

Dänisch-Hallesche Mission

Propagation of the Gospel in the East

Propagation of the Gospel in the East: Being a Farther Account of the Success Of The Danish Missionaries, Sent to the East-Indies, For The Conversion Of The Heathens in Malabar

Böhm, Anton Wilhelm

London, 1714

The First Question.

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SECTION III.

Containing Answers to such Questions as relate to Sacred or Religious Matters.

The First Question.

ARE the Malabarians for the most part Heathens, or Mahometans?

Answer: I never have seen as yet a *Malabarian* that was a *Mahometan*. The *Mahometans* here, are generally *Blackamoors*: Though they are settled every where among the *Malabarians*, yet do they make a particular Body of Men, or a quite different sort of People from the *Heathens*. And since the *Malabarick* Language has the Ascendant here above all others, they very seldom speak their native Tongue, and suffer their Children to frequent the *Malabarick-Schools*, without obliging their Masters to teach them the Tenets of the *Mahometan* Faith. So that the *Moors* or *Mahometans* understand the *Malabarick* Language, both as to *read*, *write*, or to *speak* it; yet are they no *Malabarians*, but vastly different from them, as well with respect to their *Religion*, as likewise to their *Complexion*, their *Shape*, and *Apparel*. Many *Hundred Thousands* of those *Moors* inhabit the Coast of *Coromandel*, enjoying every where great Power and Liberty: For as they depend on the great *Mogol*, so he doth always

ways protect them against the Insults of the *Heathenish* Kings, if they should offer to molest them.

The richest and greatest Merchants are among these *Moors*; one of whom died but lately, worth above a *Tun of Gold*. Their Trade and Commerce at Sea, doth far exceed that of the *Malabarians*; and for that Reason, they generally dwell along the Sea-Coasts. The *Mahometan-Moors* are far greater Enemies to the *Christian* Religion, than the *Heathens* themselves. They often visit me, as I do them; but they will seldom listen to any Reason, firmly believing their own Religion to be of the greatest Extent of all, as having possessed no less than almost *Three Parts* of the Universe. This is the Reason, that when they write a Letter to a *Christian*, they cut off *three Corners* of the Letter, leaving but one entire, to intimate thereby, that the *Christians* possess but *one*, and they, the other *three Parts* of the World.

Not far from hence liveth an *Hermit*, whom the *Moors* worship as one of their first-rate *Saints*. He pretends to be of the House of *Mahomet*, and that the Blood of that Prophet runs in his Veins. He hath a Banner displayed in the Garden where he dwelleth. Once I had the Curiosity to see him: When he was told of it, he sent Word I should be admitted to his Presence, provided I would put off my Shoes, and leave my *Somprair* or Umbrello with the Servants. To which I replied, I should comply neither with one nor the other, and so I went on straight forwards with-

without any great Ceremony. At my nearer Approach to the *Saint*, I met with others of the Domesticks, desiring me again to put off my Shoes; but I walked on, and took no notice of them. I came at last to the *Saint's* Dwelling Place, where I found him sitting on an *elevated Ground* in so starch a Posture, that he did not make the least stir or Motion towards me. However, after I had begun to address him, he desired me to sit down. I then sat my self down on the same *elevated Ground* with the *Saint*; but perceived at the same time, great Murmurings among the Standers-by, every one exclaiming against my Shoes. Hereupon, I took an Occasion to discourse them about God's Commandment to *Moses*, his Servant of old, bidding him indeed to put off his Shoes; but I added withal, that *Moses* was then on a far *Holier Ground* than whereon I was at present. I told them besides, that being a Servant of the true God, I could not in Conscience perform such Ceremonies as tended to the Honour of *Mahomet*, whom I did not own.

After having done at last with arguing about the ceremonious Part, we entred upon more serious Matters, relating to our and their *Religion*, to the Person of *Christ*, *Mahomet*, &c. Upon which Occasion, I cannot but observe, that the *Saint* shewed always a greater Inclination to discourse of *Virtues*, and a *holy Life*, than of these controversial Matters. He asked me, *Whether I had seen God? How a Man must be qualified that would see God? Whether a Man must first learn to know himself, or*

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God?

God? &c. Having answered all these Questions, I asked him again: *Wherein true Holiness did consist? What Qualifications a holy Man ought to have? What Treatment he must expect in this World?* When I found his Answers silly and insufficient, (as often they were:) I endeavoured to rectifie them; and did what I could to convince him, that the Law of *Mahomet* did not afford us a sound *Idea* of the Nature of *Holiness*; neither did it furnish us with sufficient *Means* to attain it. He replied: *Every one is apt to cry up his Religion to be the best of all, when a Saint doth only concern himself about Holiness, without troubling his Head with Disputes about Religion:* I answered: That the *TRUTH* must always be the *Foundation* and *Basis* of *Holiness*, and that without the former, the latter will prove but a meer Counterfeit at last.

