

The Gideon Malayalam Bible: The Dual Legacy of Bailey and Gundert

The Combined Timeline (1816 – 1893)

Year	Event	Figure involved
1816	Arrives in Kerala (Kottayam) as a CMS Missionary.	Benjamin Bailey
1821		Benjamin Bailey
1829	Publishes the First Malayalam New Testament .	Benjamin Bailey
1838	Arrives in Kerala (Thalassery/Malabar) with the Basel Mission.	Hermann Gundert
1841	Publishes the First Complete Malayalam Bible (Old & New Testament). This is the version the <i>Puthenkoottukar</i> (Orthodox) began using.	Benjamin Bailey
1846	Publishes the first comprehensive Malayalam-English Dictionary.	Benjamin Bailey
1847	Starts " Rajyasamacharam ", the first Malayalam newspaper.	Hermann Gundert
1850	Retires and leaves India for England permanently.	Benjamin Bailey
1851	Publishes <i>Malayala Bhasha Vyakaranam</i> (Malayalam Grammar).	Hermann Gundert
1859	Leaves India due to ill health (returns to Germany).	Hermann Gundert
1868	Publishes his translation of the New Testament (The "Gundert Version") while in Germany.	Hermann Gundert
1871	Dies in Shropshire, England (Age 80).	Benjamin Bailey
1872	Publishes the monumental Malayalam-English Dictionary (still considered the gold standard).	Hermann Gundert
1893	Dies in Calw, Germany (Age 79).	Hermann Gundert

1. Benjamin Bailey (The Pioneer)

Active in Kerala: 1816 – 1850 (34 Years) Base: Kottayam (Central Kerala)

His Role: Bailey was a pragmatist. When he arrived, there were no books, no press, and no standardized script. He literally built the machinery of the language.

- **The Font Maker:** Before Bailey, Malayalam was written on palm leaves. To print the Bible, Bailey had to design the round, loop-based font we recognize today. He carved the prototypes out of wood because the metal types from Bombay were square and ugly.
- **The Translator:** His Bible (1841) was a "rough draft" of history. He worked with Syrian *Kathanars* (priests) but relied heavily on the Sanskrit-heavy "High Malayalam" mixed with the colloquial speech of Central Travancore. It was readable but sounded "foreign" to native ears.
- **The Legacy:** Without Bailey, there would be no printing press in Kottayam, and the "Manorama" culture of Kottayam (the land of letters) would not exist.

2. Hermann Gundert (The Scholar)

Active in Kerala: 1838 – 1859 (21 Years) Base: Thalassery (North Kerala / Malabar)

His Role: Gundert was an intellectual giant. He didn't just want to translate; he wanted to understand the *soul* of the Dravidian culture.

- **The Linguist:** While Bailey relied on Sanskrit to fill gaps, Gundert loved the "Pacha Malayalam" (Pure Malayalam) and the Dravidian roots. He spent years listening to the fisherfolk and peasants of Malabar to understand the natural rhythm of the language.
- **The Correction:** Gundert looked at Bailey's 1841 Bible and felt it was clunky. His 1868 New Testament and 1881 Psalms introduced the poetic, flowing grammatical structure that is used in the *Sathyavedapusthakam* today.
- **Fun Fact:** He is the grandfather of the famous Nobel Prize-winning author **Hermann Hesse** (author of *Siddhartha*).

How They Connected: The Creation of "Sathyavedapusthakam"

They barely overlapped in terms of collaboration, but their work fused after death. When the committee met in **1910** to create the Union Version (*Sathyavedapusthakam*), they essentially took **Bailey's structural foundation** (the complete Protestant Canon) and overlaid it with **Gundert's linguistic polish**.

- **Bailey** gave the Malayalam Bible its **Body** (the press, the books, the availability).
- **Gundert** gave the Malayalam Bible its **Soul** (the grammar, the poetry, the flow).

Summary

The Gideon Malayalam Bible is essentially the Sathyavedapusthakam wrapped in a Gideons cover. It represents the "accessible, mass-produced" timeline of the Bible in Kerala, standing in direct contrast to the "guarded, liturgical" history of the Vishudha Grandham or the Peshitta.