

FROM CODACAL, INDIA TO IXONIA, WISCONSIN

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Mission work in far flung places among the primitive natives is always intriguing and conjures up marvelous imaginations of the rugged and dedicated missionary sent to convert thousands of native souls. Before the modern days of mass communication and transportation, those fanciful dreams of the mission field were reality for most Christians back home. Unfortunately for the rugged and dedicated German missionary that wasn't always the case. Undoubtedly those missionaries had those same fanciful dreams of adventure, travel, and people miraculously converted by the thousands; only to have the reality of the situation hit them between the eyes. Hardships, lingering illnesses, poor living conditions, hard-heartedness by the natives, very few conversions a year, terrible transportation, letdowns, and extreme loneliness were some of the stark realities that confronted the missionary and his family. One such German missionary experienced such realities in his mission work in eastern India. Like all ministries of the missionaries, his too was marked with many hardships, yet also *it was* fascinating, intriguing, and very much rewarding.

In the fall of 1836, on November 6th, Christian Roeck was born in Kirnbach, Grand Duchy of Baden. His parents were the Countryman, George Roeck and wife Barbara, nee Wolber. Right

from his youth young Christian had a fascinating desire for the work of the Lord. Having learned of his Savior he had the dream and determination of making that saving knowledge known to others in the heathen world. To arrive at his goal, he announced his candidacy for studies and instructions in the mission field at the Institute at Basel, a Reformed institution. The Institute accepted Christian and with a burning zeal he pursued and completed his studies in this work. After the six years of study, he was ordained as a missionary and sent to East India.

Once in India Christian Roeck earnestly pursued the learning of the difficult Hindustani language. Remarkably the gifted Rev. Roeck learned the language and in a comparatively short time was able to preach the Gospel message to the Indians in their own language. Since there were several dialects of the Hindustani language it was imperative that he become fairly acquainted with most of them. In the years that Christian Roeck worked in India he mastered quite a few of the various dialects and ^{was} able to preach and teach God's Word in many of them. Later on Mrs. Roeck would relate the difficulty that one had in learning the language, which she of course needed to learn in order to communicate with others. In her memoirs, she writes:

My husband, of course, was my first teacher. It took me over a week to become somewhat acquainted with the alphabet, and to be able to spell out individual words. The letters are so different from anything I was familiar with, that I really wondered how anyone could ever make them out; ^{but} my husband could read the language fluently. The long compounds, and the joining together of words by phonetic changes into one uninterrupted chain was most difficult to learn. The best progress was made by hearing the language spoken.

Suffice it say, Mrs. Roeck, a very gifted person in her own rights,

like her husband, was able to converse in the native language.

How exhilarated and thankful to God, Rev. Roeck must have been when his life long dream to preach Christ crucified to the heathen came to fulfillment. He obviously used his gifts and talents to the utmost in his ministry. Indeed he must have been a very energetic and gifted missionary. In the Ev. Luth. Gemeinde Blatt, of 1894, J. H. Brockmann reports of his gifts:

The Lord had equipped him with a splendid preaching ability so that he was able to preach the Gospel in an especially hearty, convincing and winning manner; also he was gifted with due wisdom, patience and love, so necessary to realize rich blessings in the care of souls, so that in twelve years of working in India, many heathen and also Christians derived much blessing from his ministry.

We can see God's almighty hand in the life of Rev. Roeck. Using his Christian Roeck's many fine abilities, God caused His Word to be spread and make known to a world of people living in darkness.

Roeck's first mission station in India was at Codacal near the eastern seaboard, which was a welcome relief in the evening. Mrs. Roeck writes, "About an hour after sunset the sea breeze comes in, and then we like to sit out and enjoy the evening and cool off from the heat of the day. We could always hear the roaring of the surf quite distinctly, a sound I never tired of listening to." During daylight hours the heat was often excruciating and often sapped the strength of foreigners, resulting in severe complications to their health or in prolonged illnesses. The Roeck's were fortunate to live along the seaboard; yet they still felt the extreme heat of the hot Indian sun.

