and Bahar.

It was noted in Chapter One, within Brown’s mission proposal he placed a strong emphasis on schooling for disseminating Christian ideas to Hindu people. Another notable statement in this proposal emphasized the translation of Scripture, as Simeon described within it: “[Brown] recommends the measure of translating the Scriptures into different languages of the East.”<sup>38</sup> This advocacy for scripture translation is also found in other areas of Brown’s writing. For example, when he considered the significance of Sanskrit, Brown suggested, “that forthwith two young clergymen be sent missionaries to India... It will then be advisable that they fix for about three years at that famous seat of Hindoo learning, Benares... There they may study, and furnish themselves with languages. After which they

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<sup>35</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 278.

<sup>36</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 278.

<sup>37</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 278.

<sup>38</sup>Simeon, “Memorial Sketches, &c.,” xiii.

may begin their glorious work, of giving the Gentiles light.”<sup>39</sup> Brown’s writing acknowledged the necessity for Europeans to learn the languages of India if they were to have any success in communicating with non-Christians, let alone provide them with a translation of the Bible. The city of Benares, a prominent location for this type of learning, also began to show Brown’s reliance and utilization of Hindu learning contexts.<sup>40</sup>

Another notable aspect of Brown’s proposed method for translation was his emphasis on mainly European scholars and clergymen to undertake the work. Brown’s own endeavours had reflected this as he initially devoted himself, in private, to learning languages of India. This self-learning approach would later evolve into a more efficient model that recognized the linguistic skills and contributions of Indian scholars. By 1795 though, the chaplains’ engagement with India’s languages and culture remained largely limited to their own self-directed efforts. Providing another chaplain’s perspective, Rev. Tennant’s observations of India’s languages and literature expanded on what Brown had begun through his first ten years in India, offering more information about both subjects.

Although Tennant argued for the dissemination of Christian ideas and texts to Indian people, he did not directly involve himself in scripture translation. His writings do, however, show that he intentionally formed observations about the languages used in India, as well as the extent to which literature was accessible to Europeans. By the end of the eighteenth century, it appeared that only minor progress had been made towards EIC chaplains learning Indian languages and gaining access to Hindu literature.

Writing along the Ganges, near the city of Benares, in 1797, Tennant offered insight into this centre which Brown also held in high esteem, calling it “still the great seat of learning, and is held in veneration all over India.”<sup>41</sup> Despite its scholarly reputation, Tennant

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<sup>39</sup>Brown, “Extracts from Recent Correspondence, &c.,” 251.

<sup>40</sup>Benares is now called Varanasi. It is located in the province of Uttar Pradesh.

<sup>41</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations, Vol. I*, 14.

was critical of how few people at Benares were actually involved in the study of Indian languages and learning. He lamented “the small number who study the Sanscreeet language, and enable themselves to read their sacred or scientific books. Very few, even of the highest class of Brahmins have made this attainment - not the thousandth part of the community.”<sup>42</sup> For all the scholarly potential Tennant saw in Indian cities like Benares, he argued that there was a discrepancy between the vast amount of Indian knowledge, languages, and literature to be studied, and the number of people who were pursuing these studies. It was one of several challenges Tennant noted with regard to language learning and literature in India.

As Brown had expressed the desire to translate Hindu texts into European languages, Tennant pointed out some additional challenges for Europeans seeking access to Indian literature. From his time in Allahabad,<sup>43</sup> in July 1797—roughly three years after Brown’s discussion of translating Hindu literature—it appeared that little progress had been made in this area. Tennant observed that among “[t]he learning of the Hindoos and Mussulmans... Few of their books have yet been translated into the European languages, or made the objects of partial criticism.”<sup>44</sup> Tennant’s focus on this subject reflected complex motives behind translating Indian literature. On the one hand, his desire to explore the ideas in Indian texts fell within the orientalist emphasis among Company authorities, most notably Governor-General Wellesley, who longed to establish “a university of the East.”<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Tennant was also reform-minded, like Brown, and wanted Hindu texts to be translated so that their ideas could be understood and critiqued in relation to the religious condition of India—a more explicitly evangelical objective.

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<sup>42</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 14.

<sup>43</sup>Allahabad is officially known today as Prayagraj and is located in the province of Uttar Pradesh, northwest of Bengal.

<sup>44</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 250.

<sup>45</sup>Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 62.

Both aspirations presented more challenges with regard to accessibility. Tennant noted one reason that so few texts had been translated was because “[a]ll their stock of knowledge, whether the great or small, is confined to the various manuscripts, either preserved in the public libraries, or in the cabinet of the learned.”<sup>46</sup> Not only was access to literature limited for Europeans, Tennant went further in stating that with “[t]he art of printing being unknown, or at least never practiced, literature in India has always necessarily been confined to a very narrow circle.”<sup>47</sup> Although these observations carried some embellishments about the state of printing and literature in India at this time, his writing’s primary concern for reform within India intersected with his need to access sources that could inform him of India’s religious and moral state, which he hoped to change. As access to literature and their translation into English provided one means for understanding Indian ideas, the learning of Indian languages also proved essential for helping the chaplains’ cultural awareness.

Tennant soon began to acquaint himself with the use and structure of the main languages of India, particularly Urdu, by conversing with Indian people and studying some of their texts. He described Urdu as “The Hindostanee”<sup>48</sup> and explained that it is “a kind of *lingue franka* made up of various dialects, is the spoken language of India, and has become the key to all communication with the natives of that country.”<sup>49</sup> In contrast to the translation of Indian literature, Tennant noted that Indian language learning by Europeans began to show more progress. He reported positively that “[o]ur knowledge of its dialects has gradually increased with the intercourse which called it forth, till at last the acquisition of it has become the object of several expensive seminaries and institutions.”<sup>50</sup> One of these institutions was

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<sup>46</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 250.

<sup>47</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. I, 250.

<sup>48</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 61.

<sup>49</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 61.

<sup>50</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 61.

the College of Fort William, which Chapter One previously identified for its contribution in educating Company servants in the languages of India. It had a great deal of success toward this goal, but Tennant was also quick to note further challenges regarding the intellectual state of India's population, which had further implications for the hopes chaplains and missionaries held for local people's comprehension of Christian ideas.

