

*Letter written by **Punnathra MAR DIONYSIUS**, Malankara Metropolitan from 1817 to 1825, addressed to Lord Gambier, President of Church Missionary Society and Bishop Henry, in the year 1821.*

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In the name of the eternal and necessary existence the Almighty.

Mar Dionysius, metropolitan of the Jacobite Syrians in Malabar, subject to the authority of our father, Mar Ignatius, patriarch, who presides in the apostolic see of Antioch of Syria, beloved of the Messiah.

Love from Christ and from the people of all the churches to lord Gambier, the illustrious, honourable and renowned president; and to our brother, Mar Henry, the honoured bishop of the city of Gloucester; and to the priests and deacons, and true Christians, great and small, in the church of England, who are devoted to these things, and are mindful of them, who both assist and provide that we should teach and preach the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ. Love from God, and grace from his only begotten Son, and protection from the Holy Ghost, be with you all evermore! Amen.

Beloved, kind, and honoured brethren in Christ, we would make known to you in a few words, what has happened to us from the depth of our poverty.

We who are called Syrian-Jacobites, and reside in the land of Malabar, even from the times of Mar Thomas the holy apostle until the wall of Cochin was taken in the reign of king Purgis, kept the true faith according to the manner of the Syrian Jacobites, of real glory, without division or confusion. But by the power of the Franks our Jacobite Syrian fathers and leaders were prohibited from coming from Antioch: and because we had no leader and head we were like sheep without a shepherd or like orphans and widows oppressed in Spirit without support or help. By the power and dominion of the Franks moreover and by the abundance of their wealth and the exertions of their leaders all our Syrian churches in Malabar were subdued and turned to the faith of the pope of Rome.

In the year of our Lord 1653, came our spiritual father Mar Ignatius the Patriarch from Antioch to Malabar but when the Franks knew this they brought the holy man to the walls of Cochin imprisoned him in a cell and gave no small money to the king of Cochin. They then brought out the good man and drowned him in the sea and so put him to death. But when we knew this all the Jacobite Syrians in Malabar assembled in the church of Mathancherry which is in Cochin and we swore a great oath by the Father Son and Holy Ghost that henceforth we would not adhere to the Franks nor accept the faith of the Pope of Rome we accordingly separated from them. A short time after this some of our people again joined them and received the faith of the pope.

Again in the year of our Lord 1753 came to us some holy Jacobite Syrian fathers from Antioch who turned us to our true ancient faith and set up a high priest for us.

We now have fifty five Jacobite Syrian churches in Malabar and as the Franks are more powerful and rich than we are they are hourly laying the trap of the pope for us and endeavouring to take us in it and from the power of a kingdom filled with idols the heathen have subdued us Jacobite Syrians just as Pharoah king of Egypt subdued the children of Israel, and had no pity.

And, as the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, and delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage of Pharoah, king of Egypt; so the Lord beheld our sorrows and afflictions; and there have been sent to us an illustrious leader, named Macaulay, and Mar Buchanan, the illustrious

priest: and when they came to us, and saw our subjugation, and sorrow, and poverty, they brought us forth from the house of bondage, and consoled us with kind words, and assisted us with money.

After this, another illustrious leader was sent to us, named Munró: and as Joshua, the son of Nun, brought Israel to the land of promise, and put them in possession of Canaan; so did this illustrious, discerning, and prudent leader, bring back and save us poor people from the hand of violence: and he built a school and one church for us, in the place called Cotym; which he did with great trouble, labour, and expense, in order that our eyes, made dim by the depth of our poverty, may be opened by the knowledge of the declarations of the holy and divine books. All the deacons, moreover, and children, who are taught in the school of our place, are cherished by the assistance of this illustrious leader.

Again the priest Benjamin* the priest Joseph, and the priest Henry, our spiritual and temporal friends, brothers, and assistants, whom you have sent to us, that they may root out the thorns and tares from among the children of God, are anxiously seeking all the requisites for the redemption of our souls, as well as constantly teaching all the deacons and children of our place the English language.

The books of the New Testament which ye sent us, we divided, and gave to the churches in Malabar; and, with great joy, does every man present his prayer unto God for you: and we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is merciful to those who show mercy, that he will give you a good reward in the day of judgment, even thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold, for your work and labour for us, and that he will make us rejoice with you. But we are unable to recompense you by any earthly riches: the more however shall we supplicate God daily that your dominion may be increased, and that he would subdue those that hate you under your feet: and daily may your preaching in Christ Jesus be increased; and may God raise up among you leaders who fear God, and who are kind to the poor, endued also with knowledge and prudence!

We have heard too that the people of your land are beseeching God for us, that he would supply and complete that which is defective and imperfect, both in our bodies and souls.

Respecting Samuel the priest, who is held in honour by us, we received the letter which he sent by the hand of Joseph the priest; and we read and understood what was written in it: and very much did we rejoice, with exceeding great joy on account of your friendship for us. And may the Lord, who both hears prayers and grants petitions, lengthen your lives, and increase your peace!

But we call to mind the adage, " A glance is enough for the intelligent," and avoid prolixity. Besides, James, the honoured priest, will make known to you all that is going on among us. And I, the Metropolitan Mar Dionysius, your friend, very cordially salute you: also Abraham the priest, our obedient servant, and all the deacons, and children that are in the school. All the priests, moreover, and deacons, and the whole congregation of Christians who are in all the churches in Malabar, salute you. May grace be with you all: even so. Amen !

Our Father which art in heaven &c.
Remain firm in the power of Jesus!
In the year of our Lord 1821.
On the third of the month Ranun the first, Friday.

From the school of Cotym.
(Signed) MAR DIONYSÍUS,
Metropolitan of Malabar.

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/dj6rev>
<http://tinyurl.com/dhqptw>
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