Christian Roeck must have started his ministry in Codacal

during the early 1860's - the date of his arrival has since been lost. During that period he went about his work with a high degree of enthusiasm. The conversions of the Indian natives were modest at best. Nevertheless that didn't damper his desire and dedication. Yet as the years went along, he felt the loneliness that ~~is~~ easily and readily comes to a missionary who is all alone in his mission field. The mission stations of the German Reformed Church were few and far between. Thus loneliness easily set in. As was the custom for foreign missionaries, he realized his need for companionship and wrote to the Reformed church in Germany to help him meet that need with a future wife from Germany. They referred him to a young woman to whom he could write. Mrs. Roeck relates the rest of the story; from her point of view:

During my stay in York (England, where she was a governess) a missionary festival took place. The missionary who preached was a friend of that dear family, and had labored among the Hindus for many years. He preached a most fervent sermon, and his words sounded as if they were those of Christ himself when he called upon his disciples to go out among the Gentiles. During the few days he was with us he told so much about the need for more workers in that wide field, particularly among the women. Then and there I resolved to become a missionary myself, and to devote my life to this great cause . . . In the busy times that followed my return home (Stuttgart, Germany) I almost forgot about my aspirations to a missionary life. One day, several months later, I received a letter (through our Mission Society) from a man presently working as a missionary in India giving me much information about the work among the natives, and the life there. The letter was written with such delicacy, I felt duty bound to at least acknowledge its receipt. Quite possibly my correspondent read between the lines the admiration I tried so hard to conceal. At any rate I soon received a second letter, and then a third. After corresponding for about a year, we became engaged, and that only by letter and photograph. Subsequently, I received congratulations from the Mission Friends at Baden, and as one thing led to another the date was fixed for my departure to India.

On October 31, 1867 Christian Roeck and Anna Caroline Hahn were united into marriage. The marriage ceremony took place in Calicut India. When Anna met Christian and saw him for the first time she "gave fervent thanks to God . . . for His bountiful goodness in letting her find in this strange land the kindly friend and able protector she needed so much." Once married they immediately returned to Codacal which was some distance away. Traveling by train and then ox-cart, they arrived at the mission church at Codacal. Once there they were met by the Deacon of the church as well as all the converts of the church. "They all gave a mighty cheer as our (the Roeck's) vehicle came to a stop at the garden gate, which had been decorated with flowers and palm branches." The people were truly happy that their "Sahib", Pastor, finally had a wife in their midst. Needless to say, Christian Roeck was also happy with his new wife. Their marriage was blessed with ten children. Four of the children were born in India and the rest in America. Three of the four were sent to a nursery school for missionaries' children, operated by the Reformed headquarters in Germany. Of the ten children born to them, Albert and Theodore never got out of India, being buried in Calcutta and Bombay respectively.

The country around Codacal is rather level; yet intersected by low ridges or hills. A charming sight were the rice fields bordered by cocoapalms. The gigantic trees (banyon) towered over all on the higher ground. Nearby were situated the small huts of the natives which were scattered about irregularly.

It was in this setting that the parsonage and mission church were placed. It was here that Christian did his mission work. But Codacal was only a basis from which he reach^{ed} out and form^{ed} other preaching stations. These jaunts to the various preaching stations were quite frequent and demanded much of his time. Often Rev. Roeck had to travel through some rather rugged terrain and wilderness area; and always with the fear of being attacked by a tiger. Many times these journeys into the back country were quite dangerous because of the threat of tigers, poisonous snakes, sudden torrentuous rains or monsoons, and the constant heat from the sun.

