

**INDIAN MISSIONARY REMINISCENCES:
PRINCIPALLY OF THE WYANDOT
NATION, IN WHICH IS EXHIBITED THE
EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL IN ELEVATING
IGNORANT AND SAVAGE MEN**

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CHARLES ELLIOTT

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INDIAN

MISSIONARY REMINISCENCES.

REMINISCENCE I.

John Steward the celebrated man, the apostle of the Wyandots—His conversion—Licensed to exhort—Remarkable dream—Sets out from Marietta toward the north-west—Arrives at Goshen among the Moravian Delawares—Journey to Pipetown—Incidents there.

JOHN STEWARD was born and raised in Powhattan county, Va. He was a free mulatto, and claimed kindred with the Indians. In the early part of his life, he lived without an experimental knowledge of religion. He could read and write but imperfectly, yet, after he became religious, he improved much in reading, so that he could read, with tolerable fluency and precision, his Bible and hymn book. Through the instrumentality of Methodist preaching, he was convinced of his sinfulness by nature and practice. He sought God earnestly, and found the pearl of great price, accompanied with the direct witness of his sonship, by the agency of the Holy Spirit; a clear sense of which he afterward retained. In his Christian experience he was very clear. This I learned from hearing him preach, pray, and exhort, frequently, as well as from frequent private conversations with him. He prayed much, and lived near to God.

He joined the Methodist Episcopal Church at Marietta, where he obtained the reputation of a consistent Christian. After some time, in consideration of his gifts, graces, and prospective usefulness, he was regularly licensed to *exhort*; and as an exhorter he laboured, especially among the people of his own colour, with acceptance and usefulness. Shortly after he was thus licensed, he esteemed it his duty to call sinners to repentance, in a more extended way than what falls ordinarily to the lot of exhorters. But as there is something altogether extraordinary connected with this man, a minute history of his early movements may not be unacceptable. With him I had frequent conversations respecting the first steps by which he was led to attempt to preach among the Indians.

About the time, or shortly after he commenced exhorting, he had a remarkable dream. And although dreams are uncertain directories, and are never to be followed, unless they have the authority of the revealed word to sanction what they teach, yet when they teach us what the Bible and common sense teach us, it is wise and safe to follow them. The only reason why we ascribe Steward's dream to a good cause, was, that the subsequent steps by which he was conducted lead us to the certainty of *facts*, which testify that his cause was one that was under the direction of the Almighty.

He dreamed that he was in a certain house, about to commence a religious meeting, and that an Indian man and woman, while he was sitting,

came into the house, clothed in particular garments—they came into the house in a peculiar manner—accosted him, and shook hands with him—retired and took their seats—and seemed to manifest peculiar earnestness and interest in respect to his message. He also gathered from them, that they invited him to go and preach for their people, who lived in a direction *north-west* from Marietta. This dream made an uncommon impression on his mind. And though he used many means to argue away its force, it still clung to him by day and by night. When he resisted the impression on his mind, he was afterward in a state of mental misery. But when he was determined to follow the indented impression of his mind, his peace and joy returned. He would frequently go into the woods and fields, to pray, and ask God for direction. It seemed to him as if he *heard* the voice of these two Indians continually, *saw* them always before his eyes, and heard their *invitation* to him, to come and preach to them, as well as their *warning* to preach the truth faithfully. He would sometimes seem to hear them praise God with sweetest voices. They still seemed to come from the north-west, and invited him to proceed in that direction. He would sometimes find himself standing on his feet, and addressing a congregation. A sense of his weakness and ignorance prevented him from attempting the contemplated journey, though his mind was continually drawn to travel toward the source from whence the voices came. The impression made daily on his

