

Dänisch-Hallesche Mission

A Brief Account Of The Measures Taken In Denmark, For The Conversion of the Heathen in the East-Indies: And Of The College or Incorporated Society, ...

Downing, Joseph

London, 1715

To the Reader

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TO THE READER.



THE following Papers give some Account of an Incorporated Society lately set up at Copenhagen; in the Kingdom of Denmark, for Propagating the Christian Religion among the Heathen in the East-Indies. As Things of this Nature are generally subject to various Opinions and Reflections; so hath in particular this Undertaking met with the same Treatment, since it became known in Europe. It hath been highly approved of by some, and disliked by others. Some, who did not suppose an Enterprize of this Nature to be altogether impracticable, did however think it now very improper, when every one complains of hard Times, and is called upon by other Expences nearer home; And for this Reason, they are for putting it off to a more favourable Opportunity. Others have been startled at the Newness of the Thing, being shy to venture in a Road so little beaten in this Age, and so much exposed to Danger.

Danger. Others have been bare Spectators in this Matter, unwilling to judge of a Work, which, like a tender Blade, did but just appear above Ground, not discovering as yet what its Fruit might prove. Others again, have taken a transient View of the Scheme, but declared their unwillingness to be farther concern'd, till they should see some eminent Men espouse it, and by their Example, encourage others to engage in it.

'Tis not the Design of this small Preface, to examine the various Opinions and Judgments of Men, much less to determine how far they might be well-grounded, or how far perhaps they might be byassed by Mistakes and Prejudices. However, thus much may be said in Answer to those that are so easily terrified by the common Calamities of the Times on one Hand, and by the Expensiveness of the Design on the other, that they seem to be little acquainted with the Ways and Dispensations of Providence. For if we take a Survey of the most considerable Transactions, both under the Law and the Gospel, it will plainly appear, that generally the best of Works have been carried on in the worst of Times, and that they have triumph'd at last, over all the Clamours and Oppositions that wicked Men and Devils could raise against them. The Prophet assures us, that Jerusalem was rebuilt in strait and troublous Times. And another of the inspired Writers tells us, that they were fain to work with one Hand, and to hold their Weapons in the other. And thus did the Work gain Ground in the midst of Adversities, and the Attempts made

made against it were so far from disheartning the Builders, that they were the more encouraged thereby, not desisting from their Toil and Labour, till they saw the Work brought to a happy Conclusion. However, it cannot be denied, that the Opposition is then most fatal and destructive, when it comes from those that are within the Pale of the Church, and who make shew of the same Confession of Faith. We read what a Backwardness there was among the Jews themselves to build the Lord's Temple, and what Pretences they made, to put it off from Year to Year; The Time is not come, the Time that the Lord's House should be built, was the common Plea for their Sloth and Drowsiness: The Effect whereof was, that whilst Governours, Priests and People, were wholly bent on advancing their worldly Interest, shamefully neglecting the Lord's House, their Vines and Olives did not yield their Increase, and the Earth denied her Fruits. All which may visibly convince us, that even outward Prosperity in a great Measure depends on the Care employed in the Worship of God, and its Enlargement among Jews and Heathens.

Nor have those a sufficient Plea for themselves, that undervalue a Design, because it hath been so little attempted by Protestants. This should rather be an Inducement not to stifle it in its Infancy, but to inflame that little of the Spirit of Power and Love which is left among us. Should we be also willing to die, because we see so many dead about us? I mean, so many careless and negligent in the greatest Concerns of Life and Happiness. Should we not rather strengthen the more the Things which remain, but are ready to die,

die, except they be supported betimes. Let us therefore shake off our natural Drowsiness, which indisposeth the Mind for any generous Enterprize. Nothing is more common, even among those who call themselves Christians, than to frame new Ways and Methods for increasing their Stock and Estate, and to improve every Opportunity offer'd for that Purpose. Every Year produceth new Schemes, and these new Pursuits after the Things of this World. Let a Design be never so new and uncommon, it will soon be embraced, if it appears to be profitable, and conducive to some temporal End. Why should a Christian then be shy of a Work, because it is new, when it may carry with it a never fading Reward? Why should not he as readily embrace this Opportunity to lay up to himself durable Riches in Heaven, and by seasonably employing some Part of this World's Mammon, in advancing so Christian an Undertaking, make to himself Friends, that when he fails, they may receive him into everlasting Habitations?