It seems when missionary Roeck went out to form a preaching station he would attend one^{of} the great/festivals that would be taking place at one of their temples in honor of their gods. It seems that the custom was to have a great fair going on for two weeks before the celebration began. Christian Roeck, then, would set up his own little booth under a shade tree and attract the attention of passersby with group singing of hymns. The natives would gather around and listen to the preaching, asking questions and making remarks. Undoubtedly this must have worked quite well for the missionary because many of the natives would follow to the booth to hear more of Christ and His Word, or to buy books. As a result of ^{his} ~~their~~ work at these fairs, Christian Roeck would receive quite a number invitations from the natives; whereupon he would follow-up on them.

While missionary Roeck was on one of his mission and preaching endeavors, his deacon would stay behind and serve the congregation.

The deacon was tall in stature and very refined, enhanced by that oriental gracefulness so often a characteristic of the Indians. He had received his theological training among the missionaries there and spoke English fluently. So at Codacal he was installed and ordained to assist missionary Roeck and to take his place when he was absent, or sometimes to even go with him to help preach at some of the great idol festivals. The deacon at Codacal was a tremendous help and a very good assistant to Rev. Roeck.

As is the case when dealing with people of an entirely different culture it was hard to relate to them the Word of God. A great hindrance to Christianity that Roeck found hard to deal with was the caste system; the name given the several classes of society in India whose occupations were marked for them by their ancestry. There were four original castes: the Brahmin, or sacred order; the Cheteree, or soldiers and rulers; the Vaissya, husbandmen and merchants; the Sudrus, mechanics and laborers. He also noted that in the passage of time many mixed classes or castes had come into being. Generally, the moral conduct of the classes was vile and their "religious life a bottomless mire of iniquity." To give an insight into the life of such people, Anna Roeck writes:

Women of the higher castes, such as the Brahmins and the Nairs are seldom ever seen on the road, and they are never allowed to approach a European, or a native belonging to a lower caste. When they do go out, they travel in groups, one behind the other, led by women servants shouting 'Ho-ho', announcing to others the coming of their superiors. The Nair caste is one below the Brahmin, taking the place of the former Warrior caste, the Kushatrias; the Brahmins call themselves half-gods, and therefore their pride is traditional. They derive their subsistence from the income of the lands attached to the temples, and from the offerings the heathen bring to the idols. Another source of income are the rentals for innumerable services offered at

the myriad of shrines, and the ceremonials connected with the worship there. The Brahmins wear a worsted cord around their loins as a mark of their rank. On the great festivals this is substituted by a cord of Kusha grass, and a proverb tells us that on these occasions they will 'eat till their cords break'. This pretty well characterizes the moral tenets of this priestly caste, who hold high living and feasting to be the chief aims in life. They actually use the phrase, 'Filling my belly is my bliss.'

Mrs. Roeck also gives us an insight into dealing with such a person when one comes into contact with him. She tells of such instances that Rev. Roeck experienced with such people. She says:

Quite frequently Brahmins came to visit my husband, apparently having no fear of contamination; however, after leaving his presence, they subjected themselves to no end of washings, thus ridding their bodies of the contact with an inferior being. They liked to talk with him about their Shastras, or Holy Books, with which they knew him to be well acquainted. Some of them admitted freely the grossness of their idoatrous worship, and openly declared their unbelief in one supreme God. Their people, they said, wanted something more tangible, an idol which they could see and worship as they carried it about in their possession. Abstractions are alright for educated people, but are not comprehensible to lower class Hindus, who prefer worshipping animals to the one true God. The Hindu religion has over thirty million deities. Supposing we convert to Christianity, they would argue, who is going to take care of our families? Give us a salary, and we will become Christians; with these words they wound up the conversation.

Obviously it was like dealing and working in circles with such people. But there were also other problems that came from the caste system. It was not easy for an Hindu to be a Christian; especially for a single member of the family. When an Hindu ^{went} ~~goes~~ over to Christianity, every thing that bound him to the past ^{was} ~~is~~ cut off and he ^{was} ~~is~~ like one cast out of the family. This was even the case among the lower castes where there ^{was} ~~is~~ much less at stake. Members of the family who became Christians were outcastes. So the missionary had to try to convert whole families if possible.

