

THE SPIRITUALITY OF DAVID BRAINERD

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Abstract: The world around us is changing at a dizzying rate these days. Being adaptable and up-to-date on trends is essential if we want to remain competitive. All things considered, we are making the most of this setting to evaluate our psychological and spiritual needs. In today's postmodern society, religious groups are taking advantage of secularization while also embracing technical advancements and bureaucratic social structures, thereby diluting the spiritual core of their faith. Consequently, a large number of young people who have the potential to become leaders in the church are leaving. Christianity, which was once celebrated for its rich heritage, is now being marginalized and seen as an antiquated religion. Some of us may view the past merely as a story that makes us nostalgic. However, within that historical framework, we are to be driven to improve our lives by finding a new spiritual life. Reviving our faith is one way to deal with the pressing problem at hand. Meditate, reflect, repent, and connect with a higher force to alleviate our inner dissatisfaction; let go of the idea of external achievement, which implies that monetary riches and fame bring us happiness, although fleetingly. We need to rise above emptiness and welcome a meaningful human life. This study takes a spiritual approach to solving the problems by using an examination of David Brainerd's life and ideas as a useful guide.

Key Words: Autobiography, Brainerd, God, life, mission, spirituality

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the globalization period, the world is undergoing tremendous change. To maintain our relevance, we often seek out fresh information and make sure to keep up with the latest trends. The postmodern era is characterized by an overwhelming amount of knowledge and numerous distractions (Choi & Chung, 2023). It seems that a lot of people view "not being busy" as a sign of failure and setback, so they multitask constantly, scribbling, looking, making phone calls, and taking notes. Many people are always looking outside themselves, expecting that progress in the world will offer them joy (Chung, 2004).

But the opposite is true: people's levels of inner discontent and emptiness are on the rise in our day. We find it humorous that individuals are setting their sights on happiness and pleasure as their primary objectives in life, even if this illusory goal seems to be drawing further and further away. Pursuing happiness through material possessions is an external endeavor, and gauging contentment is based on how one does in comparison to others. When we see someone else with a nicer house than us, it makes us feel deprived and unhappy, regardless of whether our property is wonderful. As our scientific culture, body of knowledge, and reservoir of information continue to expand, the pleasure index that individuals experience is progressively declining (Chung, 1997; Seo & Chung, 2021).

We who have lost sight of the inner journey in our pursuit of material prosperity and growth may find the life narrative of a young man called David Brainerd startlingly strange. Some think Brainerd's journal is excessively negative and full of self-deprecation, so they make fun of him for it. However, from a spiritual perspective, Brainerd's *THE LIFE AND DIARY OF DAVID BRAINERD* (1749, hereafter *Diary*) stands out. Everything he does is focused on discovering who he is on the inside. Even on the subject of redemption, he was not the kind to view "salvation" as a simple solution and to trust in it without doubt. He was not the haughty sort who would ignore his issues, reinvent himself, and strive for moral perfection to focus on going to church, worshipping, and taking part in church activities. Inward contemplation, self-examination, repentance, and a desire for God's

presence were constants in his life. Anguish over what has been lost and elation over Christ are prominent themes in his writings. As he matured spiritually, he found greater joy in God, but for the most part, his religious life was an uphill battle to find peace in spiritual death (Seok & Chung, 2024).

Brainerd argued against the rejection of "works theology," the view that believers should not emphasize actions after salvation. He was against "antinomianism." His view of salvation was not like that of an immature child naively receiving and embracing a gift; rather, it was a way to attain perfection by being in harmony with God and taking on Christ's humanity and divinity (Kim et al., 2021a). Nevertheless, he took pride in his salvation and criticized the Christian community's tendency toward spiritual hubris. Brainerd contended that the saved—and, by implication, the minister—must maintain an attitude congruent with "disinterested benevolence." Like Jesus Christ's crucifixion, selfless giving means devoting one's resources to the benefit of others. Like Jesus, he is willing to lay down his life for the sake of holiness. Serving God and being nice to neighbors is an attitude of humility because it is not an act of boasting about one's goodness but of habit.

Some people in today's environment can benefit spiritually from reading Brainerd's *Diary* since they fail to focus on themselves and instead focus on the outside world. Let us keep it close by and read it again to allow its deep spirituality to penetrate our souls and reflect on our lives, rather than reading it once and then putting it aside. When we do, we will be able to feel the deep happiness, serenity, and fulfillment that Brainerd felt. The purpose of this research is to explore Brainerd's spirituality through his *Diary* and go on an introspective journey—a search for our true selves and a means of nourishing our souls in the face of the spiritual malnutrition caused by our competitive and organized society (Kim et al., 2021b, 2021c; Jeong & Chung, 2024).

