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THE

Evangelical Magazine,

FOR DECEMBER, 1796.

BIOGRAPHY.

LIFE OF THE LATE REV. DAVID BRAINERD, OF NEW ENGLAND,

MISSIONARY TO THE AMERICAN INDIANS.

PART II.

[*From his entrance on the Ministry, to the successful period of his labours.*]

BLESSED with peculiar talents, favoured with the most intimate communion with God, and humbled in the dust under a sense of his own depravity, Mr. Brainerd entered upon the arduous work of the Ministry, preaching occasionally in the pulpits of his friends, from the day he was licensed, till the providence of God opened for him a door of utterance among the heathen.

The day after he was licensed, he rode to Southbury, and preached, where he enjoyed much of the comfortable presence of God, both in his prayer and sermon; and for several days he continued in a sweet tranquillity of mind, being sometimes refreshed with the hope of seeing the heathen coming to Christ. But on the 12th of August, while he was at a place near Kent, in the western borders of Connecticut, where there was a number of Indians, his soul was exercised with the most severe conflict. He had no power to pray; his hopes, that God would send him afar off among the heathen, vanished; his spirit was so exceedingly depressed with a sense of his vileness, that he seemed in his own eyes worse than any devil. He could not conceive why God permitted him to live, and wondered the people did not stone him, much more that they would hear him preach. The trial had lasted all that morning and the preceding night. About ten o'clock the people assembled, and he was forced

to ascend the pulpit. Contrary to his expectations, the Lord so favoured him with his presence, and assisted him in praying and preaching, that he spake with power; some of the Indians present crying out in deep distress, and all appearing greatly affected. This revived his hopes, and induced him to hire a woman to keep a school for their instruction.

However strongly his mind was impressed with a sense of his insufficiency and unworthiness, all who heard him were persuaded God had raised him up for great usefulness. His remarkable concern for the conversion of the heathen could not be concealed; and on the 19th of November, 1742, he received a pressing invitation from the Rev. Mr. Pemberton, of New-York, to come there as soon as possible, and meet the correspondents of the Society in Scotland, for propagating Christian knowledge, and consult with them about the affairs of the neighbouring Indians.

This was a solemn message. He felt more than ever the weight of the important subject for which the interview was desired; but was enabled to cast his burden upon the Lord, earnestly requesting his help and direction. The correspondents, highly satisfied with his Christian experience and acquaintance with divinity, engaged him as a missionary.

Their design was to send him to the Indians, at the Forks of Delaware. But as the winter season was then approaching, which in that part of America is remarkably cold, it was thought expedient that he should delay his journey till the ensuing spring. The interval, however, was not spent unprofitably to himself or others. He conversed occasionally with select friends; he read much, prayed much, and preached often. Considering himself as for ever devoted to the work in which he had engaged, and expecting soon to go and spend the remainder of his life among savages in the wilderness, he began to think how he might glorify God most with the property left him by his father: And no way more eligible occurring to his thoughts, than by educating some young man for the ministry, he accordingly made the offer to a person whom he thought most promising; and having given him some previous learning, sent him to college, and was at the sole expence of his education.

While he was preparing for his journey, the corresponding ministers, whom he met at Woodbridge in the latter end of March, having received information that a contest subsisted between the white people and the Indians at Delaware, concerning their lands, which they supposed would be a hindrance

drance to the reception of the Gospel, they gave him new directions, and appointed him to go among the Indians at

KAUNAUMEEK.

This is a place in the province of New-York, in the woods between Stockbridge and Albany, and about eighteen or twenty miles distant from each of these towns. Here he arrived on the 1st of April, 1743, and was kindly received by the Indians, who soon became seriously attentive to his instructions: And he continued among them upwards of twelve months, subject to great gloominess and distress of mind, and exposed to many hardships and difficulties, sleeping on straw, in a wretched hovel, and living on food of the most ordinary kind, and even reduced, sometimes, to short allowance, as none could be procured from a less distance than sixteen or eighteen miles.

He ascribes the favourable reception he met with, to the long-continued labours of the Rev. Mr. Sergeant among some of the same tribe, by whose report their prejudices were, in a great measure, removed, and their minds prepared to entertain the truths of Christianity. He immediately endeavoured to teach them the nature of the *fall* and *recovery* in the most plain and easy manner; addressing them by an interpreter, an ingenious young Indian, who had been instructed in the Christian religion, by Mr. Sergeant, and was able to read well, and write a good hand.

After he had been some months on the spot, he composed, and, by the help of his interpreter, translated into their own language, several *psalms* and *forms of prayer*, adapted to their circumstances and capacities, and which he learned to pronounce so well, that he could sing and pray with them in their own tongue.

When they had gained some acquaintance with such truths as he thought were necessary to be previously known, he gave them an *historical* account of God's dealings with the Jews, and explained some of their rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices; leading them gradually on to the birth, life, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the consequent effusion of the Holy Spirit: And having prepared the way by this general view of things, he expounded, almost every evening, in a regular course, the Gospel of St. Matthew, that their ideas might be more distinct and particular.

