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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister.

Geister, Johann Ernst

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A Journal

containing the most material Circumstances happening
in the Year 1739.

with the British Mission at Cuddalore near Fort St. David's
in East-India.

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January.

1. At the Entrance of this Year I found myself excited to thank the most gracious God for his Protection et Assistance, by which I was carried through several Difficulties, and for his benefices bestowed upon me all this time. I was moved likewise to excite those under my care to this particular duty, and in my instruction to them for that day I explained the 103th Psalm. After a short Explanation of the Text, I shewed them, how they should apply this to their own Circumstances putting them in mind first of all of those benefits, which they enjoy in common with all their fellow-creatures, and then particularly of this especial Providence, which has moved several pious and religious persons in Europe, to be beneficial to the people in India, whom they never have seen, and in all probability will never see, of whom they never have received any benefit or service, nor in all probability ever will. The whole was concluded with an Exhortation, to regard and make a right use of this great benefit. The Subject of my instructions on Sundays has been to give them an insight in the most material parts of the history of the christian Religion, where I never forget to inculcate earnestly, that this is the only true Religion, revealed in its substance from the very beginning of the world. This is necessary for them to know against the idle and extravagant notions of the heathens in this Country, who boast of an antiquity of several Millions of years. Together with this I several times represent to them, that the places and Countreys mentioned in the bible are yet existent, and visited by travellers, whereas the Malabars cannot give an Account of any place, mentioned in their pretended old histories, only telling their Readers or hearers, that such a thing has happened several Millions of Leagues to the North or South. Though in my instructions I only interperse the like observations occasionally, keeping always close to the Explanation and application of my text. To attain this my design I began some Months ago to treat of the history of the bible from the Creation to the flood. Afterwards I took some of the most perspicuous and eminent types and prophecies of the Old Testament, proceeding further to the birth of Christ, which I explained out of the Evangelists on Christmas and some Sundays after. In all my Instructions I take the greatest Care to be intelligible to them, that hear me condescending to their Capacity by choosing the plainest words, repeating and taking proper similitudes, never proceeding to a New doctrine, till I find that the first has been understood. And every thing proposed by me is afterwards repeated by the Schoolmaster.

9. I began to build again, though it went on a little slowly, there being a scarcity of materials.

10. Finding myself tolerably well advanced in the Malabar Language, I resolved to go now abroad, and converse with the Natives without doors. Therefore I visited to day all the schools in this place, enquiring after their books, way of learning and the like, telling the Schoolmasters at the same time, that if they had a mind to know the Ways, Customs and Religion of the Europeans, they might give me an opportunity of conversing with them. They gave a civil answer and shewed a Satisfaction about my knowing their Language, yet as they are poor people, and are obliged to attend the whole day at school, they seldom came to me, except I had a book to copy, or when they had a book to sell.

I chose the visiting of the Schools chiefly for that Reason, because I knew the Children would tell their Parents and Relations, what an unusual thing had happened at School and that consequently I would be sooner known amongst them.

On that same Account a few days after I went over the Fort Side, with an Intention to visit the Schools at Dewanapatnam, but found none in the usual places, because it was one of their holy days. However I went to the House of a Bramine, who amongst his Countrymen is accounted to be the greatest Scholar in the place. I discoursed with him for about a Quarter of an hour of Astronomy, Astrologie & the like, and he shewed me some of their Astronomical Draughts and figures, pretending at the same time to prognosticate the Number of my years, and other Accidents of my Life, in which however he made such blunders & downright Contradictions, that I could not help discovering them to him, upon which he put it off, to another day, when he could come to me & give me full satisfaction. I expressed my contentment about some things, he had shewn me, and told him, that I would be glad of his Company, whenever he would come to me, which he promised and visited me several times.

The finishing of all my Letters and Accounts to Europe, has required so much time, that I was in necessity to omit now and then an hour of my daily Catechisation.

30. Though I had taken all proper care of my health, yet I found myself about this time very heavy and some times almost unfit for business even in the Morning hours, for which I consulted the Doctor at Tranquebar, and he knowing my Constitution answered me, that bleeding was the only Remedy for my indisposition. Upon this I followed his Advice, and had a large evacuation today, which had the desired Effect, so that afterwards I found myself revived and capable to keep close to my business.

The building would not go on so fast as I wished, therefore I did all what I could to come only so far, that I might inhabit the house before the hot Weather, & that the remaining part might be done as soon as the Circumstances would permit.

February.

The Portuguese Schoolmaster has behaved hitherto to my Satisfaction, only I found now and then, when I came unexpectedly to school, that he was too rigorous. Therefore I admonished and exhorted him, to try all other means, before he disciplined the boys, & to endeavour that they might rather love than fear him. Some boys, who absented themselves, had made a great complaint to their Parents and Relations, as if they had been used most unmercifully by the Schoolmaster, but after a formal enquiry, I found these things to be false. Others had complained, that they run away for want of vituals being half starved. But every body that was in the house, knew that they had their Vituals three times a day and in such quantity and quality, as it was certain their Parents could not allow them. As these objections might have been prejudicial to my Business, I took proper care, to convince those, who any way might be concerned in it, of the contrary. Some of the boys run away with their Cloaths, which had been given them, and their Parents were so unthankfull, that they would not give them again, till upon my application, they were ordered by their Captain to do so.