

Dänisch-Hallesche Mission

Propagation of the Gospel in the East

Ziegenbalg, Bartholomäus
Plütschau, Heinrich

London, 1709

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LETTER IX.

The Missionaries continue to learn the Malabarian Language, and to catechize therein. They build a Church, and preach both in the Malabarian and Portuguese Language. The Conversion of some Malabarians to the Christian Religion. Of some Necessaries they stand in need of, for carrying on the Work of God among the Heathens.

WE have not been a little surpris'd, on Account of not having received any Letters from you this Year, at the Arrival of the last *European* Ships, after having writ to you both from the *Cape of Good Hope*, and last Year from this Place in the *East-Indies*. Whatever the Reason be, neither I, nor my Fellow-Labourer, have been induced to believe, this to be an Effect of any Neglect of our Friends in *Europe*; since in the daily Discharge of our pastoral Function, we can't but feel the Concurrence of many Prayers of our Friends, whereof we reckon you to be the first. And since we remember you, not only in our Prayers, but even in our daily Conversation, we could not but give you an Account, of the Rise and Progress of the Work,

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we are sent for hither, and of the signal Blessings of the Lord attending our Endeavours hitherto; in hopes it may perhaps afford some Edification both to you and to others.

Last Year, when the Ships returned to *Europe*, I fell dangerously ill, and the Distemper holding me above a Month, made me pine away to that degree, that both I my self, and others with me, began to despair of my Recovery. However, the Lord having been graciously pleased once more, to restore me, it has now the more excited me, entirely to spend the rest of my Days in the Service of God, the less my Health was looked for: My dear Colleague having renewed with me this Resolution, we began afresh to apply our selves to the Work we were sent for, notwithstanding the many Oppositions we were like to grapple with; most certainly believing, that God would never leave us in a Work sincerely begun to his Glory.

Our chief Care was now, to learn the *Malabarian* Language, after being pretty well versed in the *Portuguese*. To facilitate this Design, we maintained a *Malabarian* School-Master in our House: but still we were in the Dark, as for the Words themselves and the genuine *Construction* thereof; he being only able to teach us to read and to write, but knowing nothing of the *Portuguese*, he could not give us any satisfactory Inlet into the hardest Constructions of this Language. Soon after we fell acquainted with a *Malabarian*, who heretofore had serv'd the *East-India* Company, and besides his own Language, talked *Portuguese*, *Danish*, *High* and *Low-Dutch* fluently enough. This Man we hired, to be our Translator; and by this Means we made a choice Col-

Collection of some Thousands of *Malabarian* Words, which we got presently by heart. Soon after we fell to the *Declensions* and *Conjugations*, and began to read Books in this Language. And all this went on successfully by the Blessing of God. Our Governour hereupon procured us some Rudiments of a *Malabarian Grammar*, drawn up by a Missionary, sent hither by the *French King*. Besides this, we met with some Books, writ in *Malabarick* by *Roman-Catholicks*; which, though they were stocked with many pernicious Errors, have however contributed a great deal towards imbibing this Language, by furnishing us with such Words as did favour of a more *Christian Stile* and Temper; we being not a little put to it, how to find Words *expressive* enough for the Delivery of *spiritual* Doctrines, and yet cleared from the Leaven of Heathenish Fancies and Superstitions.

The best of these Books contained a Collection of the *Gospel-Lessons*, which proved very useful to us. This we first perused, picking out all such Words and Phrases as were fitting our Design, and after having 'em printed upon the Memory, practically applied 'em in our daily Life and Conversation. After this we went also through several other Books; and by this Means I made such Advances within the Compass of Eight Months, that by the Assistance of divine Grace, I was able to read, to write, to talk and to understand this hard Language, if delivered by others. Mr. *Plutsch* hath likewise made a considerable Progress therein; tho' indeed a Country so hot as this, doth not permit too fervent an Application of the Head. However, we thought it necessary, now to agree, that, whilst I was employed a-

bout the *Malabarian* Language, he might attempt the *Portuguese* ; both these Languages, cutting out Work enough for us every Day. And hitherto he has spent two Hours daily, in catechizing in *Portuguese*, as I have in *Malabarick*.