Building from the observations Tennant recorded in his first volume of *Indian Recreations*, his third and final volume offered a pessimistic outlook on the literature available for the Indian masses, and an even more negative judgement on the peoples' use of intellect. He wrote that within India "no collision of opinion has awakened the curiosity of the people, or roused the human intellect: no books have ever reached their hands to convey information, nor has even a newspaper been printed in the native language. Of all abstract ideas, the multitude in India is almost entirely destitute."<sup>51</sup> What is important to note is that he went on to present a solution to this perceived problem through the operation of Fort William College. As many students had already been taught reading and writing there, Tennant went on to report that within the College, "nearly eighty Moonshees and Pundits made such progress, as to be very useful in teaching the junior servants of the Company."<sup>52</sup> Thus, Tennant's answer to many of the challenges surrounding Indian language learning and the translation of scripture lay not in European efforts to study or educate themselves, but rather in their consultation with and help from Indian scholars.

With a limited number of translated Indian texts and access to them posing a challenge for Europeans, learning India's many languages proved a necessary path for missionaries and chaplains pursuing translation work. Brown had attempted these endeavours on his own at first, but eventually he and Tennant both recognized the need for Europeans to

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<sup>51</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 275.

<sup>52</sup>Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, Vol. III, 364.

work alongside Indian scholars—“small circles” of learned scholars who already had access to and understanding of Indian languages, literature and ideas. By the start of the nineteenth century, in correlation with the establishment of Fort William College in 1800, *munshis* and *pandits* became important intellectual and cultural auxiliaries for chaplains. The College’s Vice-Provost, Rev. Buchanan, soon began working more closely with these indigenous scholars, both inside and outside the College.

Buchanan’s memoir offers recollections of some early encounters he had with Indian scholars in an effort to learn different languages. While stationed at Barrackpore in 1797, Buchanan wrote in a letter to his friend, Mr. Henry Thornton, describing what this learning process looked like. He wrote that, “I have a Moonshee in the house to instruct me in the Hindostanee and Persian languages. Not knowing what may be the purpose of God concerning me, I have thought it my duty to attend early to the languages of the country, and to the constitution, civil and religious, of the mixed people in it.”<sup>53</sup> Compared to Brown’s initial pursuits in learning Indian languages through grammar books, Buchanan’s early years in India from 1797-1800 saw him being instructed by a *munshi*, or teacher of native languages, in a couple of India’s most prominent dialects.

Historically, Urdu developed within India as an Indo-Aryan language, but Persian was introduced to India externally throughout the history of Muslim conquest. The most recent expansion of the Mughal Empire into the Indian subcontinent during the mid-sixteenth century brought with it Muslim political control, as well as the implementation of Persian (Farsi) as the official language of law, trade, and administration.<sup>54</sup> Although Tennant had previously identified Urdu as “a kind of *lingue franka*,” or bridge language, Persian was also a key language of communication across India’s different people groups and cultures. It had a

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<sup>53</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 114-115.

<sup>54</sup>Jamal Malik, *Themes in Islamic Studies, Volume 4: Islam in South Asia, A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 13-14.

very practical use and would be one of the main languages the chaplains went on to study in their efforts to translate scripture.

The important role that *munshis* and *pandits* played at Fort William College in teaching these two major languages has been previously noted, with many “employed in teaching the students, others in making translations, and others in composing original works in the oriental tongues.”<sup>55</sup> However, the College not only taught prospective European and Indian-born Company servants, but also chaplains in their efforts to promote language learning and, in turn, scripture translation.

Buchanan’s position at Fort William allowed him to advocate for different translation schemes through the scholarly resources already available at the College. Among these efforts was his proposal for discussion by students of the College at their annual disputation over “[t]he advantage which the natives of this country might derive from translations, in the vernacular tongues, of the books containing principles of their respective religions, and those of the Christian faith.”<sup>56</sup> The promotion of these schemes and disputations included his offering “out of his own pocket liberal prizes to several universities and public schools for essays... of diffusing the light of the Christian religion throughout the Eastern; and on other similar topics.”<sup>57</sup> Evidently, Buchanan used his position at the College as a platform for the promotion of Bible translation. His most direct efforts were seen in his own publications, solidifying his role as a public advocate, promoter and reporter of translation work in India.

Written in 1805, Buchanan’s first published essay, *Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India*, offered some observations on the progress of scripture translation in India up until his own time, and how Fort William College had played a vital role in contributing to the learning of Indian languages and literature. From his

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<sup>55</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 156.

<sup>56</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 215.

<sup>57</sup>Carson, “Buchanan, Claudius,” 3.

observations, Buchanan first mentioned that “[t]he Scriptures have been lately translated into some of the vernacular languages of India,”<sup>58</sup> here likely in reference to the work of Baptist missionaries in Serampore. Buchanan’s report that “the whole library of Shanscrit learning is accessible to members of the College of Fort William,”<sup>59</sup> also appeared to address some of the problems surrounding accessibility to Indian literature, which Tennant had previously noted. Buchanan wrote that “[t]he old keepers of this library, the Pundits, who would give no access to the translator of the Gentoo code or to the then Governor of India, now vie with each other in giving every information in their power.”<sup>60</sup> This appeared to be especially helpful because the language of Sanskrit, as Buchanan recounted from the Brahmins, was “like an extensive forest, abounding with a great variety of beautiful foliage, splendid blossoms, and delicious fruits; but surrounded by a strong and thorny fence, which prevents those who are desirous of plucking its fruits, or flowers from entering in.”<sup>61</sup> In many ways, Buchanan sought to use the scholarly endeavours of the College to sustain its longevity by highlighting its contributions to Indian language learning.

To further these aims, Buchanan highlighted the success of the College’s linguistic studies thanks to its access to Indian languages and knowledge, but also connected its operations directly with Bible translation and the practical use of language learning for Company servants. With regard to translation, the College by 1805 had shown itself capable of accomplishing what few chaplains or missionaries could have done by their own means. Buchanan wrote with a positive tone and sense of embellishment that, “[u]nder the auspices of the College of Fort William, the Scriptures are in a course of translation into the languages of almost the whole continent of Oriental India.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, many of India’s major languages

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<sup>58</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 196.

<sup>59</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 216.

<sup>60</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 216.

<sup>61</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 241.

