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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister.

Geister, Johann Ernst

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April.

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case I could not help complaining against the Priests, who would cause the Children to be taken away in a forcible manner, though they had cost money for their maintenance.

This Worship was very much displeased at this great presumption of the Priest, and promised me, that the boy should come again, and that he would reprimand the Priest for it. Some days after, the Priest being call'd, thought best, to deny every thing, though at the same time, he complained to some Gentlemen in the place, that I did violence, against which I answered, that I never designed to force any body in point of Religion, but as I had the favour of living under the protection of an English Government I could not believe, that I did wrong, when I applied to the Government for help against insults of this nature. Though the people said, that the Governor had taken notice of the affair, yet they used delays, till upon a repeated order the boy came back again. An other boy, who, most about the same time was taken away from me, by the same arts, was either brought out of the place or carefully hid, and could not be found. I heard afterwards, that he was here again, but I thought it was better, to let him go, than to have more disputes.

13.

After a great many impediments I had at last the joy, to enter into the new built house, and I thanked God for his providence, which had assisted and carried me so far, that I could live in a house fit and commodious for my business and for my health and convenience. The whole was not yet done, but the remaining part, was not ~~not~~ very much, and was like to go on the better, when I was present in the house, and had it always under my eyes.

The next following days I took care, as much as the circumstances would permit, to bring every thing in proper order, and to have a publick congregation again, as soon as possible.

22.

To day, being Easterday I gave the first publick Sermon again in the Portuguese language, though I had but very few auditors. The day before I send a messenger about, to give notice of it to all those, who formerly used to come now and then. In my Sermon, I first of all excited those, that were present, to acknowledge Gods favour in having given us after some interruption, a convenient place for a Congregation, and admonished them not to neglect this opportunity intended for the benefit of their Souls but to make a right use of it. Then I proceeded to my Text, declaring them the history of the resurrection of our Saviour. Divine Service is begun with the Litany out of the Portuguese Common prayer book, after this follows the Sermon, and the conclusion is with a prayer. The appointed time is from 8 to 9. in the morning, and the hall of the house is the meeting place. At 10 of the Clock the Schoolmaster repeats this Sermon with the Children by way of catechizing.

May.

Though this ~~this~~ is the begining of the hottest time of the year, yet I find the new house so convenient, that I hardly perceive the heat. This together with the satisfaction of my mind on account of several successes in my business, has contributed so much to my health and vigour, that now in the hot season I can do more, then formerly I could in the cool weather. My main business has been and is yet, to perfect myself ^{in the} Country Language, for which I have spared no pains, and (thanks to God)

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find myself now advancing pretty fast. Since Mr. Sartorius's decease I have been careful to bring together a good number of books, that are valuable amongst the Malabars, most of whom I have read, and some of them two or three times. On that I might do something beforehand, for the benefit of my successors. I have wrote the most difficult words out of several books in malabar with the signification in Latin. In Mr. Sartorius's lifetime I made with his assistance a very large vocabulary on a new edition of the Gospel of St. Matthew printed at Tranquebar, which doth not only contain the words wrote in malabar, with their pronunciation and signification in latin, but has likewise for the benefit of a beginner a great many grammatical and etymological annotations and explanations.

I have been moved to do this, because in learning this language, and chiefly in the begining I found the vocabularies and other manuscripts of Mr. Sartorius to be a very great help and advantage to me. As I take this to be my chief business at present, I have sometimes, when business came too much upon me, rather left out an hour's instruction in the Portuguese School, that I might lose no time for the advancing in the language.

I have been careful to cultivate my acquaintance with the natives, though in my conversation I find more and more the great and to mens Eyes insurmountable impediments, which must be removed, before those people can embrace christianity with a sincerity of their heart.

My conversation with them has been hitherto chiefly within the house, because I cannot yet talk so fluently, as there is necessary for an interlocution in publick places and before a company. Yet I have taken hold of a silent opportunity for enlarging my acquaintance with them, when I heard that a learned Brahmin was singing every evening in the market place, some of the old malabar histories, where he had a good number of auditors. I went there several times hearing him for a quarter of an hour, which surprised those, that were present, as an unusual appearance. My old Schoolmaster being with me, several of the company after I was gone, asked him the meaning and reason of my coming, whereupon he told them, what my business was, and that I had an intention to be acquainted with the natives, for which purpose I had bought a good number of their best books, which I was reading every day, and endeavoured to perfect myself not only in their language, but in their history and learning. Upon this they expressed a satisfaction and approbation. When I read with this old man the malabar Books, which are filled not only with the most extravagant absurdities and downright contradictions, but even with the greatest offencies, (though these blind people pretend these things to be the revelations and acts of their Gods) I cannot help talking earnestly with him, discovering to him the inconsistency and consequently the falsity of these things, together with the heinous sin of ascribing such monstrous crimes to a Deity, and of adoring and reverencing Gods, who according to their own renowned books have committed more villainies and debaucheries, then any criminal on earth. In his answers he sometimes endeavours to evade the strenght of my objections, but if he cannot do that, he

