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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister.

Geister, Johann Ernst

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8. I began to continue to write the Latin signification to a very large and compleat Malabar Dictionary, which was first begun by the Missionaries at Tranquerbar, then continued and much augmented by M^r. Sartorius, & afterwards revised & augmented again at Tranquerbar, so that one copy now requires half a ream of paper. One copy being designed for M^r. Sartorius, the Malabar words were wrote in Tranquerbar, & M^r. Sartorius was to write the Latin to it, and make additions. In this he made a good progress, till by his death it was broke of. I resolved therefore to continue this as much as I could spare time from other Business, and so went on for a while, till I found that at present it would hinder me not only in my other Business, but would prejudice my health & chiefly my eyes which in this hot Climate are soon affected by much reading and writing. Therefore I left of again, though with a Resolution, to begin again as soon as possible.
20. I was visited more than once about this time by Bramines from Dewanapatnam and we talked of sciences & learning. They boasted in the usual way of their great skill and knowledge, against which I made now and then an exception, and mentioned something of the learning of the Europeans, not forgetting to tell them, that we esteemed our Ancestors and Predecessors as much as the Indians could theirs, but that notwithstanding all this our modern Scholars not contented with what was found out already, endeavoured every day to go further, when on the contrary the Indians without any meditation examination or enquiry adhered superstitiously to what was left them by their forefathers. As I knew that they value themselves chiefly on their pretended knowledge of Astronomy, Moons Age, Eclipses &c. I took an opportunity to tell them, how the European Astronomers had made such a great progress in this kind of knowledge by Telescopes and other excellent Instruments, which the Indians never made use of, nor did so much as the old Chaldeans, Arabians and Greeks, who constantly made Observations; but that they work'd their Almanacks only by Tables, which they had from their forefathers, and that many times their Tables were very insufficient. I asked them, if they knew the Eclipses for several years to come, which they answered in the Negative. Upon which I told them, that our Astronomers made their Calculations for a great many future Years, and that I had a book with me (Times Telescope) which gave an Account of those things for a number of years. They were mightily puzzled at this, so that they did not talk so high any more, and it happened to be divulged amongst the Bramines of this place, that I could tell the Moons Age, Eclipses &c. as well as any of them. In my conversation with the Bramines I choose this method to remove one great impediment, viz. their high Opinion, which they have of themselves, and the mean thoughts they have of the Europeans, whom they believe quite ignorant, and almost brutified. When I can convince them first, that the Europeans are skilled at least as well as they, and even a good deal better, it may under Gods blessing open me the way, and make them desirous for Christian Religion. Before I have removed this Impediment, I cannot have Confidence enough to talk with them on purpose of Religion. Though in conferring with them I always avoid all manner of disputing, not insisting upon Refutations, but only proposing what I can say of our ways and methods, and if I find them not inclined to fall in with my opinion, I break off, telling them, that when I have perfected myself more in the Language, I hope to have an opportunity to talk of the same thing again and perhaps to represent it in a stronger light and with more proper Expressions than now.
28. I received four Portuguese New Testaments from M^r. Schube at Madras, which were given by the Rev^d. M^r. Wynch, who was at Fort St. Davids some time ago and was desired to spare me a few out of the Church Library at Madras.
- March.
1. I did all what could be done to go on in the building, which went on a little slow for want of Materials & Labourers.