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Excerpt

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THE JOURNAL OF DAVID BRAINERD



PART I.

“MIRABILIA DEI INTER INDICOS”; OR, THE RISE AND
PROGRESS OF A REMARKABLE WORK OF GRACE
AMONGST A NUMBER OF THE INDIANS IN THE
PROVINCES OF NEW JERSEY AND PENNSYLVANIA.

CROSSWEEKSUNG, IN NEW JERSEY, *June 19, 1745.*

HAVING spent most of my time for more than a year past amongst the Indians in the Forks of Delaware in Pennsylvania, and having in that time made two journeys to Susquehanna River, far back in that province, in order to treat with the Indians respecting Christianity; and not having had any considerable appearance of special success in either of those places, which damped my spirits and was not a little discouraging to me; upon hearing that there was a number of Indians in and about a place

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called by the Indians Crossweeksung, in New Jersey, near fourscore miles south-east from the Forks of Delaware, I determined to make them a visit, and see what might be done towards their conversion. I accordingly arrived among them this day.

Found very few persons in the place I visited, and perceived the Indians in those parts were very much scattered, there being not more than two or three families in a place, from six to thirty miles distant. However, I preached to those few I found, who appeared well-disposed, and not inclined to object and cavil, as the Indians had frequently done elsewhere.

When I had concluded my discourse, I informed them (there being none but a few women and children) that I would willingly visit them again the next day. They accordingly set out and travelled ten or fifteen miles, in order to give notice to some of their friends at that distance. These females, like the woman of Samaria, seemed desirous that others might *see the man that told them what they had done* in their lives past, and the misery that attended their idolatrous ways.

June 20.—Visited and preached to the Indians again as I proposed. Numbers more were gathered at the invitation of their friends, who heard me the day before. These also appeared as attentive, orderly, and well-disposed as the others.

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June 22.—Preached to the Indians again. Their number, which at first consisted of about seven or eight persons, was now increased to near thirty. There was not only a solemn attention among them, but some considerable impressions, it was apparent, were made upon their minds by divine truth. Some began to feel their misery and perishing state, and appeared concerned for a deliverance from it.

Lord's day, June 23.—Preached to the Indians, and spent the day with them. Their number still increased, and all with one consent seemed to rejoice in my coming among them. Not a word of opposition was heard from any of them against Christianity, although in times past they had been as opposite to anything of that nature as any Indians whatsoever. And some of them, not many months before, were enraged with my interpreter because he attempted to teach them something of Christianity.

June 24.—Preached to the Indians at their own desire. To see poor pagans desirous of hearing the Gospel of Christ animated me to discourse to them, although I was now very weakly and my spirits much exhausted. They attended with the greatest seriousness and diligence, and some concern for their souls' salvation appeared among them.

June 27.—Visited and preached to the Indians again. Their number now amounted to about

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forty persons. Their solemnity and attention still continued, and a considerable concern for their souls became evident.

June 28.—The Indians being now gathered, a considerable number of them from their several and distant habitations requested me to preach twice a day, being desirous to hear as much as they possibly could while I was with them. I cheerfully complied with their motion, and could not but admire the goodness of God, who, I was persuaded, had inclined them thus to enquire after the way of salvation.

June 29.—Preached again twice to the Indians. Saw, as I thought, the hand of God very evidently, and in a manner somewhat remarkable, making provision for their subsistence together, in order to their being instructed in divine things. For this day and the day before, with only walking a little way from the place of our daily meeting, they killed three deer, which was a seasonable supply for their wants, and without which it seems they could not have subsisted together, in order to attend the means of grace.

Lord's day, June 30.—Preached twice this day also. Observed yet more concern and affection among the poor heathen than ever, so that they even constrained me to tarry yet longer with them; although my constitution was exceedingly worn out, and my health much impaired by my late fatigues and labours, and especially by my journey

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to Susquehanna in May last, in which I lodged on the ground for several weeks together.

July 1.—Preached again twice to a very serious and attentive assembly of Indians, they having now learned in all respects to attend the worship of God with Christian decency. Between forty and fifty of them, old and young, were now present. I spent some considerable time in discoursing with them in a more private way, enquiring what they remembered of the great truths that had been taught them from day to day; and may justly say, it was amazing to see how they had received and retained the instructions given them, and what a measure of knowledge some of them had acquired in a few days.