Undoubtedly, previous research has examined his writings. Joseph Conforti (1985) accurately characterizes Brainerd's role within the evangelical Christian culture of the 19th century. Brainerd is still being referenced in contemporary missionary history. Nevertheless, it is crucial to underscore the significance of this study, given the limited exploration of the notion of spirituality and the possibility of the profound impact of his writings on our spiritual well-being.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to demonstrate that Brainerd's journal, *The Diary*, possesses the spiritual essence of an autobiography. Autobiography is typically considered the most straightforward and prevalent form of writing due to its lack of restrictions or normative standards in comparison to other types of writing. The English term "autobiography" can be broken down into the Greek words "auto, bios, and graphe." Auto means self, bios is life, and graphe refers to the written word or writing. Therefore, "auto-bio-graphe" translates to "self-life-writing." "Auto" pertains to self-identity without external inquiries; "bios" refers to a life process or significant aspect of life; and "graphe" denotes the life story of the person writing the autobiography (Chung, 2003). It involves articulating personal experiences and translating abstract concepts into tangible written form. Phenomenologists, existentialists, and psychologists have recognized the significant role of autobiography in shaping the concept of the self as a defensive mechanism against environmental disturbances and disorder (Seok & Chung, 2021, 2022, 2023; Kim & Chung, 2023a, 2023b).

The significance of narrative organization in autobiographies lies in the purpose of writing. The storyline serves as the central framework of literature, connecting the ambiguous "auto" and the fragmented "bios" to provide coherence and significance. Characters in narratives progress events by reacting to the storyline with emotions such as fear, hope, frustration, and conflict within a defined time and place. An autobiography's most prominent feature is the emotional impact it has on readers when the protagonist reveals genuine facts in a personal and confessional manner. People have a strong affinity for books and movies, finding real-life events captivating, but their responses differ significantly based on whether the stories are fictional or not (Chung, 2003a, 2003b; Chung et al., 2021). Characters in autobiographical narratives possess the ability to evoke profound emotions, insights, and contemplation that fictional characters in films or plays cannot offer. Autobiographical stories depict the everyday lives of people in real historical contexts, in contrast to science fiction or heroic tales that explore themes beyond time and space. Readers of quality autobiographies uncover the essence of themselves

inside the protagonist's daily experiences or realize the potential for transformation and development, forging a fresh identity (Kang et al., 2021).

This paper's title includes the theme of spirituality. Does the autobiography contain elements of spirituality? What is the connection between autobiography and spirituality? From a Christian theological standpoint, a well-crafted autobiographical faith narrative has the power to uplift and enrich our spirits. This study defines "spirituality" as the believer's inner self and personality aligning with the lives of the God of the Bible and Jesus, rather than focusing on unexplained experiences or miracles. Despite the noisy society we live in, we develop the ability to consistently connect with God, who dwells within our hearts. By seeking this unity, we ultimately transform into another Jesus.

There may be a debate about whether Brainerd's *Diary* qualifies as an autobiography in the traditional sense, but its content and structure demonstrate profound introspection and decisive moments, rendering it an autobiographical narrative of faith. The journal adheres to the etymological and literary definitions of autobiography and provides a detailed autobiographical account from a theological perspective. *The Diary* does not document external events or accomplishments but rather delves into the connection between God and self. Brainerd records his confused and troubled emotions in his writings and seeks God's grace via prayer. His sincere and unadulterated longing for God moves readers deeply. Readers discover that Brainerd's self is evolving and expanding, experiencing loss, frustration, triumph, and relaxation. The fact that he is a real person and the creator, narrator, and protagonist of the story intensifies the emotion and enhances the feeling of trust.

This study will examine Brainerd's development over his many life phases by analyzing *The Diary*. With the theological idea of "loss and finding" as a prism, we will look at his writings and ultimately the book. We shall investigate both the aspects of his personal "lost and found" and those of the Indians in his writings. We also want to examine the process by which he was healed as a newly discovered spiritual person. In addition, we will examine his extraordinary dedication after he has been making steady progress in his spiritual regeneration. Finally, we will examine the impact that his *Diary* has had on the church community (Kim et al., 2021).