<sup>62</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 240.

were being learned and applied in the classrooms under the guidance of *munshis* and *pandits*. Buchanan provided distinct adjectives to identify each of them and their place within the Indian context, explaining that “[t]he colloquial Hindostanee, the classic Persian, the commercial Bengalee, the learned Arabic, and the primæval Shanscrit, are spoken fluently after having been studied grammatically, by English youth.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, the learning of languages at Fort William College provided an effective platform upon which Buchanan could build his evangelical mission. Language learning not only helped in Buchanan’s promotion of the translation of scripture to continue, but also assisted the political and commercial desires of the Company since students could then “apply their acquisitions immediately to useful purposes.”<sup>64</sup> As long as the College remained in operation and Buchanan remained Vice-Provost, he possessed an effective means to promote scripture translation and missionary activity in India while still serving the academic needs of the EIC.

Buchanan’s efforts continued beyond the publication and circulation of his *Memoir for an Ecclesiastical Establishment*, which, according to Pearson, “produced a powerful sensation” in England because “[t]he subject was to many entirely new, and at the same time was regarded as very important.”<sup>65</sup> Met with a variety of reactions, some readers supported his cause, and many others found his writing about the spread of Christianity in India too controversial.<sup>66</sup> Despite this, Buchanan made additional proposals in early 1806 for the promotion and support of scripture translation that were already being undertaken by the Baptist missionaries at Serampore.

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<sup>63</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 242.

<sup>64</sup>Buchanan, “Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment,” 243.

<sup>65</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 427.

<sup>66</sup>Pearson notes that it was also a factor in catalyzing a pamphlet war in Britain between evangelical sympathizers and the EIC, with one response by Wm. Thomas Twining, a senior merchant of the Bengal establishment, titled “A Letter to the Chairman of the East India Company on the Danger of Interfering in the Religious Opinions of the Nations of India; and on the Views of the British and Foreign Bible Society as directed to India” (428).

Since his arrival to India, Buchanan had formed close relations with the Baptists, particularly William Carey, who went on to be employed by the College from 1801-1831. Once again “determined to devote his influence, as vice-provost of the college,” Buchanan wanted to aid in the Baptist missionaries’ work and “excite the public interest in their favour.”<sup>67</sup> His next proposal therefore sought to draw financial support “for translating the Holy Scriptures in fifteen oriental languages; containing a prospectus of Indian versions, and observations on the practicability of the general design.”<sup>68</sup> These proposals were also widely circulated throughout India and England in March 1806. A month later, Rev. Martyn arrived in India. He was a strong advocate for Christian missions, but also a skilled linguist who could devote serious time and energy to the rigorous work of Bible translation and proliferation of scripture to Indian people.

The other chaplains’ involvement in and observations about language learning and translation were fully realized in the work of Henry Martyn. He made the largest contribution to their evangelical cause via his translations of the New Testament into three major languages of India: Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Although Persian and Urdu were used frequently throughout Northern India, Martyn learned Arabic and translated the New Testament into it because he aspired to minister to Muslims in India and the Middle East.<sup>69</sup> After his arrival in April 1806, and under Brown and Buchanan’s direction, Martyn applied his linguistic skills almost immediately by beginning to work on translating different Bible passages.<sup>70</sup> For all his qualifications though, Martyn also relied on the help of local Indian scholars, most of whom were not Christian.

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<sup>67</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 253.

<sup>68</sup>Pearson, *Memoir of Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 253.

<sup>69</sup>Powell, “Martyn, Henry,” 2.

<sup>70</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 90-91.

John Carman highlights the contributions of Indian scholars in the making of William Carey's Tamil and Bengali translations, as well as the theological conversations that must have occurred throughout the process. Due to the limitations of the sources, however, Carman is often left to speculate what some of these moments of "unrecognized dialogue" may have looked like.<sup>71</sup> Martyn's journals and letters, by comparison, shed more light on this kind of interreligious dialogue, and provide further understanding of what the collaborative process of scripture translation was probably like between Christians, Muslims, and Hindus. They reveal a number of instances of cooperation over shared linguistic goals, but also disputes that brought the contrasting theological beliefs of each scholar to the forefront.

A few notable details of Martyn's initial translating work come from June, 1806. He devoted nearly all of his available time outside of his regular duties as chaplain to learning Indian languages and translating alongside Indian scholars. Part of his day on June 19 reflected this determined approach, as Martyn wrote that he "[b]egan after breakfast for the first time, with a moonshee, a Cashmerian Brahmin, with whom I was much pleased. In the boat, back to Serampore, learning roots."<sup>72</sup> From just a few short statements, Martyn's journal provides insight into his thoughts and work with the unnamed *munshi*, who was also coincidentally from the caste which chaplains were the most critical toward. Despite this official hostility, he spent many days studying and learning Urdu from either Hindu or Muslim *munshis* and *pandits*, sometimes while travelling along the Ganges. Although most of Martyn's *munshis* helpers were unnamed in his journal, there were a couple notable scholars who were given more recognition by Martyn and the other chaplains.

One important contributor to Martyn's translations was the Persian scholar, Mirza Phitrut. The earliest account of Mirza's work with Martyn dates from June 23, 1806. Martyn

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<sup>71</sup>Carman, "Protestant Bible Translations in India: An Unrecognized Dialogue?," 15.

<sup>72</sup>Martyn, "Letters, &c," *Vol. I*, 458.

“[s]pent the morning with Mirza Phitrut, who read over with me the Hindoostanee translation of the two first chapters of Genesis. I knew enough to point out several errors, which he corrected; the exercise was improving to myself.”<sup>73</sup> It seemed that Mirza was given a higher position of authority when it came to Martyn’s translation endeavours.

Mirza was from Lucknow, according to one of Buchanan’s reports, as well as “Persian by descent, and a man of liberal learning among his countrymen. He visited England some years ago, and was afterwards appointed a Persian teacher, and translator of the Scriptures in the College of Fort William.”<sup>74</sup> He was of great assistance to Martyn, largely thanks to his previous education and experience in translation. Although he had a Muslim background, Mirza usually remained cooperative and open to discussing Christian ideas in order to successfully translate the Bible. At a later point he had said to Martyn that “now he had translated the Gospels, he [had] become a Christian in heart, and wished to spend the remainder of his days in a corner, thinking of God.”<sup>75</sup> Together, they would read over each other’s translations for corrections, and, with notable progress, continued toward a successful translation of the Gospels into Urdu. This project was just one of Martyn’s translation efforts, as he often took on more than he could manage on his own.