Anna Roeck gives us a case in point:

A young Brahmin to whom my husband gave instructions in the English language came often to our house. His father was a man of considerable wealth, and had spared no expense in giving his son a thorough Brahmin education. My husband had great hopes of converting him to Christianity, and used his best arguments to convince him of the folly of idol worship, but all to no avail. This young man was the eldest son, and as such the future heir to a large property, all of which he would have had to renounce had he converted to Christianity.

The caste system posed the greatest problems for missionary Roeck. But in his correspondences he never once mentioned them, but rather patiently dealt with such difficulties and frustrations. I guess we might be safe to assume that the caste system posed just one more obstacle and hindrance in the realm of many problems that at times foiled the work of the Lord. And Christian Roeck approached each situation as they presented themselves; one at a time.

We can also safely assume that for every difficult situation or problem that arose there were also many memorable and God-pleasing occasions to offset them. In the life and ministry of Rev. Christian Roeck that was very much the case. Anna Roeck records one such incident in the life of Christian Roeck. She says:

My husband was often away for weeks at a time, and then I felt most lonely; but when he came home again he had so much to tell me about his adventures through jungles and crossing rivers that I was most thankful to have him back again, safe and sound. Then in the evening, as we rested outside, he would tell me of his experiences among the heathen. While on his way to investigate one of the elaborate festivals held to honor one of their gods, he passed through a little village where no missionary had ever visited before. An old man with silvery hair was sitting in the doorway of his little hut, and when he saw a white man with natives following him, he got up and made a deep bow and begged them to sit down and rest and tell him some good news. Then my husband sat with him, and in his kind and benevolent manner told the man of Jesus, how He came into the world to save us, and how God loved all of us. Then the old man began to weep and tremble like a child, and cried over and over,

'Is that true, is that really true?' Then the natives spoke with him, and at last he called out, 'I do believe in that Savior; you must come again and tell me more of Him.' They left portions of the Holy Scripture with the man, promising to return soon.

It's amazing how God often finds a way of rewarding the work of His servants when they are doing His work. Many times Christian Roeck experienced such rewards as he proclaimed God's message of grace to an idol-worshiping nation. Sometimes those rewarding experiences happened right on his own front porch. Anna Roeck relates one such instance:

Sometimes the peace of the night was interrupted by thumping drums and the shrill cacophony of native instruments, interspersed with hoarse shouting. This we well knew came from a Hindu temple nearby, the poor deluded worshipers not knowing the true God, who had made Himself so manifest in the beauty of His works. But listen! The familiar melody of a Christian hymn comes sounding through, the several voices blending harmoniously together. To our great joy we hear this regularly, and join in singing from our distance. It comes from the home of our Deacon, where the family worships God before taking their night's rest.

Indeed from such instances, we easily see how God truly had blessed the work which Christian, as well as Anna, Roeck were doing in Codacal, India. These were fruits of God's blessings.

While living in Codacal for a number of years, Rev. Roeck did some correspondence with the Mission Society in Germany. These progress reports and updates give us little of the flavor of the mission work done by missionary Roeck. In a correspondence dated June 15, 1870 Christian Roeck writes much about the pending problems that he encountered at Codacal. One Problem had been solved and that was the building of a new church building which had been a rather lengthy undertaking by the small

mission congregation. The old chapel building was moved and re-located at the new school at Paraperri. Rev. Roeck supervised the building project as well as the building of a school-cate-chist house in Paraperri. He claimed that such an undertaking was very taxing to his health, especially working in the sun. Still another problem with the building project was the finan-cing. As was so often the case the congregation underestimated the cost of the new church building and were quickly running out of funds.