Concerning Religions, says he: *We ought to let Things continue as they have been established in the World many Thousand Years since.* I said: A holy Man, enlighten'd by God himself, ought to lead the Blind into the same Way of true *Holiness*: But if he designed to be holy for himself alone, without being concerned about bringing others to the same Possession of Truth and *Holiness*, he then too visibly betrayed his own Emptiness; and that he had no true Character of any *Holiness* at all, &c.

This Discourse held above two Hours, wherein he behaved himself with a great deal of Modesty: His Dress was *Mahometan*; he had on his Head a green silken *Turbant*, with a black

black filken Scarf about his Body. He was besides loaden with Gold, Silver, Pearls, and other precious Ornaments hanging about him. A Scymeter lay on his left Side. His Bed was all of pure red, black, and green Velvet. Whilst we thus conversed together, a great many *Moors* sitting on the Ground near us, listened with much Attention to what we said. All the *Moors* of both Sexes, very reverently kissed his Feet both when they came, and when they went, and behaved themselves so respectfully as if he had been a Piece of a Deity. At last, he ordered all sorts of very fine Fruit to be presented to me. When I took my Leave, he rose from his Seat, and stepping on the Ground, joined Hands with me, and followed me about ten Steps, saying: I should be always welcome to see him; and if at any time I had a Mind to tast of his Fruit, I might freely send for it.

A Month after, four of us went to him again: Having acquainted the Saint with our Desire, we obtained Liberty to come in: But then they fell again to the Shoes and the *Somprair*, which should be left behind, and no Servant or Soldier should enter in with us. However, we boldly passed on, without regarding such Ceremonies. He met us in the midst of the Garden; but observing our Shoes were on, he was not a little nettled about it, and could not forbear telling us, that even the King of *Tanjour* himself, did not only take off his Shoes in his Presence, but prostrating himself on the Ground, did not rise till he bad him. I answered, that it was certainly a *Spirit of Pride,*

Pride, that put him upon such unaccountable Doings, altogether inconsistent with the Nature and Property of a holy Man, whose chief Concern was how to attain and practise *Humility*, the best of Virtues. This freeness of my Discourse, wherewith I addressed the Saint, made him still more uneasie and discontent: However, I laid before him so many indisputable Arguments of the Necessity of an *Humble* Mind, that he seemed to be reconciled to what I said, and in a pretty good Humour, bad us sit down by him under a Tree.

Here we had a long Discourse upon the *Nature of Sin*; the *Representation of God in Prayer*; the *Deceitfulness of Mahomet*; the *Characteristicks of a true and false Religion*, &c. After this, he presented us with some choice Fruits, and peaceably dismissed us at that Time.

After a while, when our third Colleague was arrived from *Europe*, we made another Attempt to come to the Sight of the Saint: But then he absolutely refused to admit us, except we would put off the Shoes: We replied, we were now more than convinced, that the pretended *Saint* was altogether destitute of that *essential* Character which a wise and holy Man ought to have, and which is nothing else but *Humility*, and a *sober Opinion* of himself. In effect, we supposed the true Reason of this Denial to be, not so much the Ceremony about the Shoes, as the Consciousness of his Weakness in Arguing, and the Fear of exposing himself thereby to the Reflexions of the *Moors* and *Malabars*, who gave diligent Attendance

tendance to the Discourses that passed betwixt us. But be that as it will, we left the Oracle, and intruded no more upon him.

Such, and other Instances of that Nature, may give you a Taste of the Temper of the *Mahometans*, and of their intolerable and silly *Pride*, which they do not fail to express upon any Occasion that offers: And *Pride*, you know, is always an infallible Character and Mark of *Antichrist*.