It quickly became apparent that Martyn’s method of translation required multi-tasking between learning languages from *munshis* and *pandits*, while also working through different portions of scripture with them and Mirza (sometimes translating multiple languages and passages at once). In a letter to Brown from November 17, 1806, Martyn wrote the following:

[m]y employment at this time consists chiefly in arranging and writing on the parables; —these I hope to have ready by the time the children of the schools are able to read, and in translating the Acts with moonshee, who takes great delight in this work. Sanscrit sleeps a little, though I am daily more convinced of the absolute necessity of it in order to know the country Hindoostanee.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Martyn, “Letters, &c.,” 460.

<sup>74</sup>Buchanan, “Christian Researches in Asia,” 119.

<sup>75</sup>Martyn, “Letters, &c.,” 465.

<sup>76</sup>Martyn, “Letters, &c.,” 510.

It became clear, after having undergone several months of translation work, that Martyn had several notable goals in his attempt at balancing these different linguistic tasks. For one, he hoped that his translations could be used in a school context to help students learn to read and write. Chapter One provided evidence of Martyn successfully integrating some translated portions of scripture for his students to read and recite. At the same time, Martyn's *munshi* worked alongside him to translate the book of Acts, which indicate the ongoing process of working on a translation of the entire New Testament. While Martyn eventually stopped his pursuit of Sanskrit, he did spend much of his early Indian career trying to learn it, since he recognized its significance as a foundation to the other languages of India like Urdu. As his work in translation carried on, he needed to continue to find ways to maximize the scholarly resources and available time he had for these different projects.

An additional approach Martyn took in managing his work was to delegate tasks to other scholars, giving *munshis* and *pandits* the responsibility of translating specific portions of scripture. In one instance he wrote that he “[b]egan the work of translating the parables into the Bahar dialect. I left the moonshee and pundit together to execute it. The moonshee from his Rekhtu version explained it to the pundit, who accordingly wrote it down in the village dialect.”<sup>77</sup> <sup>78</sup> On May 18th, 1807, he wrote in a letter to his friend and fellow chaplain, Rev. Corrie, that, “Moonshee has been some time ill, which has delayed the translation.”<sup>79</sup> His later writing suggests that the status of his *munshis*' health, as well as Martyn's own—often fragile in the hot Indian climate—was as much a factor in the progress of translation as

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<sup>77</sup>Martyn, “Letters, &c.,” 519-20.

<sup>78</sup>Based on Martyn's journal, their translation work suggests they were working from the Greek. He wrote on Jun 13, 1807, when discussing the translation of the Gospels into Persian: “I should be able to reduce it to a conformity with the Greek, and also substitute simpler words by the help of my present moonshee” (78).

<sup>79</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” *Vol. II*, 67.

their own efficiency in the work itself.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the progress of translation appeared to rise and fall with the productivity of Martyn's *munshis*, which was based largely on their health as well as their ability to work independently on translations.

Martyn recorded that the *munshis* and *pandits* usually displayed a willingness to collaborate with him, but this did not mean that there were no moments of disagreement or dispute between them. Many conversations between Martyn and his Indian scholars became theological debates, often resulting in heated dialogue as they translated. Some conversations are only given brief remarks with Martyn writing, for example, on December 20th, 1806, that his "[a]fternoon passed rather profitably in conversation with the Pundit about the Hindoo superstitions, and method of learning Sanscrit."<sup>81</sup> Other entries, however, reveal that Martyn gave considerable attention to different theological ideas that were contested between the Indian scholars and himself.

One notable dispute illustrates the intersection between Martyn and his *munshis*' religious views on certain concepts, such as the idea of the Trinity, as well as how these ideas were to be integrated into written words. Martyn recounted from February 23rd, 1807, while translating a portion of the church Litany at night with his *munshi*:

...he could not pretend, he said, to find a word for three persons, since he said it was death by their law, to say that there were three anything that were God. A conversation ensued, in which he said that all God's attributes were grand, whereas Father and Son were mean and degrading; I explained as usual, that God was not literally Father and Son, as these terms are used among men, but were names used by God as the nearest, to express the relations subsisting between these two persons, and that the terms had moreover especial reference to the work of redemption...<sup>82</sup>

As the *munshi* pushed back against Martyn and the ideas they were attempting to translate, Martyn responded with his own questions of the *munshi*'s faith:

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<sup>80</sup>In another entry, Martyn wrote that he was involved in "Usual employments, except translations which are suspended through moonshee's illness" (May 7, 1807).

<sup>81</sup>Martyn, "Letters, &c.," 523.

<sup>82</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 22-23.

Afterwards I asked him, what proof could be given of Mahommedanism. He brought forward for the first time this one, that Mahommed had challenged any man to produce a single Arabic verse like the Koran. I replied, that of all the Indian poets, one was the best. If that one had challenged any other to produce verses like his own, none could have produced them; but this would be no proof that he was sent by God, but only that he was the best poet.<sup>83</sup>

This interaction shows some of the challenges Martyn experienced when translating Christian ideas. The *munshi* clearly had reservations toward a trinitarian conception of God while acknowledging the similarities of the two great monotheisms. Disputing during translation work also brought with it notable examples of apologetic approaches between representations of the two faiths.

In their encounter, they each asked the other for “proofs” of their religion and attempted to support their beliefs with examples from their own religious texts. While one sought to prove the nature of the Trinity through the Bible, the other sought to prove the legitimacy of Mahommed as a prophet through what he had spoken—both notable points of contention and ideas that arose in Christian-Muslim debate. Even though Martyn was sometimes frustrated by the opposition from his *pandits* and *munshis* over the translation of certain ideas, it forced him and his translators to ensure they were applying their knowledge of languages properly by using words that accurately reflected different theological concepts, regardless if they believed in them. It could therefore be inferred that Martyn’s strained relationship with his *munshis* ultimately worked to produce a more accurate translation.