III. DISCUSSIONS

1. *The Life of David Brainerd*

Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut, in 1718, as the third child among five sons and four girls in a devout Christian household. His father passed away when he was 9 years old, and his mother died when he was 14 years old (Brainerd, 1749). After losing both of his parents at an early age, he started to feel anxious about his future. Externally, he appeared as a devout young man who abstained from worldly matters, engaged in fervent prayer, and maintained a meticulous and stringent approach in his speech, behavior, and mindset. He chose to pursue a career as a preacher and devoted himself to the Christian faith, striving to adhere to the principles of the Bible. During the winter of 1738, at the age of 20, he experienced a stunning realization of God's anger while strolling down the road, leading to profound sadness and loneliness. He aimed to draw closer to God by fulfilling his responsibilities diligently and becoming a person who reflected God's values. He strove to please God via hard work and honesty, but at the same time, he struggled with the desire to avoid the all-powerful God. He saw that despite his efforts to nurture his heart and be virtuous, it was tainted when confronted with the uncompromising teachings of the Bible. He frequently questioned Calvinism, the theological beliefs of the American Puritans, which emphasize the rigorous adherence to the Word of God, redemption through faith alone, and the complete sovereignty of God, causing him distress. During a period of intense suffering, he encountered divine favor from God in July 1789.

It dawned on him that his efforts to achieve salvation and independence had been fruitless the entire time. In the pursuit of his gratification, he had been so absorbed that he had failed to give any consideration to the honor of God. Brainerd experienced a profound spiritual experience similar to the disciples of Jesus witnessing the magnificent appearance of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration in Mark 9:9 and Matthew 17:9 (Chung, 1996; Kim & Chung, 2023a; 2023b). He encountered God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in person and was deeply moved by their divine presence. He understood that God's love can only bring about God's righteousness via Jesus Christ. From that time until he passed away, he frequently encountered physical and spiritual frailty,

although he unwaveringly believed in God's inherent compassion and affection regardless of the situation. Upon enrolling at Yale University in September 1739, his exceptional talent quickly set him apart. Yet, in his second year of college, his increased fascination with the Great Awakening (1740–1743) in New England led to conflicts with school authorities. The school administrators considered the revival movement to be religious fanaticism because of the loud noise and chaos (Chung, 2023; Seok & Chung, 2023). However, students, under Brainerd's leadership, did not agree with the theological stance of the school authorities. The school administrators expelled Brainerd to quell the potential uprising among the students. Brainerd was deeply affected by the occurrence but faced it with humility, tenderness, and patience, maintaining faith in the total sovereignty of his God. Brainerd befriended Jonathan Edwards as a result of this occurrence. Brainerd openly discussed this subject with Edward, leading to the development of a personal relationship between them. Edward observed genuine Christian qualities in Brainerd's humble, composed, and sincere demeanor. Following Brainerd's passing, Edward gathered his journals and released them in a book, unveiling the hidden gems of Christian mysticism. On one hand, this tragedy caused Brainerd to renounce his pursuit of degrees and worldly recognition, opting instead to dedicate his life to missionary service as a living sacrifice.

Following his disgraceful exile, Brainerd was sent as a pastor through field ministry in the Presbyterian Church. From 1743 to 1747, he served as a Presbyterian missionary, spreading the gospel to American Indians in New York, Delaware, and New Jersey. His ministry was not particularly successful during his first two years. He endured starvation, cold, and disease in a desolate landscape without any English-speaking companions. He was not helpful to the Indians and felt extremely hopeless due to his own weakness and incapacity to survive in the forest without their assistance. The intense suffering and hopelessness he experienced during this time are thoroughly documented in the *Diary*. His complaints and unhappiness are not the final focus; instead, God's comfort and inner strength towards the vulnerable self and his profound prayers to God are emphasized. He was genuinely devoted to prayer.

His tearful prayers started to yield results. In August 1745, a significant spiritual awakening took place among the Crosswicksung Indians in New Jersey, similar to the one mentioned in the Book of Acts. Despite Brainerd's earlier efforts, the Indians comprehended the gospel and repented after a brief explanation, shedding tears. After completing this work, Brainerd persistently extended invitations to the congregation with the gospel message. He remained humble despite his remarkable victory and documents the outcomes of his effort as if he were an observer of divine intervention. During this time, over 130 Indians were converted to Christianity through his ministry, adhering to the teachings of the Bible. Brainerd neglected his own health while selflessly serving his congregation excessively. In 1746, he developed TB and had to stop his ministry. Brainerd, while enduring a severe sickness for almost a year, expressed admiration for God's glory and revealed his longing for the kingdom of God. In October 1747, Brainerd passed away and achieved eternal peace in the embrace of the God he deeply cherished.

2. Loss and Finding in Brainerd's Diary

David Brainerd's transformation from a state of spiritual confusion to enlightenment is prominently depicted in his *Diary*, overshadowing the accounts of individuals who found their way through Indian missions. Brainerd's life illustrates the theological theme of "loss and discovery" in the gospel of Luke through two main aspects: the experience of renewal, that is, "finding," and the ongoing acknowledgment of "loss." Brainerd was a remarkable young man, gifted, virtuous, and devout. Based on his narratives, we can see that he displayed exceptional perception by precisely and honestly evaluating both others and his inner state with delicacy. His acute perception and profound self-analysis prevented his mind from being at ease and drove him to continually pursue perfection. He consistently refrained from engaging in any significant immoral actions and made a conscious effort to maintain a humble and virtuous demeanor. Brainerd found solace in his belief that he was morally superior to others and held onto the hope that his hard work would lead to success, even in the face of God's wrath. Nevertheless, he harbored neither peace nor contentment and endured a profound aversion towards God, along with a strong sense of shame stemming from an internal disobedience known only to him. He resembled the eldest son's grievance in "The Parable of the Lost Son" (Luke 15:11–32).