But to return to the *Malabarians*: I must needs say, I have found them more civil and tractable, as well as far more desirous to be instructed in better Things. The Answers they use to give to such Questions as are put to them, are indeed not always very wise; yet will they presently yield, whenever they happen to be convinced of an Error. It was but Yesterday, I took a little Walk with two of my Fellow-Labourers into the neighbouring District, under the King of *Tanjour*: Coming to a very pleasant Market-Town, called, *Anándamangalam*, we had the Curiosity to view a small Princely-Palace which is there. After this, we went into the Garden adjoining to it, and from thence passed to the great *Pagode*, and came at last to the House of a *Braman*, where several of them were assembled together. Finding one of them very busy in casting and writing Accompts, I took an opportunity from thence of speaking of the Nature of those *spiritual Accompts* we are to give to God at the last Day. No sooner had I begun to discourse on this Head, but Numbers of Men and Women flocked to the

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House

House where we were, and very seriously listened to what was delivered. I still insisted upon the Point of *spiritual Accompts*, and explained to them the Nature of our Stewardship, and of the Resigning it up as soon as we had departed this Life : When not only we, but all Men that are dead, should, by the Power of God, be raised to Life, and called before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, to give an Account of all their Thoughts, Words, and Actions ; and that therefore it was highly necessary to clear our Accompts every Day with God.

They asked, *How this possibly could be ?* I answered : ‘ First of all, you must endeavour
 ‘ to attain a true Knowledge of that God to
 ‘ whom you must give an Account of your
 ‘ past Life ; but not being able to appear before his Justice, by reason of your Sins, you
 ‘ stand therefore in need of a *Saviour* and *Mediator*, to interpose in your behalf : This
 ‘ is by no means your *Wischnum*, or *Ispiren*,
 ‘ or *Brumma*, who were subject to Sin themselves, and, according to the Tenor of your
 ‘ own Books, did abundance of Mischief in the
 ‘ World : But it is *JESUS CHRIST*, the
 ‘ true Son of God, who coming into the
 ‘ World, was made Man ; and taking all our
 ‘ Sins upon Him, suffered and satisfied for us,
 ‘ in order to reconcile us to God the Father,
 ‘ and to redeem us from Sin, Death, the Devil,
 ‘ and Hell. It is by *Faith* in this Saviour, you
 ‘ must turn your selves to God, and after having
 ‘ abandoned all Communion with wicked
 ‘ Men and Devils, enter into a close Union
 ‘ with

' with the only true God : Then your Sins
 ' will not only be pardoned, but you will al-
 ' so be endued with Power to flee from it,
 ' and to follow that which is really Good.
 ' And it is then you will be able to keep a
 ' strict and daily Account of all your Actions:
 ' You will then, Morning and Evening, seri-
 ' ously consider on one Hand, the manifold
 ' Mercies God hath bestowed upon you ; and
 ' on the other, the Sin and Ungratefulness of
 ' which you stand guilty. This Consideration
 ' will inspire you with a fervent Prayer for ob-
 ' taining Mercy, and with a firm Resolution to
 ' Sin no more hereafter. And such an Ac-
 ' count would undoubtedly be pleasing to God,
 ' the Author of our Being.

Upon this they replied : *We are an ignorant
 and unlearned People, not able to argue with you
 upon these Matters.* ' There is, said I, neither
 ' a great Stock of Knowledge, nor of Arts or
 ' Sciences required towards attaining eternal
 ' Salvation, but only a *Singleness of Heart*, joined
 ' to a hearty *Love to that Truth* of which we
 ' are convinced : And therefore I speak to
 ' you of such plain Things as People of the
 ' meanest Capacity, and even Children, might
 ' understand.

Nay, said one of them, *Do all the Blanks un-
 derstand what you say ? Do they all speak as you
 do ? What is the Reason, that coming amongst us
 they are bent on nothing but on doing of Mischief ;
 that having carouzed it a while among us, and in-
 dulg'd themselves in excessive Drinking, they turn
 us out of our own Houses in their mad Pranks ?*
 To this I said : ' Those that commit such

‘ Disorders among you, are in no wise to be
 ‘ counted *Christians*, though they should call
 ‘ themselves by that Name: They are rather
 ‘ Children of *Belial*, than of Christ, &c. But
 said they again: *Why can’t you tell them the*
same Things you tell us? Why do you not reclaim
them, as you would reclaim us? I replied:
 ‘ They have the Word of God in their Hands:
 ‘ They hear us preach constantly on *Faith* and
 ‘ *Repentance*; but they proving disobedient to
 ‘ what they hear, make ineffectual the Word
 ‘ that is preached to them. For this Reason,
 ‘ we are now come to you; if perhaps the
 ‘ Word may have a better Effect upon you
 ‘ than it hath upon them.

They further asked: *If we should embrace*
your Religion, do you suppose we should be cer-
tainly saved in it? ‘ If you suffer *Faith* and un-
 ‘ feigned *Repentance* to be wrought in your
 ‘ Souls; a *Faith*, I mean, attended with a con-
 ‘ stant Exercise of good Works, and with a
 ‘ continued Perseverance to the End; there is
 ‘ no doubt but your Souls shall be saved by
 ‘ Virtue of our Religion. But if you bare-
 ‘ ly change the *Name*, and not the *Heart*,
 ‘ then the coming over to our Religion, and
 ‘ the taking upon you the Name of a Christi-
 ‘ an, will do you no good at all.

