



AN
ACCOUNT

OF THE

Religion, Manners, and
Learning of the People

OF

M A L A B A R,

In several LETTERS.

Written by some of the most learn-
ed Men of that Country to the
Danish Missionaries.

Translated from the *High-Dutch*

By *J. THO. PHILLIPS.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. MEARS, at the Lamb
without *Temple-Bar.* 1717.

To the Right Honourable

Thomas L^d Parker,

Baron of *Macklesfield* in the
County Palatine of *Chester*,
Lord Chief Justice of *England*,
and one of His Majesty's most
Honourable Privy Council,

AND THE

Other Honourable Commissioners
appointed for the Building of
Fifty New Churches,

The following Papers are

Humbly Dedicated,

by their most Devoted,

Humble Servant,

J. THOMAS PHILLIPS.



THE
P R E F A C E.

AS the following Sheets contain such Matter only as relates to the Religion, Manners, and Learning of the Inhabitants of Malabar and the Adjacent Countries, without a particular Survey of the Country it self, or what was the Occasion of the Printing of these Letters; It will not be improper to give my Reader some Hints concerning the Situation of the Place, and for what Reason this Correspondence was entered into.

To begin then with the Country; Malabar and Cornandel makes that Part of Asia, which beginning about 15 Degrees North Latitude, extends it self Southward as far as Cape Comorin. The best Maps place its most Western Part in 42 Degrees Longitude, and its most Eastern Bounds in about 70 Degrees towards the East. In former Ages this Country had but one Sovereign, who undertaking a Voyage to the Red-Sea to visit Mahomet's Tomb did

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in his Return from thence, without Issue; whereupon his Great Ministers divided it into five Kingdoms, viz. Cananor, Calecut, Cranganor, Coachin, and Coulang. The Natural Produce of these Countries are so Rich and Profitable to the Merchants, that the English, Dutch, French, Portugueze, Danes, and People of other Trading Countries have made large Settlements upon their Coasts.

The Famous Vasco de Gama, a Portugueze Admiral who dyed Anno 1524, was the first who discover'd the Passage to the East-Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, and visited these Countries: Upon this Occasion I cannot pass by in Silence what is mentioned by Ferdinando de Castenheda in his History of the Indies, lib. 1. cap. 16. (viz.) that Gama with some of his Retinue being at Calecut, and entering into the Pagan Temples pay'd their Reverence to the Images there, taking them for the same which they had left in their own Churches in Portugal: A convincing Proof that Pagan and Romish Idols are so like, that the Difference is hardly discernable even by their own Votaries.

'Tis now about an Hundred Years since the Danish Kings built a Fortress at Tranquebar, for the carrying on the Indian Trade, which according to Baldaeus (who liv'd there a long time, and writ an exact History of the Country) is but very inconsiderable, and says that he has often wonder'd why the Danes should not Encourage the Indian Trade more than they do, seeing they have as good an Opportunity as the English. *The*

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The present King of Denmark, Frederick the IVth, in the Year 1705 first sent Ministers to preach the Gospel of Christ in those Parts, at the same time consecrating some Part of his Royal Revenues to carry on that his Pious Undertaking. And also establish'd a Society of good and learned Men at Copenhagen, to concert the most proper Methods for the carrying on this Work.

The Honourable Members of the Society settled at London for Promoting Christian Knowledge, are great Encouragers of the Tranquebar Missionaries, and have, besides other Marks of their Favour, sent them a Printing Press, with a Font of Portugueze Types, that Useful Books may be publish'd in that Language, which is understood by most of the Inhabitants.

The Missionaries, upon their first Arrival in the Indies, had two great Difficulties to surmount before they could entertain any Hopes of answering the Design of their Mission. The First was, to learn the Portugueze and Malabar Languages; the other, to Inform themselves of the Genius, Manners, and Capacities of the Heathens who were the Subjects of their Mission.

*The First they apply'd themselves to with so much Diligence and Industry, that they were soon capable of preaching the Gospel in the Portugueze Tongue, and of transcribing the New-Testament into the Language of Malabar, which they Printed for the Use of the Indians; and
some*

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Some Copies of it have been transmitted to England.

Secondly, That they might be the better apprised of the Faith and Doctrine of the Indian People, they endeavour'd to discover the Principles and Notions which those Heathens hold of the Supream Being, his Nature, Attributes, and Providence, and also to learn from them what Rewards or Punishments they expected in the next World. This was the prudent Proceeding of the Missionaries, that by knowing in what common Principles the Heathens agree with the Christians, they might avoid the trouble of unnecessary Disputes, and more easily convince the Indians upon their own Concessions of the Validity of the Christian Doctrine. The ensuing Sheets will far better set forth the Design of the Danish Ministers, by shewing what particular Enquiries they have already made, and the several Answers they have receiv'd from the learned Priests of Malabar, concerning the Religion and Manners of the People of that Country. It is the Design of the Mission still to pursue for some time the like Correspondence with the Wise Men of Malabar, by which means they will be fully apprised of all the Mysteries as well as let into the Weaknesses of the Heathen Religion, without Imbittering the Minds of those People against them; and after being fully possess'd of all the Necessary Preliminaries to a formal Siege, will then attack the Capital Errors of Heathenism.

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As this Book has been kindly receiv'd in Germany, so I hope it will meet with no less favourable Reception here, inasmuch as for a thousand Years last past very few Productions of this Nature (written by the Heathens themselves) have been seen in Europe. The Reader will find in it many diverting Passages, strict and wholsom Lessons of Morality, with many Material Hints which will point out to him the Original of divers Ceremonies, and pompous Superstitions falsly call'd Christian, and receiv'd into the Romish Church. 'Tis known that some Nations have worship'd the four Elements, especially those of Fire and Water, because of their cleansing and purifying Qualities, foolishly supposing that Immaterial Beings, such as the Souls of Men were capabl. of being purified by those two Elements. So the Romish Priests prefer their Purgatorian Fire and Holy Water as Essentials to Salvation, and which they can have no other than the above-mentioned Reason for, and that they are the most fruitful Branches of the Sacerdotal Income. We find likewise, that it is not only these Heathenish Opinions that are follow'd by the Romish Priests; they Copy from the Heathens also the Numberless Orders of Priests and Monks. The Bramans are the Keepers of the Malabarish Law, which is written in a Language of their own, and as little Understood by the Common People, as the Holy Scriptures and publick Masses are by the Hearers of the Church of Rome. The Learning of the Bramans was so Famous among the Antients, that Alexander the Great put many

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Difficult Questions to them when he invaded India, and so much were they celebrated for their Doctrine, that the Noted Apollonius Thyoneus (whose Life was written by Philostrates, one of his Disciples,) went to India on purpose to be instructed by them; so that 'tis plain enough, that the Romish Church have robb'd them of their Ceremonies, and Rome has not the Honour of so much as being the Inventor of her own Superstitious Follies.