He was outwardly religious, but inside he was spiritually adrift. On July 12, 1739, he had a spiritual revelation

when divine light illuminated him, leading him to recognize that he had been lacking in his commitment to God. He realized that his efforts and good deeds were insufficient to bring about God's salvation, which was only possible through God's "indescribable glory" method of salvation. Brainerd discovered his authentic identity through the magnificence and affection of God and went back to his father's community. "Indescribable glory" and "sweet joy in God" are two emotional and joyful confessions from Brainerd, who met his Heavenly Father in spirit, which served as the driving force that guided him till his death. Simon Peter in Luke 5 and Brainerd both demonstrated characteristics of a lost person despite following Jesus. When reading *The Diary*, one often comes across his repeated discouragement and inner sadness, leading others to condemn him for his perceived weakness and temperamental pessimism. Brainerd's path of inner investigation challenges and awakens readers who seek to honestly examine themselves. The monologue emphasizes how the busyness of life can obscure the ego and spiritual aspects of ourselves, causing us to view our true selves through the lenses of spiritual pride, vanity, selfishness, sloth, despair, and rage. Brainerd's serene introspection opens a pathway in our desensitized hearts for spiritual rejuvenation to enter, guiding us into a realm of self-examination. We come to know our being through his feelings of frustration and hopelessness (Park et al., 2021).

Due to his spiritual arrogance, his heart has weakened, causing him to suffer deeply. The diaries from August 1942 reflect a consistent spiritual conflict. Due to his inner ugliness, he experienced despair and thought that his God had abandoned him. He confessed, revealing the spiritual pride and sins hidden in his heart that motivated his efforts to grow the mission of God. He admitted his inadequacies and imperfections, seeking solace in the Lord's forgiveness and hope for eventual perfection. Upon confronting his inner self, he felt lost, but by understanding his current existence and seeking God's mercy, he rediscovered himself and achieved balance. The theological themes of loss and discovery that frequently occur in *The Diary* are mirrored in our own life journeys. Readers gain self-discovery from Brainerd's sadness and find inspiration in his religious and spiritual joy.

Brainerd encountered several incidents, both failures and accomplishments, throughout his six years of missionary activity, but the primary emphasis in *The Diary* was consistently on his connection with God. His vision of mediating with Indian spirits in a secluded area in the forest is similar to the sacred prayer of Jesus Christ as a high priest. Brainerd sincerely, earnestly, and diligently followed the activity of the Holy Spirit as the presence of God manifested among the Indians and miraculous repentance and redemption progressed. Brainerd experienced illness from November 1946 until his death on October 9, 1947. Despite being physically weak for a year, he underwent spiritual growth. On September 19, 1947, he expressed in his journal his desire to enjoy God, glorify Him, and be fully devoted to His glory. His soul remained connected to God. Brainerd attempted to find joy and worship God while in a coma, experiencing high fever, great pain, and facing death. This situation evokes a profound sense of solemnity that goes beyond the boundaries of life and death. As a spirit, he comprehended the enigma of God's love. He asserted that God desires love from us, not faith, respect, or praise. Jesus was resurrected and appeared on the beach of the Sea of Tiberias, where he addressed his disciples, "Do you love me?"

The Diary includes poignant accounts of both Brainerd's personal experiences of loss and discovery as well as those of the Native Americans. On July 21, 1745, Brainerd described the Indian interpreter's conversion. Initially lacking spiritual interest, his heart progressively opened to the Word of God as he assisted in interpreting Brainerd's sermons. He refrained from stealing or engaging in physical altercations like his peers and strived to lead an honest life. Upon experiencing divine enlightenment, he started to deeply contemplate the issues concerning his soul. He regretted realizing that he had not met God's standard of righteousness. He began to thoroughly ponder the difficulties that were affecting his soul after he had the experience of heavenly enlightenment. He was extremely sorry to learn that he had fallen short of God's order for righteousness. Despite his inability to articulate it precisely, he found solace in God, who both punishes sinners and brings out new beings. Subsequently, there was a significant transformation in his temperament, conduct, and communication, resulting in his embodying a new persona while still upholding his identity as a devout Christian. Similar occurrences were observed among the Crosswicksung Indians, where the influence of Bible teaching was significant. Notable transformations occurred among Indians, including a renowned alcoholic who deeply regretted committing murder, an elderly man who renounced a lifetime of idol worship, a woman who tearfully repented for being excessively angry with her son, and a husband who felt remorse for leaving his first wife and