To this they answered: *Every one may be*
saved in his own Religion, provided he doth but
live up to the same. I replied: ‘ This is very
 ‘ false, and a common Snare of the Devil in
 ‘ the Pagan World: For by this, he holdeth
 ‘ you fast in the Blindness of *Heathenism*: You
 ‘ have no true Religion at all, how can you
 ‘ then

‘ then be saved thereby? Pray shew me your
‘ Law : ” They answered : *This is in the*
Hands of our Bramans. I asked all the Stand-
ers-by : If ever they had seen the Law of God
in the Hands of the *Bramans*, or heard them
expound it? They all said : *No, we have not.*
I then put this Question to them : “ Is it the
‘ Will of God that all the *Malabarians* should be
‘ saved by their Law, or only the *Bramanes*?
They answered : *That all Men should be saved*
by it. ‘ It must then follow, said I, that all
‘ Men that would be saved, must read this
‘ Law, hear, learn, and understand it ; and
‘ why do you not do all this? ” Their Answer
was : *Our Bramans do not permit us to see it,*
much less will they suffer us to read it. ‘ From
‘ hence, said I, you may safely conclude, that
‘ the *Bramans* either have no Divine Law at
‘ all, or else, that their pretended Law, must
‘ be a false and lying Law. For were it a
‘ true one, they would not scruple to put it
‘ into your Hands. And pray, what good do
‘ the *Bramans* do to you? What Care do they
‘ take for your Souls? Do they declare unto
‘ you the Way to Salvation? Do they instruct
‘ you in sound Principles of Religion? Do
‘ they reprehend and reprove you for your
‘ Sins? ” To this, one of them answered :
When we come to our Bramans, and ask them :
Good Sirs, what must we do to save our Souls?
They will give us no other Answer, but ‘ That we
‘ *should make them large Offerings, and give them*
‘ *part of our Possessions ; and then for certain we*
‘ *should be saved.* Some of the *Bramans* be-
ing present at this Discourse, said : *But is it*
not

not reasonable we should get something too, to maintain our selves and Families? I answered thus:
 ‘ Were you true Servants of God Almighty,
 ‘ and earnestly concerned for the Welfare of
 ‘ your Followers, then neither God himself,
 ‘ nor the Love of your Disciples, would let
 ‘ you suffer Want.

When I was thus arguing with them, the great *Braman* that lived there, happened to come out of his *Pagode* into the same Room where we were assembled. I asked him: What says your Idol in the *Pagode*? He tells us, said he, *we should eat and drink well, and make much of our selves.* I reprov'd him for this light Expression, and told him: ‘ You
 ‘ pretend to be Priests of Gods, and yet speak
 ‘ in so despiteful a manner of your own Idols,
 ‘ and this, in the Presence of your Disciples too,
 ‘ whom you should endeavour to inspire with
 ‘ Awe and Reverence towards any thing that is
 ‘ Sacred: From whence it is plain, you bear no
 ‘ manner of Fear or Respect to your own Gods,
 ‘ as knowing well enough that they are but a
 ‘ Pack of silly Idols. Why do you amuse ignorant People with such *Heathenish* Stuff, and
 ‘ have no Care at all either for your own or
 ‘ other Mens Souls? He replied: *I do not understand these Things; go to such Priests as are more learned than I am, and they will give you Satisfaction.* I said: ‘ When I ask the
 ‘ simple and ignorant People concerning, the
 ‘ Salvation of their Souls, they answer: *We do not understand the Matter, you may address your selves to the Pantares, and they will satisfy you on that Head.* These put me off again,
 ‘ gain,

gain, and sent me to the *Bramans*. And these again, will have me apply to the *Chief* of their Order for my fuller Satisfaction, and own themselves unable to argue the Point in Hand. The chief of your Priests excuse themselves again, with saying: *We are in those hard and troublesome Times, so much taken up with worldly Concerns about getting a Livelihood, that we cannot think on such Things as those; much less can we give you such Answers as you desire; your best way would be to converse with the Learned of the Land, who will be able to dispute the Matter with you.* Do I apply my self to your Learned, I find them full of Complaints about the Injustice of the Times, and other such Hardships as these, which prevailing every where, did not permit them to study *Divinity*. They advise me, however, to find out their *Hermits*; who would be ready at any Time to resolve all such Questions as I should propose to them.