Martyn’s relationship with his *munshis* also displayed a power dynamic that shaped their progress in translation. Although Martyn put himself in a position of superintendence over his Indian assistants, the delegation of responsibilities suggests a recognition of his dependence upon local experts for any sufficient progress to be made. Furthermore, and despite Martyn and his translators holding different statuses of authority, they each carried

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<sup>83</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 23.

differing levels of linguistic expertise. It is clear Martyn lacked a certain amount of experience in translating Indian languages that *munshis* and *pandits* possessed from their professions. The varying levels of expertise between Martyn and his translators intercrossed the differing levels of authority they perceived their relation to each other. Thus, Martyn was simultaneously in a position of dependence, trusting that the translations of his Indian interlocutors were accurate, while also sharing a sense of mutual interdependence with them over the completion of delegated tasks throughout the translation process.

This dynamic was easier for Martyn to manage with some scholars than others, such as Martyn's ongoing relationship with Mirza. Their interactions brought out a different style of interreligious dialogue compared to Martyn's other translators. In contrast to the Indian *munshis*, the Persian scholar was relatively indifferent towards the contrasting theologies. While Martyn would often use terms like "dispute" or "argument" to describe the dialogue between himself and his *munshis* or *pandits*,<sup>84</sup> his dialogues with Mirza were described in a friendlier tone. For example, Martyn later noted on October 28th, 1807, that "at night in a conversation with Mirza accidentally begun, I spoke with him for more than three hours, on Christianity and Mahommedanism."<sup>85</sup> Martyn described their conversation as follows:

He said there was no passage in the gospel that said, no prophet shall come after Christ. I showed him the last verse in Matthew, the passages in Isaiah and Daniel, on the eternity of Christ's kingdom, and proved it from the nature of the way of salvation in the gospel. I then told him my objections against Mahommedanism, its laws, its defects, its unnecessariness, the unsuitableness of its rewards, and its utter want of support by proof. When he began to mention Mahomet's miracles, I showed him the passages in the 6th and 13th chapters of the Koran, where he disavows the power.<sup>86</sup>

Their conversation further reinforced the notion of Mirza's open-mindedness toward religion.

As Mirza sought out answers toward what he viewed as theological discrepancies between

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<sup>84</sup>On one occasion with his *pandit* Martyn wrote: "Passed the morning with pundit, in dictating some of the sermon on the mount, and disputing" (May 8, 1807).

<sup>85</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 119.

<sup>86</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 119-120.

the New Testament and the Qur'an, Martyn went on to write that he "told me that I had produced great doubt in his mind, and that he had no answer to give."<sup>87</sup> Martyn's conversation with Mirza also shifted away from forceful apologetics, becoming a comparative analysis of the two texts. It also showed that Martyn was fairly well-versed in the contents of the Qur'an.

In view of Martyn's interreligious dialogues with *munshis* and *pandits*, it is also worth considering why exactly Muslim or Hindu scholars were willing to be employed in the work of scripture translation, especially under a fervently missions-minded chaplain like Martyn. The historian, M. Mujeeb, even notes that the notable Muslim reformer and scholar of the Hadith, Shah Abd al-Aziz, "declared that it was abhorrent and, therefore, improper to learn English for the promotion of better relations with Englishmen, or to serve them in the capacity of *munshis* (clerks), servants or soldiers."<sup>88</sup> Powell helpfully offers other reasons why the work of scripture translation under English chaplains and missionaries was able to bring together a seemingly incompatible group of scholars.

Two key reasons why *munshis* were willing to be employed in the work of scripture translation were, first, because of their perceived place in Islamic society, and second, that others viewed them as incapable of engaging in interreligious dialogue. Powell notes that while people like Martyn had "no difficulty in obtaining help from learned Muslims and Hindus for the work of translating the Bible," *munshis* were often viewed as outliers within Islamic society.<sup>89</sup> Powell explains that *munshis* "might be regarded as Muslims who had taken up *haram* (forbidden) forms of service under non-Muslim rule, and by assisting to translate the Bible they were in danger of committing an act of *kufir* (infidelity), thereby

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<sup>87</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 120.

<sup>88</sup>Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, 398.

<sup>89</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 94-95.

putting themselves outside the pale of Muslim society.”<sup>90</sup> There were also commentators who were critical of missions and claimed “the typical *munshi* was anyway a half-educated sycophant, who had nothing to lose by taking employment with the missionaries,” and that their marginal status “put [them] in no position to initiate the missionaries into the intricacies of Islam or Hinduism.”<sup>91</sup> Powell and the interreligious dialogue already highlighted thus far provides evidence to the contrary, however.

Powell notes that not all *munshis* fit nicely into these descriptions.<sup>92</sup> As Martyn’s journal has shown, Mirza was one notable exception who carried a strong academic pedigree through his contributions at Fort William College. He seemed to display a clear awareness of the nuances in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Another scholar, the recently converted Nathaniel Sabat, formerly named Jawad bin Sabat, also played an integral role through his relationship with Martyn and their work in translation. His arrival in November 1807 as Martyn’s assistant produced eventually intermeshing cultural and religious worldviews.

Sabat’s experience led to a blending of cultures and traditions. His involvement in scripture translation and different moments of dialogue with Martyn reveals that his character was relatively ambiguous. Powell notes that, “Sabat was extremely difficult to deal with. Conscious, perhaps, of his importance to the missionaries, and possessing by all accounts, a proud and fiery disposition, he caused havoc on Martyn’s household... It seems that he was retained in Martyn’s service only because of his value as an Arabic and Persian translator.”<sup>93</sup> Despite the controversial state of his religious identity, as well as what Powell calls his “erratic behaviour,”<sup>94</sup> Sabat still factored importantly into Martyn’s translations of the New Testament as both a contributor and a hindrance. From an interreligious viewpoint, Sabat was

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<sup>90</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 95.

<sup>91</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 95.

<sup>92</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 95.

<sup>93</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 96.

<sup>94</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 96.

also an essential bridge for Martyn, someone who assisted the chaplain's understanding of Islam and the translation of scripture into Arabic and Persian.