came back home. Similar instances of recovery, where lost children reunite with their fathers, are also observed among Indians. Readers engage in the experiences of Brainerd and the Indians by reading *the Diary*. Brainerd's genuine sorrow, repentance, longing, and love for God immerse readers in the profound realm of Christian truth. Brainerd's suffering and spiritual awakening prompt readers to reflect on their own sense of identity and spiritual being, often overshadowed in a hectic post-modern society. As they listen to vivid accounts of the Indians' conversion and transformation, readers become engrossed in Brainerd's narrative. Despite being a sinner, he found solace in God, his heart softened, and he yearned for the happiness of being redeemed and standing with God. To thrive in a challenging world, the focus shifts from financial possessions, fame, and tangible objects to the intangible inner world, conscience, soul, and spiritual realm. As they acknowledge the timeless realm beyond ordinary existence, become reflective, and yearn for divine favor, they experience a profound shift from being confused to being enlightened. These internal changes lead to alterations in thinking, objectives, and behavior, ultimately impacting daily living.

3. *The Portrayal of Healing in The Diary*

During the journey from being lost to being found, a theological phenomenon that inevitably occurs is the process of healing in some way. Brainerd experienced healing, and readers can likewise find healing through reading his narrative. Let us examine multiple chapters of his journal to identify the issues he faced and how he recovered. Brainerd has an inherent theological inclination towards discouragement and susceptibility to depression. The dishonorable expulsion was a challenging experience for a Yale student with a promising future who possessed an especially delicate temperament. Let us heed his sincere admission on how he recovered from this issue:

My heart seemed again to sink. The disgrace I was laid under at college, seemed to damp me; as it opens the mouths of opposers. I had no refuge but in God. Blessed be his name, that I may go to him at all times, and find him a present help (Brainerd, July 3, 1742).

This day I ought to have taken my degree; but God sees fit to deny it me. And though I was greatly afraid of being overwhelmed with perplexity and confusion, when I should see my class-mates take theirs; yet, at the very time, God enabled me with calmness and resignation to say, "The will of the Lord be done." Indeed, through divine goodness, I have scarcely felt my mind so calm, sedate, and comfortable for some time. I have long feared this season, and expected my humility, meekness, patience, and resignation would be much tried: but found much more pleasure and divine comfort than I expected. Felt spiritually serious, tender, and affectionate in private prayer with a dear Christian friend to-day (Brainerd, September 14, 1743).

Spent this day in fasting and prayer alone. In the morning was very dull and lifeless, melancholy and discouraged. But after some time, while reading 2 Kings xix. my soul was moved and affected; especially reading verse 14, and onward. I saw there was no other way for the afflicted children of God to take, but to go to God with all their sorrows. Hezekiah, in his great distress, went and spread his complaint before the Lord. I was then enabled to see the mighty power of God, and my extreme need of that power; was enabled to cry to him affectionately and ardently for his power and grace to be exercised towards me. — Afterwards read the story of David's trials, and observed the course he took under them, how he strengthened his hands in God; whereby my soul was carried out after God, enabled to cry to him, and rely upon him, and felt strong in the Lord. Was afterwards refreshed, observing the blessed temper that was wrought in David by his trials: all bitterness and desire of revenge seemed wholly taken away; so that he mourned for the death of his enemies; 2 Sam. i. 17. and iv. 9, ad fin. — Was enabled to bless God, that he had given me something of this divine temper, that my soul freely forgives and heartily loves my enemies. (Brainerd, November 10, 1743).

Brainerd endured significant hardship as a result of being expelled and struggled with internal feelings of

discouragement for nearly four years. How can he articulate his unhappy emotions after being unjustly denied the degree he earned and wrongfully accused? He candidly conveyed his disappointment, bewilderment, and helplessness, expressing concern about his ability to cope. He could only confront these issues, approach God, and express his sorrowful emotions. He completely freed himself from the harm that his enemies had caused as he advanced spiritually and achieved a significant internal victory:

In the morning spent (I believe) an hour in prayer, with great intensesness and freedom, and with the most soft and tender affection towards mankind. I longed that those who, I have reason to think, owe me ill will, might be eternally happy. It seemed refreshing to think of meeting them in heaven, how much so ever they had injured me on earth: had no disposition to insist upon any confession from them, in order to reconciliation, and the exercise of love and kindness to them. O it is an emblem of heaven itself, to love all the world with a love of kindness, forgiveness, and benevolence; to feel our souls sedate, mild, and meek; to be void of all evil surmisings and suspicions, and scarce able to think evil of any man upon any occasion; to find our hearts simple, open, and free, to those that look upon us with a different eye! — Prayer was so sweet an exercise to me, that I knew not how to cease, lest I should lose the spirit of prayer. Felt no disposition to eat or drink, for the sake of the pleasure of it, but only to support my nature, and fit me for divine service. Could not be content without a very particular mention of a great number of dear friends at the throne of grace; as also the particular circumstances of many, so far as they were known (Brainerd, March 3, 1744).