If after all my Searches, I come at last to the *Hermits*, their Answer is: *Alas, dear Sir! we live at present in a very wicked World, full of Disorder and Confusion, so that we do not only find it impracticable to live up to the Rules of our Order; but are fain to work hard for our Bread: And this is the Reason we cannot spend much Time about spiritual Concerns: The only Way for you would be to visit our holy Prophets, and discourse with them those Points; and you need not doubt but they will resolve all your Questions to your Content.* In this Manner do you all go
‘ astray,

‘ astray, and are destitute of a saving Know-
 ‘ ledge of God and Religion.

‘ ’Tis true, among the meaner sort of Peo-
 ‘ ple I find still the greatest Attention, and
 ‘ some little Concern about their future State ;
 ‘ which small Knowledge would also be im-
 ‘ proved to higher Attainments, were it not
 ‘ for the *Bramans*, who do what they can to
 ‘ stifle all good Impressions in the People.
 Hereupon, a simple Plow-Man answered : *I*
love my own Profession : I work hard all the Day
long, and hope God will grant me Salvation at last.
 My dear Friend, said I : ‘ ’Tis true, your Pro-
 ‘ fession is infinitely better than that of your
 ‘ *Bramans*, who squander away their precious
 ‘ Time in Idleness, Strife, and Jesting ; when
 ‘ you on the contrary, being employed in hard
 ‘ and continued Work, are not near so much
 ‘ exposed to wicked Thoughts and Actions :
 ‘ But whatever Advantage you have over the
 ‘ *Bramans* in this respect, ’tis still impossible for
 ‘ you to be saved, except you submit to a seri-
 ‘ ous Course of Repentance, and in this Order,
 ‘ be truly converted to God.

When I had said this, some of them replied
 in this manner : *But, pray, as for Repentance ;*
have we not many great Penitents among us ;
Men that will undergo the severest Penance that
can be ? Don't many give plentiful Alms to the
Poor, and do all the Good they can in other re-
spects ? Don't they build Houses and Hospitals
for the Needy and Indigent ? Are they not ve-
ry punctual in saying their Prayers, and in bring-
ing their Offerings ? Do not many go on great Pil-
grimages for the sake of Religion ? They ad-
 ded

ded likewise : *Are there not many, who, to serve the better their Gods, retire into most distant Deserts, freely leaving Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Houses and Estates, and even whole Kingdoms? And should not these Men be in a fair Way of Salvation, and attain eternal Happiness by so many good Performances?*

To this I said : ‘ If a Man did perform never so many and great Things in the World, but had not at the same time a living Faith in Jesus Christ, all his Doings would be of none Effect, nay, even displeasing to God ; since they were begun and carried on in *Self-will*, which proved the sad Occasion of all that Pride and Ostentation which did so visibly appear among them, and whereby they became disobedient to the Righteousness of God. Upon this, some of the most tractable among them, approved of what I said, and exclaimed against the *Bramans*, as the chief Cause of their Ignorance in spiritual Matters. I made then a short Exhortation both to them and their *Bramans*, and wished them true Wisdom and Understanding about the most important Concerns.

After I had taken my Leave of them, and was going away, some other Heathens stood by the Way-side, one of whom being the Wife of a *Braman*, called to me, and desired to hear something of our Law. I gave her a brief Account of the Christian Faith, and of the whole Method of Salvation ; at which she greatly rejoiced, and declared the same to those again that were near her.

Thus

46 *Of good Motions among the Heathens.*

Thus much I thought good to return in Answer to your Question about the *Mahometans* and *Malabarians*, and about the *inward State* of the Religion of both these Parties.

The Second Question.

Pray have you discovered some true Workings of Grace on the Souls of the Catechumens? Are you assured there is more in their Conversion than a bare external Compliance with, and verbal Confession of the Christian Doctrine? What Proofs and Indications have you of the inward Work of Grace?

Answer: After the Gospel of Christ has begun to be preached in the Pagan World, many Commotions have been observed among *Heathens, Mahometans*, and the *Popishly-affected Christians*. Before we began to preach here the Word of Repentance, every one thought himself safe in his wonted Way of Religion, without any Doubt about his future Salvation. But after we have begun to call in Question the Goodness of their Religion, and alarmed them into some Doubts and Apprehensions, many have exclaimed against us, and loaded our Labour with Lies and Calumnies. Others have been desirous to discourse with us more at large about their better Concerns: Others have been so far convinced, as to own they stand in need of a thorough Conversion; but then they have suffered themselves to be diverted from so good a Design, by the Cunning of *Satan*. Others of the *Heathens* have agreed with us in many Points, and have approved of whatsoever is