Not long after his arrival, Sabat's relationship with Martyn became strained despite their overlapping Christian faith. In a letter to Brown, Martyn wrote about some of his first impressions of him:

Truly, not to esteem him a monument of grace, and to love him accordingly, is impossible; and yet with all, as you say, he is an Arab... The very first day we began to spar. He would come into none of my plans, nor did I approve of his; but I gave way, and by yielding prevailed, for he now does everything I tell him. He wishes to have nothing to do with my Hindoostanee works, nor do I want him, for he knows not the common Hindoostanee of the country. He says himself that he can be of no use to me, now that I have Mirza, of whose capabilities he has a high opinion. I therefore go on with Mirza and leave Sabat to his Persian.<sup>95</sup>

Even though their different cultural backgrounds, fiery temperaments, and overall perception of each other formed relational barriers, Martyn managed to assign Sabat to the work of Persian translation while Mirza continued on with the Urdu. Between the three of them and with the help of other *munshis* and *pandits*, they continued making progress on each translation. Martyn wrote in April 1808 that, "With my Arabian brother and Mirza Fitrut I am labouring most of the day in the Hindoostanee and Persian gospels. The translation of the rest of the Sacred Scriptures in these languages is employment enough for some years to come. At intervals I read the Persian poetry with Mirza and the Koran with Sabat."<sup>96</sup> Their progress was not without moments of theological dialogue and dispute, especially with the addition of Sabat as a newly converted Christian.

The inclusion of Sabat as a Muslim convert to Christianity added another dynamic to Martyn's interreligious group of translators. On the one hand, he provided integral help to Martyn in the translation of the Persian and Arabic New Testaments. On the other hand, his fiery character brought some hindrances as well. From Martyn's correspondence with Rev.

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<sup>95</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 122-123.

<sup>96</sup>Martyn, "Journals, &c.," 188.

Corrie on March 7, 1808, we learn that they had “arrived as far as the end of Luke; but Sabat carps at several things still. As I think that no man on earth will be able to find a fault after such a severe critic has let it go, I mean to make Mirza read the whole again before him, and then we shall amply discuss every phrase in the Epistles.”<sup>97</sup> While Sabat took a very thorough approach to correcting the translations, sometimes displaying a perfectionist’s attitude, Martyn also viewed Sabat’s relationship with himself and others as similarly strenuous. He later wrote that, “Sabat creates himself enemies in every quarter by his jealous and passionate spirit, particularly among the servants.”<sup>98</sup> Not only did Sabat quarrel with the other scholars over a variety of religious matters, but Martyn’s own discussions with him also brought out differences between their perception of each other’s cultural and academic backgrounds. Martyn wrote that, “Sabat and I agree better in the faith of Christ than in anything else. He exalts logic and I decry it, or rather the pedantic use he makes of it. He looks down with high contempt upon the learning and civilization of the Europeans... This nettles me to take up the cudgels sometimes, to teach him that we do know something.”<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, Martyn and his translators had to continually navigate their differences in order for sufficient progress to be made, with some notable goals finally being reached that same year. Martyn wrote to Corrie in February 1808 that “we finished St. Mark’s gospel in Hindoostanee. Sabat has rather a contemptuous opinion of my translation, merely because some of the words are mean, and not the Hindoostanee which he speaks, which nobody but the Nabobs and Molwees would understand.”<sup>100</sup> Despite the usual stylistic challenges coming from working with Sabat, they managed to continue their work, with Martyn reporting to Brown the following month that, “[w]e are ready for printing—the four Hindoostanee gospels

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<sup>97</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 166.

<sup>98</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 166.

<sup>99</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 138.

<sup>100</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 160.

will be finished this week.”<sup>101</sup> In this instance, Fort William College again provided a helpful platform for the chaplains, not only for translation work, but also for printing.<sup>102</sup> Upon meeting these smaller objectives, Martyn remained determined in his work of translation, but his journal also hints that his mind was beginning to shift its focus beyond India.<sup>103</sup>

Sabat supported Martyn’s goal of leaving for “Bassorah,” or Basra, in Iraq, in order to continue the translations and spread the gospel, but the Arab scholar’s contributions also ended up being in vain. Powell notes that Sabat’s work “proved suspect... Even before Martyn left India, Sabat’s translations, particularly the Persian New Testament, were questioned by other scholars and *munshis*.”<sup>104</sup> She goes on to explain that after Martyn’s arrival to Shiraz, where he intended to work on revisions of the Persian and Arabic translations, he wrote that, “our attempts at Persian translation in India were good for nothing.”<sup>105</sup> Their previous work was received with much “ridicule by the Shirazi scholars of the Persian renderings of his Indian *munshis*” as a result.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, Martyn continued to revise his translations in Shiraz and intended to travel further to Damascus.

Martyn’s wavering health had often posed a challenge for him though, and he died before he could reach the city. After his untimely death in October 1812, Powell explains that Martyn’s revised manuscripts later returned to his friends in Calcutta, and his “New Testament, and parts of the Old, were printed, published and disseminated from presses in Calcutta and London in the three languages” after the EIC lifted its missions ban in 1813.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Martyn, “Journals, &c.,” 168.

<sup>102</sup>Pearson’s Memoir of Buchanan notes: “The first versions of any of the Gospels in Persian and Hindostanee which were printed in India, issued from the press of the College of Fort William” (217).

<sup>103</sup>Martyn wrote, “Sabat’s conversation stirs up a great desire in me to go [to Persia]; as by his account all the Mahometan countries are ripe for throwing off the delusion” (127).

<sup>104</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 96.

<sup>105</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 101.

<sup>106</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 101.

<sup>107</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 99.

As Martyn's Urdu, Arabic and Persian translations continued to have an impact after his death, Sabat's own life soon came to an end as well. This was not before his religious identity went into question, however. Powell explains that "soon after Martyn's death he renounced Christianity and returned to Islam."<sup>108</sup> Yet, Sabat supposedly pronounced himself a Christian again shortly after; not long before being "drowned off the coast of Sumatra by pirates who had tied him into a sack before throwing him into the sea."<sup>109</sup> In the end, Sabat's religious identity remained mysterious.<sup>110</sup>

To the dismay of the chaplains, longevity in Christian conversion or religious reform among Indian people often required more than translated scripture and a verbal confession of faith. Sabat, although an Arab, was one example of this, and was certainly not helped by the optimism of the chaplains' evangelical zeal. Although their goal of converting non-Christian Indian people was seldom met during their own lives, their involvement in processes that either advocated for or led to the work of scripture translation still managed to have a lasting legacy. The translations of the New Testament, made available to missionaries after 1813, became an important evangelical tool for future missionary activity throughout India.<sup>111</sup>

The chaplains' contribution to scripture translation in India is largely undisputed, but the interreligious encounters and dialogue which occurred during the processes of language learning, public advocacy, and scripture translation itself reveal how complicated the process actually was. Indian scholars served as an essential and necessary source of knowledge for chaplains, while simultaneously posing unique challenges and religious barriers that needed

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<sup>108</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 96.