Soon after our Arrival here, some well disposed *Germans* entreated us, to give 'em some good Instructions out of the Word of God. We were glad of this Opportunity, and set up an Exercise of Piety in our own House. On the same Day we were to begin, the Governour sent for us to Dinner, and having discoursed the Point with us, he said : That he neither could, nor intended to hinder any ways the Work we were about, though he could be more glad, to see it publickly done in the *Danish* Church there. We replied : we would begin in our House, till we received further Orders from him. Coming home, we found the House crouded with People, to hear the Word of God, whom we readily served as well as we could. But some ill-disposed Men, highly displeased with our Design, began to exclaim against it. However, this proved but a Means, to draw more People to our House, and some even of the first Rank, would now and then come to hear us, so that the Room of our House was hardly big enough to hold them. At last the Governour sent his Secretary, and enquired, whether we had a Mind to preach once a Week in the Church here ? We said, we were ready for it at any Time, if we had but the Consent and Approbation of the *Danish* Ministers ; which the Governour, after the Removal of some Obstacles, brought about at last. We presented the *Danish* Church

Church with Two and Twenty Psalm-Books. And from that Time, *viz.* from the Month of *December* 1706. we have constantly continued to preach therein. We had abundance of Difficulties to struggle with in carrying this Point; but find now such a Blessing springing up from thence, that it affords us matter of Joy and Comfort. By this Means we had now a fair Opportunity, to lay the Word of God before *Heathens, Mahometans, and Christians*. Truly, we often did not know, from whence to fetch the necessary Supplies, to support both Spirit and Body; having been all along engaged from Morning till Night, to converse with all sorts of People. But the Lord has hitherto assisted us so powerfully, that both Christians and Heathens begin to be convinced, that God is with us; especially since they see, that by his Grace, we endeavour to render our Life and Conversation conformable to the Doctrine we preach to them; which, as we find, leaves generally the strongest Impression upon Peoples Mind.

We must needs say, That what we have undertaken hitherto in Singleness of Heart, has been attended with a *Conviction* of many, and a *Conversion* of some Souls. The first of our baptismal Acts was solemnly performed in the *Danish Church*, with *Five* Heathens, which were christned, after they had given an Account of all the Articles of the Christian Faith. This they did with such a Readiness of Mind, that many old People were ashamed thereat, and we ourselves convinced, they had a sound Sense of what they outwardly performed. Nay, God has assisted us so far, that we have been able to build

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a Church among the *Malabarians* here, which seems the more marvellous to us, the more Difficulties we have met with in bringing it about. We know very well, that the Dispensation of the Gospel, in the New-Testament, requires chiefly an *inward* and invisible Worship, and that many of the Christians dote too much on a fine Set of outward Formalities, confined to Churches. However, since God is a God of Order, and requireth to be worshipped, both privately and publickly, we have been obliged to resolve upon raising a Church, for our greater Conveniency; our own House being on one hand too small for preaching, catechizing, and administering the Sacraments, and the Heathens on the other, too shy, to venture into the Churches of the *Blacks* (so they call the Christians) since these were generally adorned with fine Cloaths, and all Manner of proud Apparel; but they themselves black, and having nothing about 'em but a thin Cloth to cover their Body.

We happened to fall acquainted with a Man of an eminent Family in this Country, who offered, both to come over to our Religion, and to raise a Church at his own Charge for our Use; but there arose so many Contests and Broils about it, that he was forced, not only entirely to drop this Design, but to remove also from hence to another Place. Notwithstanding this Disappointment, we, in the Name of God, and in hopes of being supported by our King, laid the Foundation of a Church, bestowing thereon all whatever we could possibly spare from our yearly Pension. Every one, that saw it, laughed at it as a silly & rash Design, and cried us down for Sots, venturing

ring too boldly upon a thing which, they thought, would certainly come to nothing. However, we prosecuted our Design in the Name of God, a Friend sending Fifty *Rixdollars* towards it. By this Forwardness of our Work, the Enemies were confounded, and some of 'em did then contribute something themselves towards accomplishing the whole Affair; which proved no small Comfort to us. Thus is the Building finished at last, and fitted up for a Church-Congregation. It lies without the Town, in the Midst of a Multitude of *Malabarians*, near the High-Road, built all of Stone. It was consecrated the *Fourteenth* of *August*, which was the *Eighth* Sunday after *Trinity*, in the Presence of a great Conflux of *Heathens*, *Mahometans* and *Christians*, who had a Sermon preached to them both in *Portuguese* and *Malabarick*.