Besides these instructions, he had, by the consent of the Commissioners, instituted a school for children and young people,

people, and appointed his interpreter to teach them English; attending himself, as often as he could, to give them serious exhortations; and in a short time he had the pleasure to observe that they made considerable proficiency.

In a word, no pains were spared to win the souls of those few poor savages to Christ. But though the truth seemed to be attended with some power upon their hearts and consciences; though a few seemed awakened to a solicitous concern for deliverance from their miserable estate by nature; though an outward reformation appeared in the lives and manners of most; though their idolatrous sacrifices were wholly laid aside, and their heathenish customs considerably abated; though the sin of drunkenness was, in some measure, surmounted, and a regard manifested for the Lord's-day; yet, after all these hopeful appearances, there were circumstances so *discouraging*, that he could not say he had any satisfactory evidences of their being renewed in the spirit of their minds, and savingly converted to God.

Having had an interview with the corresponding ministers in the winter, and informed them of his proceedings, with a view to new arrangements, he was ordered by them, early in the month of April, 1744, to leave these people, and go to another tribe of Indians near the river Delaware. This being at a considerable distance from Kaunaumeek, he began to dispose of his books, and other small articles, and make preparation for his journey. For though he must have felt much regret at having laboured to little or no purpose a whole year, under distressing circumstances, which a stronger constitution than his could hardly sustain; and though he had been recently importuned to settle at Millington, near his native town, and received an unanimous and pressing invitation from the people at East-Hampton, the most pleasant town, and the largest and wealthiest parish in Long-Island; and though he knew that in the place to which he was going he would be exposed to many extreme hardships; yet so firmly was he bent on the missionary work, that he resolutely determined to go forward.

But his poor Indians, on hearing his intention to remove, were inconsolable, and earnestly dissuaded him from the attempt. He sympathized with them, and advised them, as they were but few, to leave their present situation, and live at Stockbridge, where they might be accommodated with land, and instructed under the ministry of Mr. Sergeant. To this proposal they readily acceded; and on Sunday, the

29th

29th of April, he took his leave of them in a farewel sermon in Mr. Sergeant's pulpit, at Stockbridge, where most of them had then arrived.

Leaving Stockbridge on the Thursday following, he set out on his journey, calling on his friends in the various towns through which he passed. Travelling through a place called Minnissinks, and finding a number of Indians there, he halted, and offered to instruct them in the truths of Christianity. The king, to whom he addressed himself for leave, laughed, and, turning upon his heel, went away. Mr. Brainerd followed him into his house, and renewed his importunity; but he declined the subject, and referred the business to another, who appeared to be a man of good rational parts. "Why," said he, "should you desire the Indians to become Christians, seeing the Christians are so much worse than the Indians. The Christians lie, steal, and drink worse than the Indians. They first taught the Indians to be drunk. They steal to that degree, that their rulers are obliged to hang them for it, and that is not sufficient to deter others from the practice. But none of the Indians were ever hanged for stealing, and yet they do not steal half so much. We will not consent, therefore, to become Christians, lest we should be as bad as they. We will live as our fathers lived, and go where our fathers are when we die." In vain did Mr. Brainerd endeavour to convince him that some, who are called Christians, are *not* Christians in heart. He grew warm. And when he appeared more calm, and was asked by Mr. Brainerd, if he was willing that he should come and see them again? he replied, "They should be willing to see him again, as a friend, if he would not desire them to become Christians." Mortified with this reply, and grieved that the injuries which these poor creatures had received from the wicked monsters bearing the Christian name, should have engendered such fatal prejudices, he bid them farewel with an aching heart, and, prosecuting his journey, arrived, on the 13th of May, at a place in the province of Pensylvania, called by the Indians Sakhauwotung, within the

FORKS OF DELAWARE.

Here, by the consent of their king, he pitched his tent among a few poor Indians, well-disposed and very attentive. There were not more than thirteen houses inhabited, and these lay several miles distant from each other. The rest of the Indians, that formerly belonged to this place, being dispersed, had retired farther back into the country. At first, when with difficulty, owing to their remote situation from each

other, he could collect this remnant together, they did not amount to more than twenty or twenty-five persons; but, towards the latter part of the summer, they so increased, that his auditory frequently consisted of forty; and the effect of the word upon their souls was rather encouraging, as they seemed desirous of seeking salvation themselves, and that others should do the same. Hearing of a few straggling Indians, who were about thirty miles westward, he went and found them preparing to move towards Susquahannah river, the place of their residence. He preached to them twice; and, though at first they feared he had some ill design upon them, as they had suffered injuries from white people, they were pleased with his discourses, and desired he would visit them at Susquahannah, and give them further instruction.