<sup>109</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 110.

<sup>110</sup>Buchanan's *The Star in the East*, and Abdul Wali's *Life of Jawad Sabat* seemingly portrayed the events of Sabat's life through two contrasting lenses: One which emphasizes his Christian conversion acting as a symbol of Islam responding to the Christian gospel, and the other which emphasizes the undermining of Christianity from an Islamic perspective by pretending to convert to Christianity.

<sup>111</sup>Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 99.

to be carefully navigated for the chaplains' goals to be accomplished. Somewhat paradoxically, Bible translation, which the chaplains hoped to utilize for converting non-Christians, provided some of their most informative moments of interfaith dialogue with Indian Muslims and Hindus. Scholars foreign to India like Mirza and Sabat only added more layers to this picture of interreligious collaboration. Yet, like the chaplains' efforts toward schooling and ethnography, the process of translation increasingly became more of a collaborative space for chaplains to learn about Indian religions and culture rather than it was a platform for conversion.

What might be most important, however, is the conclusion that without the help of these scholars—many of whom were largely uninterested or indifferent towards the chaplains' evangelical cause—these translations may not have been completed. The chaplains' earlier writings show how arduous their efforts to learn languages, translate, and gain access to Indian literature often was without *munshis* and *pandits*, while Martyn's short life of 31 years shows, in hindsight, how integral their contributions were to the translations.

Scripture translation in India was certainly driven by the growing movement of Protestant evangelicalism. Nonetheless, the chaplains' work shows that Biblical translation carried many more Indian, and more notably non-Christian, contributions. Part of the unrecognized dialogue found in translation work was an intersecting point of learning for all involved; providing a relatively open space in which different religious perspectives could both be disputed and work together within the Company's stance of non-interference. The chaplains' acquisition of Indian languages was essential in the complex process of scripture translation, but the mutual and mostly respectful engagement between them and those they sought to convert proved even more so. Thus, a work for conversion fostered deeper interreligious cooperation. It leaves a compelling historical picture in which collaboration over language and religious ideas transcended divisions in religious communities.

### **Conclusion: Placing the Chaplains' Encounters in Broader Historical Contexts**

Of four chaplains we have encountered in this thesis, only Buchanan lived to see the EIC's 1813 Charter Renewal lift the ban on Christian missions within its territory. The renewed Charter made the Company Board of Control "the final authority to grant licences to missionaries to proceed to India, and provision was made for a bishop at Calcutta and three archdeacons."<sup>1</sup> Buchanan's lobbying for Christian missions to India became a reality through this renewed Charter, but his health was failing, and he died two years later in 1815. Brown, Tennant, and Martyn also died at relatively young ages between 1810 and 1813. While their desire to see Protestant Christianity spread throughout India and produce new converts was not accomplished during their own lifetimes, these evangelically-minded chaplains helped lay important groundwork for larger-scale missionary activity in India after 1813.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding their goal to spread the Christian gospel, this thesis has shown that chaplains pursued different interreligious encounters as an alternative to what Evangelicals normally expected Christian missionary activity to entail. By exploring these encounters, we have seen how the chaplains became conduits of religious knowledge. As conduits, the chaplains' religious knowledge of Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam moved in different directions between them and their Indian interlocutors, depending on the kind of encounter.

Through Anglo-Indian schooling, the chaplains attempted to teach (or theorized how to teach) Christian ideas to non-Christian Indian people. In schools, chaplains acted as the primary communicators of ideas. However, their encounters with Indian children and their families convinced them that they needed to learn a great deal about the traditions of life and thought in India if they were to effectively teach Christian ideas or texts to them. This resulted in a reciprocal exchange in which the chaplains adjusted their teaching methods as

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<sup>1</sup>Keith, *A Constitutional History of India 1600-1935*, 160.

<sup>2</sup>Eyre Chatterton, *A History of the Church of England in India Since the Early Days of the East India Company* (New York and Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1924), 108.

they learned more about Indian people and their cultural sensitivities within the classroom context. For all their desire to communicate with their students, chaplains were also recipients of ideas about India's religious culture via schooling.

Other religious inquiries made by the chaplains, which produced a kind of proto-ethnographic writing, positioned them more directly as extractors of information. Their deliberate efforts to go into different Indian social contexts to observe Hindu rituals or dialogue with Hindus over their beliefs and practices produced a wide range of empirical data recorded by each chaplain. Although many of their experiences overlapped, each chaplains' writings offered different impressions that sought either to bridge the gap in their understanding between Christianity and Hinduism via theological similarities or draw distinct borders around unfamiliar Hindu traditions that did not fit within their Protestant evangelical worldviews. In both instances, the chaplains consciously exposed themselves to India's religious culture, while sometimes, perhaps subconsciously, making sense of their experiences by connecting together and distinguishing apart the unfamiliar with the familiar.

Finally, interreligious encounters with Hindu and Muslim scholars became an essential part of the chaplains' attempts to learn, understand, and utilize India's major languages in Bible translation. The collaboration between chaplains and *munshis* and *pandits* produced a fascinating relational dynamic which displayed both their interdependence and dependence upon one another's expertise toward shared translation goals. Instead of solely being recipients or extractors of religious ideas, the chaplains' role in Bible translation placed them in a dialogical process of cross-cultural exchange with Indian scholars over language, theology, and meaning. These exchanges produced moments which allowed for interreligious discussion, debate, and learning to occur towards each other's differing theologies through the common ground of translation work.