The other problem situations that arose in Codacal in that year, I let Rev. Roeck speak for himself and his family. He writes:

The cool, wet days of the monsoon also brought me face to face with my old acquaintance; neuralgia, which robs me of sleep at night and doesn't let me accomplish anything during the day. This, however, is transient and not of any great consequence.

My dear wife, however, is in a worse state of health. After her last confinement she was ailing. We didn't attach too much im-portance to the situation, and hoped that by and by it would pass. But the doctor is of a different opinion, and has indi-cated that if she should not regain her strength, she'd have to return home. We are hoping and praying to the Lord that this may not be necessary. After the monsoons my wife will definite-ly have to go to the hills for some time.

Needless to say, Mrs Roeck went to the Blue Mountains of northern India to regain her strength and health. Unfortunately this^{illness} soon became a real dilemma with Mrs. Roeck, and she quite often had to return to the mountains for rehabilitation. She went to the moun-tains because there the weather and surroundings were quite simi-lar to the weather of Europe. Yet the Roecks found it necessary in the following years to have Mrs. Roeck and the children return to Germany for awhile until she was completely healthy. This pro-

blem with their health soon caused the Roecks to leave India permanently. India hadn't been the most healthy situation for Christian Roeck and his family.

In regards to the congregation itself in Codacal, Roeck writes in his correspondence to the Mission Society in 1870:

As for the Mission work and its prospects I can also not report much progress. True, I have a small group of candidates for baptism, some of which can soon be baptized, but there are few prospects for new ones.

If the despising of the idols and the lack of proper respect for them were an indication, the people hereabouts would be hopeful prospects. In the idol temple near here, at Prepran-godu, the silver idol was stolen. The pagans themselves are laughing at this and are admiring the thief who could accomplish this feat. I overheard some say: 'There you can see what out idols are, they cannot protect themselves.' One man made a vow to his 'house-gods', he'd bring a great sacrifice, if they would keep the small-pox from his home. When the small-pox nevertheless struck several of the family down, he became enraged, and threw all the images out of the house, destroying them. His neighbor sent a temple servant, who had come to collect temple dues, away with the following words: 'I have given the Bhagawati a great deal, many times - let her give me something for a change.'

Many other incidents of that sort could be cited, which show that the fear of and the trust in their idols is losing its hold more and more. But nothing much is won thereby. But we may hope that the sown Seed of the Gospel may sooner or later bring the desired results here too.

In most homes one finds one or more copies of our literature (devotional material) and constantly there is demand for more. Although many are left unread and unheeded, others are appreciated and read. All of this cannot be in vain. We must keep our faith and pray, that the breath of Life from above will change the learned truths in the hearts to spirit and life.

Faith and patience fail me in regard to the congregation. Sad to say they have left me more than once; and love, too. Instead of growth in power and life the majority seems to be 'resting on the lees'. So little hunger for God's Word, so much worldliness, often deep and grievous sinning! Instead of love toward one another and unity, much bickering and strife.

There are, God be praised, exceptions; bad influences notwithstanding. But still there are bad ones. For instance: from me, as well as the deacon, the teacher and from the better

congregation members, who are mostly poor people, everything is stolen what is grown in the Compound, and other things that cannot be nailed down or kept behind locked doors. We are all convinced that people from the congregation itself are the culprits. This is very annoying, since this has happened often, and the perpetrators are never caught.

But these complaints are most unpleasant and I shall therefore close.

It seems that the constant and nagging problems surrounding the church were finally getting to Christian Roeck. As one reads the correspondence, there is no more mention made of the joys and the rewards of his mission efforts. Christian Roeck simply dwells on the problem situations in Codacal. By dwelling on those problems Rev. Roeck obviously, though to some degree unknowingly, was sinking deeper into depression.