This invitation afforded him encouragement; and after he had represented it to the correspondents, and obtained their consent, he undertook, even so late in the year as the beginning of October, this fatiguing journey. Having travelled three days, and slept two nights in the open wilderness, he came to Opeholhaupung, a settlement on the side of Susquahannah river, consisting of twelve houses inhabited by about seventy Indians. Though, on his arrival, they were just about to begin their general hunting, they deferred it four days; on each of which he preached twice, besides conversing with them, and endeavouring to obviate their objections against Christianity. Their king and some others, on being asked, expressed their willingness that he should renew his visit in the ensuing spring, and none indicated any disapprobation. Hoping that God was thus preparing their minds to receive "the truth as it is in Jesus," he returned with pleasure to his own people at Delaware.

Here a circumstance soon occurred which produced in his mind the greatest uneasiness. His Indians, notwithstanding the pains he had taken with them, and the hopes he had sometimes cherished, engaged in an idolatrous *feast* and *dance*; nor could they be dissuaded from it by his most earnest intreaties. On a similar occasion, some months before, he had been tempted and buffeted by Satan, who suggested to his mind that there was no God, or if there was, he was not able to convert the heathen before they had more knowledge. Now, perceiving his health impaired by the voluntary hardships he had endured, and even the little hope he had entertained of success, after all his labour and toil, wholly extinguished, his spirit was overwhelmed within him; and having finished a house, or hut, he had built to live in for the sake

of

of retirement, he determined to throw himself at the feet of his Saviour, and to spend some time in secret fasting and prayer, that he might humble his soul in the dust, and implore mercy for himself and these deluded people.

But the time was fast approaching when the days of his mourning should be ended. The Lord had, indeed, brought him into the wilderness, but he soon found the valley of Achor to be a door of hope. He continued to pray with great fervency, and in a few days had the pleasure to hear his interpreter, for whose conversion he so greatly longed, express an earnest concern for his soul. This was productive of new care; his hope was mingled with fear, and he besought the Lord, with many tears, that the work might be real and lasting. Similar impressions were made, about this time, on several other persons, who shed many tears under his discourses; and particularly an old man, supposed to be a hundred years of age, was deeply affected. He tells us, however, he had no reason to conclude they were partakers of true and saving grace, but were only the subjects of conviction.

Desirous of fulfilling his promise to the Indians at Susquahannah, he set out with his interpreter in the beginning of May, 1745, enduring great hardships and fatigues; being obliged to sleep one night in the open air, exposed to wind and rain, and travelling on foot the next day, and driving their horses before them, which they could neither ride nor lead, as they were so sick with a poisonous herb they had eaten the night before. After he had reached Susquahannah, he proceeded about the length of a hundred miles on the banks of the river, visiting many Indian nations and settlements, and preaching to them by different interpreters; sometimes disheartened by the opposition they discovered to the Christian religion, and sometimes encouraged by the docility of others, and their willingness to be instructed. Here he met with some Indians who had been his hearers at Kaunaumeek, who both saw and heard him with strong expressions of great joy.

Having spent about a fortnight in this laborious employ, sleeping on the ground, and frequently in the open air, he was violently siezed with an ague and fever, which had nearly proved fatal. But it pleased God to give him sufficient strength to reach an Indian trader's hut, where, with his blessing, in the space of a week, without the use of medicine, he recovered; and on the 30th of May, after a journey of three hundred and forty miles, he returned to his own people.

For two years he had now laboured with very little, if any success. The difficulties of christianizing these poor Pagans pressed upon his mind with peculiar force. He perceived they were filled with prejudices against Christianity from the vicious lives of some that are called Christians; and the numerous injuries they had sustained from their rapacity and cruelty. He likewise found them extremely attached to the customs, traditions, and fabulous notions of their ancestors; particularly that they were not made by the same God who made the white people, but by another, who commanded them to live by hunting, and not conform themselves to the customs of the white people; so that, without denying the truth of our religion, they are persuaded of the reality of their own. The influence of their Powwows, or conjurors, who are supposed to have a power of enchanting or poisoning them to death, or, at least, in a very distressing manner, presents another obstacle to their conversion, as they apprehend that they would exercise their power upon them, were they to become Christians. Besides, the manner of their living is itself a great disadvantage to missionary efforts, as they are continually roving from place to place, so that the men are scarcely ever to be met with, except about six weeks before and in the season of planting their corn, and two months in the latter part of the summer, about the season of harvest. If to these difficulties be added the hardships that necessarily attend such a service; the fatigues of frequent journies in the wilderness; the mean and scanty fare; the wretched lodging; the difficulty of addressing a people of a strange language; and, what he seemed to feel as much as any, the irksomeness of solitude, being destitute of a Christian companion, or fellow-labourer, though Jesus sent out his disciples by two and two; we need not wonder if he had even entertained thoughts of withdrawing from the work, in which he had almost despaired of success. But now, while his mind was thus discouraged, and hope had almost failed, the Lord was pleased to display his power and grace in a manner the most remarkable and glorious.

(Here we are obliged to stop for the present, but shall conclude the account of Mr. Brainerd's successful labours in the Supplementary Number; which will be published on the 16th of December, that the whole of his Biography may be bound in the same volume.)

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