Prayed earnestly for dear Christians, and for those I have reason to fear are my enemies; and could not have spoken a word of bitterness, or entertained a bitter thought, against the vilest man living. Had a sense of my own great unworthiness. My soul seemed to breathe forth love and praise to God afresh, when I thought he would let his children love and receive me as one of their brethren and fellow-citizens. When I thought of their treating me in that manner, I longed to lie at their feet; and could think of no way to express the sincerity and simplicity of my love and esteem of them, as being much better than myself (Brainerd, March 10, 1744).

The above words of Brainerd exemplify true Christian tolerance, purity, and humility by advocating forgiveness even towards enemies. Brainerd's introspective account serves the purpose of bringing people together rather than dividing them, making it a commendable autobiography. It is impossible to forgive an opponent who has caused us profound shame and hurt due to our inherent human nature. Brainerd demonstrated that individuals who truly understand God's extensive compassion, patience, and forgiveness are capable of showing mercy to their enemies and accepting them with God's love. Brainerd channeled forgiveness toward his enemies, which ultimately healed his wounds of bitterness, resentment, and discouragement (Kang & Chung, 2013).

Brainerd's struggles, feelings of hopelessness, and eventual healing through his faith in God are recurring themes in *the Diary*. He was acutely conscious of his internal wrongdoing and felt profound sorrow. Brainerd evaluated his spirituality on October 18, 1740. His spirit became delicate during morning prayers as he experienced deep regret and sorrow for his significant wrongdoing and lack of purity. His deeds repulsed him to the core. It was at that very time. He was instinctively inclined towards God's love and came to understand that God loved him.

Brainerd's sayings are similar to Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine, in his autobiography, commended God by candidly and comprehensively critiquing his ego, like Brainerd. Humans possess exceptional cognitive abilities, unwavering resolve, and great emotional complexity. However, in the absence of God, these traits are often viewed as unethical, depraved, and detrimental. Augustine claimed that the sole way for the sinful, damaged, and destructive self to be restored is by meeting the Lord Jesus and imitating his life. It is a gripping story that depicts Augustine's relationship with God as well as his process of healing and restoration, and his articulation contains this story (Yang & Chung, 2023). Before his spiritual rebirth, Augustine was tempted to put serving humanity over serving God. People from all over the world sought recognition because they had a foolish desire for glory and were arrogant because of their knowledge. He placed human approval and acclaim over fearing God and was frightened about not being accepted. This lifestyle is deemed irreligious (Jeong & Chung, 2022;

Jeong et al., 2022).

Those living in the postmodern era who are struggling with feelings of anxiety, frustration, fear, loneliness, envy, jealousy, and various forms of avarice may be able to relate to the difficulties that Brainerd and Augustine spoke about in these works. Both authors acknowledged that their emotional distress, cognitive limitations, independence, unpredictable actions, and sexual curiosity are subjects that concern us. They imply that we are capable of achieving triumph over sin, finding solutions to problems, experiencing the delight of locating those who have been lost, and achieving genuine freedom and inner peace. We can express the same kind of belief that Augustine and Brainerd did. Augustine (397) confessed: “Dear Lord, You are truly magnificent and deserving of great praise. Your power is immense, and your wisdom knows no bounds. We, as human beings, are but a small part of Your creation (Kang & Chung, 2013a,b). We carry within us the weight of our mortality and the evidence of our sins.” Brainerd experienced despair because of his inadequacies, but he did not remain in that condition and instead found comfort in God. His distress hinted at the forthcoming abundance and love of God, with each segment ending with Christ's victory and God's comfort. Brainerd's diary calmly depicts this process, indicating that he organized his inner thoughts through writing and also discovered significant spiritual direction. Brainerd continued to keep his diary until just before he died, save during times of physical weakness when he couldn't write. The journal was probably an essential tool for him, along with prayer, to strengthen his bond with God and direct his confused inner self toward God:

It was Sunday. During the morning, I sensed a strong desire for righteousness within my soul. As I observed the bread and wine on the altar during the Holy Communion, I realized that Jesus Christ was symbolically present, as if being crucified before me. My soul was brimming with illumination and affection. I was nearly in a trance. My body grew so feeble that I could hardly sustain it. I have gained a deep love and strong empathy for all humanity. My spirit and all its force appeared to blend into the smell and softness, so to speak (Brainerd, October 19, 1740).