Although these encounters provide examples of fascinating interreligious dynamics to analyze, they also shed light on the larger histories the chaplains were a part of. In essence, they complicate common notions which may arise when discussing historical narratives of the EIC, Christian missions in India,<sup>3</sup> and interreligious relations more broadly.<sup>4</sup>

The administrative history of the EIC and its policies suggests that prior to 1813, little to no missionary activity occurred in British India because of the Company's non-interference policy. In reality, what the Company declared in writing was not as strictly enforced in practice. This was partly due to the ambiguity surrounding what they actually considered to be "Christian missionary activity." This in turn allowed for other forms of evangelically-motivated activities to be pursued by the chaplains, while, in the same process, broadening what Christian missionary efforts looked like in an imperial context. Prohibited from evangelistic preaching that emphasized the necessity of Christian conversion, the chaplains' writings show that they engaged with India's people in more subtle and nuanced ways. The chaplains' involvement in Christian scripture translation, for example, was not unlike what Jesuit missionaries did in China from the mid-sixteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The Jesuits' more nuanced attempts to spread Christian ideas to Chinese people were similar to the chaplains' own.

Aside from the chaplains' activities in India and the Jesuits' in China, it is usually more common to find throughout the history of Christianity in the early-modern and modern

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<sup>3</sup>Lawson positions 1813 as the starting point for official missionary activity in British India. This is true, but also overlooks the evangelically-motivated activities of chaplains that occurred during the decades prior (*The East India Company: A History*, 149-51).

<sup>4</sup>Powell's analysis of Muslim-missionary exchanges in India, or Pratt's explication of the term, "contact zone," do not always parallel the chaplains' encounters with Indian people. Neither did their encounters always reflect the imperial context they were in.

<sup>5</sup>R. Po-chia Hsia, "The Catholic Mission and translations in China, 1583-1700," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39.

world that colonialism and Christian missions operated coercively together.<sup>6</sup> The most apparent example of this was during the European colonization of North and South America. Carson notes that, “[e]arlier Catholic empires had imposed Catholicism on their conquered territories, asserting the state’s duty to bring the benefits of Christianity to subject peoples in order to further the progress of the ‘*Corpus Christianum*’.”<sup>7</sup> The imposition of Christianity by colonial powers often resulted in other changes forcibly made toward the religious culture of the colonized.

The conditions in which evangelically-minded chaplains worked in British India prior to 1813 were noticeably different. For roughly two centuries, the EIC held a stance of non-interference toward India’s religious culture and tried to avoid sparking cultural confrontations for the purpose of maintaining good trading relations, and later political relations during British rule in India. In short, Carson explains that the Company wanted its rule to be seen by Indian people “as an element of continuity rather than change.”<sup>8</sup> Eventually, however, the discussion surrounding Christian missions began to produce some debate about the policy of non-interference at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The chaplains’ activities, especially their lobbying, factored into the discussion about whether to spread Christianity in British India.<sup>10</sup>

It is also apparent from the chaplains’ writings that they did not all view their desire to spread Christianity through an imperial lens. Tennant certainly thought that the Christianization of India could be part of a larger effort to westernize or modernize Indian

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<sup>6</sup>Carson, *The East India Company and Religion*, 10.

<sup>7</sup>Carson, *The East India Company and Religion*, 10.

<sup>8</sup>Carson, *The East India Company and Religion*, 15.

<sup>9</sup>Carson, “An Imperial Dilemma,” 1.

<sup>10</sup>Karen Chancy notes how Buchanan’s pamphlet, *Memoir of the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India* (1805), was a factor because it “sparked a bitter eight-year debate over the right of Christian missionaries to operate in British India” (“The Star in the East: The Controversy Over Christian Missions to India, 1805-1813,” *The Historian*, Wiley, 1998), 1.

civilization in many facets of life. By comparison, Martyn seemed to desire the conversion of Hindus and Muslims to Christianity via persuasion and without them having to give up control of their place in their own social and cultural structures. Religion, culture, and society for Indian Hindus and Muslims was far more interwoven than Martyn probably recognized, however. Even in this study's focused sample of chaplains' writings, there was a range of motives for furthering Christian missions in India; all which envisioned more or less cultural transformation.

Lastly, this thesis problematizes an assumption that may arise with the study of the history of interreligious relations, that encounters between different religions historically were ultimately framed and shaped by conflict, which ranged from the realm of theology to politics. This notion produces narratives which might emphasize a "clash of cultures," particularly between the colonizer and the colonized.<sup>11</sup> It also leaves less room to consider the more mutual and cooperative forms of encounter that also occurred between people with differing religious views.

The EIC chaplains' writings show that the encounters they had with Indian Hindus and Muslims were shaped less by conflict and more by learning, dialogue, inquiry and debate. They may have represented fundamentally incompatible theological positions, and the chaplains may have wanted to perceive their Indian interlocutors in ways that placed them in opposition to their own Protestant worldview, but they also had to grapple with recognizing that there were in fact overlapping ideas across the different theologies and practices they encountered.

Rather than a clash of cultures, the chaplains' encounters with Indian people might be better understood as a product of overlapping cultures. The cultures of British and Indian

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<sup>11</sup>For example, Brian M. Fagan's, *Clash of Cultures* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 1984), uses "clash" to loosely describe the nature of many intercultural encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans during the Age of Discovery (23).

civilization overlapped geographically throughout Bengal, creating a new dynamic that inevitably made space for moments of interaction between India's different religious believers. Despite British India's imperial context, these interactions were at times shaped by more mutual relations and even collaboration over shared goals. Thus, the chaplains' writings and activities invite historians critically to reconsider common historical narratives about interreligious relations by showing how, in British India before 1813, the nature of these relations were more complex and reciprocal than a narrative of conflict would suggest.

When they first arrived in India, what these chaplains likely expected of India's religious culture was often different from what they actually experienced through their encounters with Hindus and Muslims. They expected a receptivity to Christian ideas but instead often struggled to find an effective means to teach Indian people. They expected to find a large dichotomy between Christianity and Hinduism, but instead found that certain unfamiliar religious beliefs and practices could become familiarized within their own Protestant worldview. They expected that translating the Bible into India's many languages would be attainable through their own efforts, but instead had to rely heavily on the expertise of the same people they wanted to convert. Within each of these encounters, the chaplains had to navigate a narrow path between Company and Christian duty, thereby embodying the EIC's complicated relationship with religion. It was out of this complexity that interactions of faith occurred, offering cross-cultural perspectives of what it meant to be a Protestant Christian in British India at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and what it was like for these unique Company employees to interact with faiths that carried notable differences and similarities from their own.

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