he turns about quite the opposite way confessing, that what I say, is true, and that all what their authors say is false. Then I ask him, why he will not endeavour to find and to embrace the truth, - He answers in the usual way of these people: You are a wise and a holy man, a favorite of the true God, and it is for your great merits and virtues, that God hath blessed you with the true light, but as for us poor people, our case is desperate. we are in an Ocean of delusions, we are tossed about by wordly lusts and desires, and we are like a ship, which drives about without compass, rudder and sails, and how can we help that, since it is our destiny, and how should we reject the ways and customs delivered unto us from our ancestors, whom we take to have been very wise men. Friends of the Gods, men of great merits etc. I asked him, how he could reconcile these downright contradictions, and if by applying his reason he could not discover the falsity of those things. He answered: that they must believe and follow their ancestors, and it was enough, that these great men had spoke and done so, which they ought to accept and reverence.

I replied: if any pretended wise man would persuade him, that white was black, if he would not rather trust his own eyes, and believe, that white was white. I further told him, that it was our duty, to apply the reason, which God has given us for the discovery of what is false or true, and that one ~~time~~ time or other, God would call every one of us to an account where no body would absolve us, but every body must answer for himself, and there certainly it would be to no purpose, if one should excuse himself, saying, he could not find out, that white was white, because his wise ancestors had told him, that it was black: Standing once with him in the back part of the house, where there is a free prospect to the sea and the mouth of the River, I proposed to him, these similes: Suppose in a strong inundation and violent current of the river, he had the ill luck to be carried away, with all his relations, friends and people of his cast, and after he had been hurried away, he happened to touch ground, and erecting himself should see all his relations already in the mouth of the river, when at the same time he saw next by him an eminence, to which he might retire and save himself; if he would rather choose to bear his relations company, or if he would separate himself and live. He seemed to be struck with this, and after a little pause could not help confessing, that in such a case he would rather separate and save himself. Upon this I admonished him seriously to take care, that he might come to know the only true God, and that if he was serious, God would give him an opportunity and shew him the way to it. Though now and then these people confess a truth proposed to them, yet I can hardly remember an instance, that truth made an impression upon them, and that they seemed to be convinced. This may partly proceed from thence that they are not used to cultivate their judgment and reasoning faculty, but only their memory, because their learning is not by way of examination and consideration, but merely by stuffing their memory with what

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they find in their books, let it be never so absurd and contradictory. Some times they will make a plain and open confession, that the interlocution may come to an end, and that they may get rid of him, who talks to them, and I remember an instance, when on one of their solemn days a Malabar Man at the door of a Pagode spoke in a scornfull way of the idols to a Missionary, and that very moment entered the Pagode to make his adorations. If in such a case they are asked, why they do not embrace the truth, which they pretend to allow as truth; they will say, that every body must go his own way, and that God has revealed himself several ways to several nations and tribes. I have asked them sometimes how they can have such an opinion of the Deity, as being partial, and unwillingly keeping some nations or tribes in wrong way. If by Gods benefices of nature they could not conclude, that he was ready to impart his favour to all without distinction, seeing that the sun did not shin and the rain did not fall upon such a town, street or house only, but that without distinction these benefits were given to all.

31. The above mentioned Roman Catholick boy, Francisco de Souza, was dismissed because he shewed a great dislike to learn, was always sickly and scabby infecting the others, and his mother continually desired to have him home again.

June

I had resolved to discharge the Malabar Catechist, Strulappen, but finding that he had not yet an other employ, I promised him half a Pagoda a month for some while, and that he should be with me on Sundays, and attend on other days only when I should call him, but that he should look out for his livelihood somewhere else.

10. From Easter to Whitsunday I have declared in my sermons the history of Christ's manifesting himself after his resurrection and of his ascension. To day I treated of the effusion of the holy Ghost according to the 2^d chapter of the Acts.
17. For two or three days I had pains and inflammation of the eyes, which increased so to day, that I was obliged to keep myself in a dark room, and could not preach a sermon. Upon the application of proper remedies I was better in few days afterwards.
24. Having formerly in Mr. Sartorius's life time begun to preach on the main articles of christian religion, I resumed this, and preached to day upon the doctrine of God and his glorious attributes. At the end of this Month I dismissed the European, whom I had employed as an Accompant and Surveyor of the building, because there was no more business for him.