mind became stronger and stronger. And in consequence of having resisted this call, from a sense of his own insufficiency, the agitations of his mind so affected his body, that he was thrown into a severe fit of sickness. During his illness, and as he was recovering, he resolved, with God's help, that, should the Lord restore him, he would attempt the work which he believed it his duty to perform. When he thoroughly recovered, he firmly resolved to go, provided he would be enabled to pay some debts he had contracted before he experienced religion. This he was soon enabled to do, and commenced preparing to take his journey. He opened his mind on the subject to several members of the Church, but they generally viewed his impressions as merely imaginary. From this source he therefore either met with no encouragement, or with repulse. Here his difficulties again increased. And though he was convinced he *must go*, yet he had no person or Church authority to send him. The quarterly meeting conference justly enough supposed that the hazard was too great for them to venture any particular interference. At length he conversed with a certain class leader, one of his confidants, on the subject, and the leader gave him the following wise advice:—"Your impressions and sense of duty are so peculiar, that no Church authority can act just now in your case. But as you verily believe it is your duty to go somewhere north-west, and preach to the Indians, obey what you esteem to be the command of God. And probably you

may not be able to decide the question or ease your mind in any other way, than to attempt the work by commencing your journey." The leader and he prayed together, and being thus recommended to the grace of God by this pious man, he came to the determination to make the attempt.

Accordingly he commenced his journey. He had no purse, nor money to put in it, and had no clothes but those on his back, and these were of course material and somewhat worn. He had no license, permit or recommendation from any Church authority. He had no one to wish him God speed but the class leader. No large assemblies convened to hear speeches, make collections, or to join in prayer for him. The whole Methodist Episcopal Church was in a profound midnight sleep in regard to Indian missions, when John Steward, the *coloured man*, with his staff on his shoulder, to the end of which was tied the little coarse handkerchief or knapsack, which contained a couple of halfworn shirts, and a couple of thread-bare socks, none of which were ever after washed, except when, on his journey, or at Sandusky, he washed them with his own hands, without soap or smoothing, nor were they repaired by new ones—with his Testament, also, in one pocket, and his hymn book in the other—a small supply of bread and meat too made a part of his *outfit*. John Steward, the *coloured man*, thus set out from Marietta, not knowing whither he was going, except toward the north-west. Methinks I still see the picture

which he gave of his departure, when we conversed on this subject, in the fall of 1822. He proceeded from the town toward the north-west, leaving Zanesville on the left, sometimes following a road, when he thought it was in the right direction; at other times travelling in the pathless woods. When he supposed he was too far to the east, he inclined toward the west, and when he thought he was too far toward the west, he inclined more toward the east. Sometimes he would stop in the woods, pray to his heavenly Father, sing a hymn or two, or seat himself on a log, and read in his Testament. Thus he proceeded until he came to the Delaware Indians on the Tuscarawas River, at Goshen. These were the shattered remains of those who were so inhumanly butchered during the last war. They were murdered in cool blood, in the most barbarous manner, while at their devotions. They were Moravians. They received him kindly. He preached for them and remained several days among them. He told the minister of his call, who exhorted him to obey it. Steward thought, at first, that he had arrived at the end of his journey, but after he was there a few days, he believed that he must still proceed farther; that this was not the place where he was called to labour, and that there was yet some place north-west where he must go.

While at Goshen, Steward learned that there were Indians north-west of that place. He therefore determined to set out to find them. He had already travelled about 80 or 100 miles. The

distance still before him was about one hundred miles, and for the most part uninhabited, or at least very thinly. He proceeded on his journey as before. When he thought he was too far to the east, he took a more westwardly course, and when he found he was too far to the west, he changed his course more to the east. He lay several nights in the woods. Toward the head waters of the Mohican or Killbuck creek, he providentially found a welcome lodging with a pious class leader, who encouraged him much, and replenished his knapsack with a fresh supply of bread and meat. They spent a good part of the night in prayer, and Steward left his roof much encouraged to fill his mission. Some, whom he met, endeavoured to dissuade him from his undertaking, by informing him that the Indians could not be converted, and if they could, he could never be the instrument of their conversion. But these things did not move him: he still pursued his journey as before, until he arrived at Pipetown, on the Sandusky River, where a part of the Delaware Indians reside. It should also be remarked that during this journey he never omitted any opportunity of preaching, conversing with people on the subject of religion, or praying with them in the families where he stopped. When he entered a cabin in the wilderness, he had no money to offer them for entertainment: his only resource was, to declare the errand on which he was going, which, by the way, was not a popular one among the early settlers of Ohio. Yet his candid tone of sin-