The depression and self-pity for himself and for his congregation becomes even more obvious in the correspondence dated April 15, 1872. In that letter Roeck almost gives up hope in the mission and even asks for a release to another mission closer to neighboring missionaries. The heat, hardships, obstinate natives, lackluster attitudes of members, and the extreme loneliness finally ^{had} set in. In his correspondence of April 15, 1872 Christian Roeck laments:

When I think about all of this in lonesome Codacal - the way it was so recently and how it is now: one of my beloved children in Calcutta, another buried in Bombay, my dear wife with the other two children on the high seas toward home - then it seems to be a horrible dream, and I must rally effort to work, as well as to faith.

There is no scarcity of work, and I am heartily thankful for it, because next to prayer there is no better remedy for depression. At the same time I'd be very grateful if the Hon. Committee would grant my request, which I sent in recently, to assign me a post nearer other brethren. I cannot stand it here much longer, since my appetite as well as my sleep has left me.

But why dwell so much on myself? I'm afraid the reason is that I have so little of interest to say.

Here in Codacal there is nothing new to report.

In the Mission work something akin to a standstill has occurred. Individually there are some people who wish to join, but not as many as in former years. At the present time there are only eight, adults and children. If only these had a sincere longing for the Lord I'd be delighted! But I must fear that this yearning is lacking in most of them.

I do not believe that the congregation will get much larger than it is, unless the people in the neighborhood, landowners, become Christians. Our people here must eke out such poor living as hardly at any other station. Any kind of industrial project is out of the question because of the isolated region.

I guess we shouldn't be too harsh on Christian Roeck's correspondences. He had been working over there in India for over ten years now and had never had any leave of absence to Europe or anywhere else outside of India. Realizing the circumstances involved we can to some extent sympathize with his grim outlook of the mission. I'm ^{sure} anyone in a similar position would feel very much the same way. Unfortunate as it ~~is~~ ^{was}, Christian Roeck was growing more and more impatient with his Indian mission work and desperately needed a change in scenery, whether to a different region of India or out of the country entirely. What ever the case, it appears obvious that Roeck needed a change fast to bolster his depressed morale, attitude and outlook.

That change in scenery came when Roeck accepted a call to serve the preaching station at Cannanore, India. Undoubtedly missionary Roeck still ^{had} the missionary zeal that he had when he started and remained in India to serve a different post. At this new post, Roeck's attitude and outlook seemed to be much improved and brighter than before. Still the same problems plagued him here as well as

a few new trying situations. In a letter to the Basel Institute, Roeck elaborates on some of these things he experienced at the mission at Cannanore. He writes:

Well, of what can I inform you about Cannanore? How dearly I should like to speak of successes, like the ones the dear brethren in Mulki and Udapi experienced, if I could, but here everything seems to be dead. There was enough preaching since Brother Hanbart was tireless in his work as itinerant preacher, and Cannanore certainly wasn't overlooked. It seems to me as though the people here were 'preached to death'. With the exception of a few souls, there is no life and everything is so quiet (or rather everything is so concentrated on worldliness) as though everything would have to remain eternally thus.

Cannanore is actually a military station. There are always three regiments stationed here (one European and two native) and the influence these have is not always good. Furthermore much drunkenness exists and what fruit that kind of ground produces is evident.

But you may think I am too pessimistic; I do not believe so. I am not entirely discouraged. Though I'd rather go out into the country and shall go far in order to preach, I shall not neglect the closer field. Also I hope for a better time, a time of harvest, and this hope is not unfounded, since there are prospects which indicate this. Should we, however, not experience this in our time, we know that we have not worked in vain.

In regard to my dear wife and me I have little to report. For a time I was not well and unable to work. But this condition has improved and despite the intense heat, I feel well enough to be able to think of making a preaching trip again. It is regrettable that not more Brothers are free to do this. On the Cannanore District two Brothers would have work enough, even if they had five or six catechists with them. As it is now it often takes several years before one can revisit the same locality, and in the meanwhile what the people have heard is forgotten. Even the pagans themselves have called attention to this omission. But what can we do? The field is too large and the workers too few.