Following a time of severe debilitation, my health partially improved. I spent approximately two to three hours writing on biblical subjects. Engaging in sacred activities provided immense solace and happiness. My health improved slightly, and I gained significant spiritual fortitude, allowing me to participate in the Lord's work (Brainerd, September 1, 1744).

I wanted to write, but I felt feeble and confused. I did not feel as well as I had hoped. I was restless in the evening. I was thrilled. However, God soon provided him with sleep. I discovered tranquility in my thoughts. We have accomplished numerous tasks for God, both in public and private settings, with His assistance. I have achieved numerous accomplishments that would have been unattainable even if I had been in good health. The Blessed Holy Spirit regenerated my spirit; may your name be praised eternally. Amen (Brainerd, October 1, 1747).

His writings before his death indicate a growing closeness and unity with God. He was in God, and God was in him, and he ardently sought the glory of God through perfect love. He is transient like dew, reminiscent of the elderly man's dust.

IV. INFLUENCES OF BRAINERD'S DIARY

1. Jonathan Edwards

There was a theologian and preacher from the Reformed tradition named Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). Calvinism was his theological stance, as it was for the majority of Puritans. Edwards is generally considered to be among the most influential and groundbreaking intellectual theologians in American history. His role in the First Great Awakening was significant, and he presided over early revivals in his church at Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1733–1735 (Chung, 1996, 1998; McMahan, 2008). Edwards was Brainerd's mentor and close friend, with whom he shared a profound personal bond. Brainerd resided in the Edwards residence during his

final year. The two individuals conversed on the significance of global missions and also offered prayers for them. Brainerd's missionary vision and enthusiasm lived on in his diary, *The Life of David Brainerd*, edited by Edwards, despite his premature death. Professor Calhoun (2011) determined that this book, being the initial American biography, acted as a trigger to stimulate missionary efforts among various evangelical communities and lay leaders in Europe. This book was the top-selling Protestant religious book in the United States throughout the 19th century, with over 30 editions, and remains in print and available for purchase today.

2. John Wesley and Francis Asbury

The founder of the Methodist church, John Wesley (1703–1791), had the opportunity to witness and experience the intense evangelical passion that missionary Brainerd exhibited (Priestap, 2017). It was through Brainerd's testimony that John Wesley learned this. The Brainerd's exceptional degree of devotion was one of the many things that Wesley loved best about him. He proclaimed that every preacher should read Brainerd's *Diary* from beginning to end. According to Calhoun (2011), Wesley reportedly said that we should try to be more like Brainerd, who was completely unattached to material concerns and had an intense love for God and people. Alsgaard (2016) states that the British-American Methodist minister Asbury (1745–1816) highly esteemed Brainerd's journal and eagerly studied it at Wesley's encouragement.

3. Others

Even though Brainerd's *Diary* made a big splash in the 18th century, it was the 19th-century Protestant worldwide missions that felt its influence. To disseminate spiritual literature such as the Bible, the American Tract Society (ATS) was established in New York in 1825 (Twaddell, 2009). To unite all Christian groups, the ATS has called on churches and Christian organizations to put aside their differences and work together. The ATS was able to reach 70,000 people with Brainerd's *Diary* in the Americas from 1833 to 1892 thanks to partnerships like these. In 1769, Anglican clergyman and slavery abolitionist John Newton (1725–1807) commended Brainerd's works, stating that they were a testament to Brainerd's piety and dedication to God, and recommended that they be frequently read and valued (Turnbull, 2023). Newton believed that Brainerd should be recognized as a great missionary hero because of the significant influence he had, despite his missionary service lasting only five years. This compact book was essential in mobilizing missionaries from the United States and England to other parts of the world, heralding the start of a new chapter in missionary endeavors. Princeton Theological Seminary professor Archibald Alexander (1772–1851) stated that the Newside Presbyterian Church showed a growing dedication to missionary activity after Brainerd's journals were published.

The title "Father of Modern Missions" is frequently bestowed upon William Carey (1761–1834). It is difficult to exaggerate the impact he had on Protestant worldwide evangelism (Howell, 2023). He was mainly self-taught in terms of education and had a trade as a shoemaker. Inspiring both his aspirations and his independent study, a globe map adorned the wall of his workshop. He established Serampore College, India's oldest continuously running university, led a mission team that printed and translated the Bible into numerous Indian languages, and brought about significant social improvements. The title "Father of Modern Missions" is frequently bestowed upon William Carey (1761–1834). It is difficult to exaggerate the impact he had on Protestant worldwide evangelism (Howell, 2023; Kim & Chung, 2013). He was mainly self-taught in terms of education and had a trade as a shoemaker. Inspiring both his aspirations and his independent study, a globe map adorned the wall of his workshop. He established Serampore College, India's oldest continuously running university, led a mission team that printed and translated the Bible into numerous Indian languages, and brought about significant social improvements.