July 2.—Was obliged to leave these Indians at Crossweeksung, thinking it my duty, as soon as health would admit, again to visit those at the Forks of Delaware. When I came to take leave of them, and spoke something particularly to each of them, they all earnestly enquired when I would come again, and expressed a great desire of being further instructed. And of their own accord agreed that, when I should come again, they would all meet and live together during my continuance with them; and that they would do their utmost endeavours to gather all the other Indians in these parts that were yet farther remote. When I parted, one told me with many tears, “She wished God would change her heart”;

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another, that “she wanted to find Christ”; and an old man that had been one of their chiefs wept bitterly with concern for his soul. I then promised them to return as speedily as my health and business would admit, and felt not a little concerned at parting, lest the good impressions then apparent upon numbers of them might decline and wear off, when the means came to cease; and yet could not but hope that He who, I trusted, had begun a good work among them, and who I knew did not stand in need of means to carry it on, would maintain and promote it in the absence of them, although at the same time I must confess that I had so often seen such encouraging appearances among the Indians in other places prove wholly abortive. It appeared also the favour would be so great, if God should now, after I had passed through so considerable a series of almost fruitless labours and fatigues, and after my rising hopes had been so often frustrated among these poor pagans, give me any special success in my labours with them, that I could not believe, and scarcely dared to hope, that the event would be so happy. I never found myself more suspended between hope and fear than on this occasion.

The encouraging disposition and readiness to receive instruction, apparent among the Indians, seem to have been produced by the conviction that one or two of them met with some time since at the Forks of Delaware, and who have since

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endeavoured to show their friends the evil of idolatry. And although the other Indians seemed but little to regard but rather to deride them, yet this perhaps has put them into a thinking posture of mind, or at least given them some thoughts about Christianity, and excited in some of them a curiosity to hear, and so made way for the present encouraging attention. An apprehension that this might be the case here has given me encouragement that God may in such a manner bless the means I have used with Indians in other places, where there is as yet no appearance of it. If so, may His name have the glory of it; for I have learned by experience that He only can open the ear, engage the attention, and incline the heart of poor benighted prejudiced pagans to receive instruction.

FORKS OF DELAWARE, IN PENNSYLVANIA, 1745.

Lord's day, July 14.—Discoursed to the Indians twice, several of whom appeared concerned, and were, I hope, in some measure convinced by the divine Spirit of their sin and misery. They wept much the whole time of divine service. I afterwards discoursed to a number of white people then present.

July 18.—Preached to my people, who attended diligently, beyond what had been common among these Indians; and some of them appeared concerned for their souls.

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Lord's day, July 21.—Preached to the Indians first, then to a number of white people, and in the afternoon to the Indians again. Divine truth seemed to make considerable impressions upon several of them, and caused the tears to flow freely. Afterwards I baptized my interpreter and his wife, who were the first I baptized among the Indians. They are both persons of some experimental knowledge in religion; have both been awakened to a solemn concern for their souls; have apparently been brought to a sense of their guilt and misery, been comforted with divine consolations, have evidently passed under a great change, and I cannot but hope a saving one.

It may perhaps be satisfactory and agreeable that I should give some brief relation of the man's exercise and experience since he has been with me, especially seeing he acts as my interpreter to others. When I first employed him in this business in the beginning of the summer of 1744, he was well fitted for his work, in regard to his acquaintance with the Indian and English language, as well as with the manners of both nations; and in regard to his desire that the Indians should conform to the customs and manners of the English, especially their manner of living. But he seemed to have little or no impression of religion upon his mind, and in that respect was very unfit for his work, being incapable of understanding and communicating to others many things of importance; so that I

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laboured under great disadvantages in addressing the Indians, for want of his having an experimental as well as a more doctrinal acquaintance with divine truths. At times my spirits sank, and were much discouraged under this difficulty, especially when I observed that divine truth made little or no impression upon his mind for many weeks together.

He indeed behaved soberly after I had employed him, although before he had been a hard drinker; and seemed honestly engaged, as far as he was capable, in the performance of his work. He appeared especially desirous that the Indians should renounce their heathenish notions and practices, and conform to the customs of the Christian world. But still he seemed to have no concern about his own soul, till he had been with me a considerable time.

Near the latter end of July 1744, I preached to an assembly of white people with more freedom and fervency than I could possibly do to the Indians, without their having first attained a greater measure of doctrinal knowledge; at which time he was present, and was somewhat awakened to a concern for his soul. The next day he discoursed freely with me about his spiritual concerns, and gave me an opportunity to use further endeavours to fasten the impression of his perishing state upon his mind; and I could plainly perceive, for some time after, that he addressed the Indians

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with more concern and fervency than he had formerly done.

These impressions, however, seemed quickly to decline, and he remained in a great measure careless and secure, until some time late in the fall of the year following, when he fell into a weak and languishing state of body, and continued much disordered for several weeks. At this season divine truth took hold of him, and made deep impressions upon his mind. He was brought under great concern for his soul, and his exercise was not now transient and unsteady but constant and abiding, so that his mind was burdened from day to day; and it was now his great enquiry, *What he should do to be saved.* His spiritual trouble prevailed, till at length his sleep in a measure departed from him, and he had little rest day or night; but walked about under great distress. His neighbours could not but observe a wonderful change in his behaviour.

After he had been some time under this exercise, while he was striving for mercy, he says, there seemed to be an impassable mountain before him. He was pressing towards heaven, as he thought, but "his way was hedged up with thorns, that he could not stir an inch farther." He looked this way and that way, but could find no way at all. He thought if he could but make his way through these thorns and briers, and climb up the first "steep pitch" of the mountain, that then there