But the work is the Lord's and we commend everything to Him.

Despite the constant highs and lows that Christian Roeck went through, he still kept his spirits up through them all. He was a very capable and dedicated missionary who had a constant burning desire to get the Gospel to the heathens. No one could

question the love that he had for the spiritual welfare of the people that he served in India, as well as the people throughout his ministry.

The change of scenery and location from Codacal to Cannanore India lifted his outlook in the mission field to some degree so that he had renewed desire for the work of the Lord. But the shift did nothing for his health nor for the health of his family. As was mentioned before, his wife, Anna, had to return to Europe to recuperate from her lingering illness. After staying for some time in Europe, she once again returned to her husband in Cannanore, India. But Anna could never fully recover from her bout with the severe illness as it constantly returned to plague her while she remained in India. After a few years stay in Cannanore, the Roecks *realize* something had to be done concerning the illness that was sapping the strength of Anna as well as the rest of the family.

After consulting with doctors in India, Christian and Anna Roeck made the difficult decision to leave India for the safety and the good of their family's health. The choice of their re-
location was America. Making the difficult transition from leaving friends in India and their home for twelve fruitful years to a new future and challenge in America was easily attained as the Roeck's safely arrived in New York and ^{to} far different surroundings than in India.

Sometimes in the year 1885 Christian Roeck was installed as pastor for a Reformed church in New York state. After spending the year in New York, Rev. Roeck accepted a call to Wisconsin to

serve the parishes of Ridge and Wauseca. At this time he affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod. For whatever reasons Christian Roeck joined the Wisconsin Synod^{they} have never been spelled out. Nonetheless it seems that he joined WELS sometime in 1886. After a years times here at Ridge-Wauseca, he again accepted a call to the WELS church in Morrison in Brown County. Here Roeck stayed and served the congregation for about ten years with "much blessing."

In the year 1887 he received a call to Ixonia which he accepted. Pastor Roeck served three congregations at Ixonia for which he received \$600.00 per~~annum~~^{annum}. With much faithfulness, self-sacrifice, and many~~of~~ blessings he served the three congregations in this area. He soon won himself the hearts of his membership through his splendid sermons, his evangelical manner, and his mild and humble attitude. His means of transportation in serving the congregations was the horse and buggy like that of the circuit rider. ^{And} During his spare time he was an avid and dedicated gardener and had the habit of being up in time to see the sunrise ^{and} ~~so~~ do his garden work. He always maintained this earned him the time to watch the sunset.

Many people believed that the heart-rending tragedy of India, plus the often disheartening results among the heathen, had a really profound effect on his ministry in the later years. It finally all caught up with him; the hardships in India, the loss of two sons in India, and the many bouts he had with severe

illness. In the year 1894 he became ill with a serious dysentery which soon sapped his strength. According to his wish just before his death, he received Holy Communion for his comfort and strength and at which occasion made his confession and testified to his belief in His Savior. His strength rapidly failed and on Ascension Day he died in his sleep. J. H. Brockmann records the funeral services when he writes:

The funeral took place on Exaudi Sunday. The participation by the members of his congregations, as well as many guests, testified to the great love they had for the deceased. The Professors from Watertown, plus eight colleagues in the ministry also participated at the funeral. At the funeral home P. Brenner performed the liturgical service; J. H. Brockmann officiated at the church, and at the grave P. Guenther gave a beautiful address on the comforting Word: 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.'

Christian Roeck faithfully carried out his lifelong dream of being a missionary in the foreign field among the heathen. Though having died at the age of 57, God made it possible for him to fulfill that burning desire within him. There were difficulties and hardships of various kinds, yet the blessings must have far outweighed them in the dedicated missionary activity of Christian Roeck. Indeed Christian Roeck experienced God's richest blessings as a called servant of the Lord spreading the Good News of the Gospel message to those living in darkness.

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