Cary considered Brainerd's *diary* to be as significant as the Bible. As foreign missionaries in the Indian mission, Carey and his colleagues committed to residing among the Indians, praying earnestly for their salvation, and emulating Brainerd's approach.

One of the most virtuous and gifted young preachers of his time, Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813–1843), was from Scotland. Nearly everyone who met the young pastor praised him as "the most Jesus-like man" they'd ever

encountered (Stone, 2023). After reading Brainerd's journal and experiencing the depth of Brainerd's spiritual life, he decided to become a dedicated evangelist.

Famous Scottish clergyman Dr. Horatius Bonar (1808–1899), who wrote hymns like "I heard the voice of Jesus say" and "Thy way, not mine, O Lord," thought Brainerd's life slammed modern Christianity for being superficial (Knapp, 2024). Bonar inspired us to think critically and work for personal growth by drawing on Brainerd's life story. Bonar claimed that Christians find constant encouragement in Brainerd's life story due to his remarkable intimacy with God. Readers may find motivation and thought-provoking aspects of Brainerd's life even after 250 years.

Between 1920 and 1950, Oswald J. Smith—the man who founded the Toronto People's Church—led a slew of evangelistic missions, one of which was a massive outreach to Latvia (Barnes, 2019). Additionally, he preached to Russians who had emigrated to Europe after the Revolution of 1917. Brainerd taught him the value of fasting and prayer. He concluded after much deliberation that if he wants to accomplish great things, it is more important to stay connected with God every day than to preach.

The pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, John Piper (2018), expressed his appreciation for the ministry of David Brainerd by stressing the significance of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, studying the Bible, relying on grace, enduring hardship, keeping one's focus on God's glory, and valuing God's Word. He confessed that Brainerd had taught him much about holiness, eternal principles, gospel preaching, healing from illness, and living an excellent life to the end. Leonard Woods, a 19th-century professor at Andover Seminary, praised Brainerd's *Diary* as the most accurate and reliable representation of practical religion, according to Grigg (2009).

V. CONCLUSION

Brainerd's journal is an autobiographical narrative that features a heartfelt expression of love between him and God. He did not write this to show off or boast. In terms of the theological concept of "lost and found," he went through a profound metamorphosis, going from a condition of uncertainty to a state of clarity. This transformation was remarkable because it recorded his introspective exploration, desire, and dedication to God. If Jonathan Edwards had not published *The Diary* after Brainerd's death, we would not have learned of Brainerd's deep spirituality. The funeral of a spiritual leader such as Brainerd would have been a tremendous loss for many people who sought comfort and motivation from his teachings while seeking personal spiritual development. Brainerd's *Diary* provides deep inspiration and revitalization for those who are fatigued and discouraged while navigating life through religion and grappling with their physical existence on this demanding planet. Brainerd encountered despair and discouragement, but he discovered solace in the presence, comfort, and peace of God, which he anticipated and encountered in the present. Brainerd's *Diary* is a great tool for individuals experiencing a transition from uncertainty to understanding, offering guidance in their spiritual quest.

Brainerd experienced a recognition of his sinful condition upon seeing Christ, leading to continuing sorrow as he sought redemption. He saw life as a sacred path towards sanctity, attained through comprehending and experiencing Christ. At times, we encounter obstacles, but we must persist in our quest for sanctification. He embarked on this road through prayer, gratitude, and intermittent weeping and remorse. After repenting, he felt a profound spiritual connection with God, humanity, and the universe. Brainerd's autobiography contains continuous contemplations and investigations concerning humanity and God that endure throughout his life. He prioritized his spiritual relationship with God over earthly concerns. He had deep sympathy for and love for sinful people, including himself and the Indians. He exemplified the principle of unity by forgiving his adversaries and aligning himself with God. Individuals engaging in Brainerd's introspective journey may discover deep comfort and encounter indescribable emotions as a result. This emotion triggers a change in us, leading to a craving for a specific way of living and a readiness to acquire knowledge from it.

Brainerd's *Diary* is a meticulously written autobiographical tale that meets all the criteria for an excellent autobiography. The primary goal of his journal is to captivate readers with Brainerd's narrative of his religion, motivate them to lead meaningful lives guided by a revitalized conscience, and ensure that their experiences

influence future generations to choose a similar faith. We think documenting our religious experiences and life stories helps many people make decisions.

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