This Solemnity was performed to the no small Astonishment of abundance of People, who visibly discovered the Finger of God attending us all along in carrying on this Work. And thus we have now for seven Weeks together, performed the publick Service in our *Jerusalem* (this being the Name we have given to our new-built Church) by Preaching, Catechizing, and administering the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper. We continue also to preach every *Wednesday*, in our native Language in the *Danish* Church, called *Sion*. Every *Sunday* Morning we preach in our Church *Portuguese*, and in the Afternoon *Malabaric*, each Sermon being concluded with a short Catechisation of Children. The same is observed every *Friday*, only, that one Day we perform it in *Malabaric*, and the other in *Portuguese*. Multi-

tudes of People Flock together to hear us, *Malabarians, Blacks and Christians*, every one being allowed to come in, let him be *Heathen, Mahometan, Papist, or Protestant*. However, our small Congregation more nearly committed to our charge, has their particular Seats fitted up for 'em.

At this rate the Work of God runs on a main. Our Congregation consists of *Sixty three* Persons; and another is to be baptized to morrow. We hope, more will shortly come over, there being up and down a pretty many, that have already received a favourable Impression of the Christian Religion. There is a blind Man in our Congregation, indued with a large measure of the Spirit of God, who begins to be very serviceable to us in the Catechising of others. He has such an holy Zeal for the Christian Religion, that every one is astonish'd at his fervent and affectionate delivery in Points of Religion. We can't express, what a tender Love we bear to our new-planted Congregation. Nay, our Love is arrived to that degree, and our Forwardness to serve this Nation, is come to that pitch, that we are resolved to live and to die with them; though according to the Tenour of our Engagement, we might have Liberty to return to *Denmark* after a stay of three or five Years in this Country. At least, we can't harbour as yet any Thoughts about returning home, though we be daily exposed to the persecutions of our Enemies on all sides, and taken up all the Day long with uninterrupted Business to push on the Design once begun. I'm sure, you wou'd wonder, if we shou'd give you an Account at large of all the Oppositions

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we have met with hitherto. Yet all these Engines set a Work by the Devil, have only served, the more gloriously to display the Work of God, and to unite us the nearer to Him, who is the only Support of all the Distressed. Heathens and *Mahometans* are kind enough to us, and love to be in our Company, notwithstanding we have all along laid open to them the Vanity of their Idolatrous and Superstitious Worship. But those that *pretend* to be Christians, and are worse than Heathens at the Bottom, have shewn us all the spite and malice they ever cou'd. However, there is a Remnant left among them too, that love to be sincerely dealt with.

All our Endeavours are now entirely bent upon this, how we may be able to raise the Work to a higher Perfection. We have sent some *Proposals* to his *Danish* Majesty relating to this Point. 'Tis true, the Grace of God is the Spring of all good Motions; But if this shou'd be accompanied with seasonable Supplies and Beneficial Contributions of Publick-spirited Persons, we shou'd then be enabled, to lay a firm Foundation for many noble Establishments, tending to a Thorough-Reformation of these wild and deluded Heathens. With the last Ship, that sailed from hence, we sent you a Letter, to *prove thereby the sincerity and forwardness of the Love* of our *European* Christians in relation to the Poor Heathens; and we hope that at the arrival of the next Ship, we shall receive a Blessing from you. In the mean time we desire you, to send us some more Book treating upon the Life and *Practice of Religion*, together with fifty *Psalms*-Books of Mr. *Newmans* Edition; Some of our Country-Men be-
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beginning to relish good and spiritual Books. I don't question, but many well-disposed Souls, and Well-wishers to the publick Good, will gladly contribute something towards the supply of our want. We have likewise desired, that two Persons more might be sent over to assist us in the Work so happily begun. Remember us constantly in your Prayers. It wou'd afford us a great deal of Satisfaction, if we shou'd see you once here amongst our Heathenish Flock, to hear us preach to them in the *Portuguese* and their own native Language, &c.

In the East-Indies at
Tranquebar Sept.
12th 1707.

B. Z.

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