TEN NEW ENGLAND LEADERS

BY

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IV.

JOHN ELIOT

ANYONE who glances over a general catalogue,

such as is issued by Andover Seminary, must be

struck first of all by the number of names of those

who, while faithful servants of God in their genera-

tion, have left little record among men. Few of us

can expect even a line in the biographical cyclopaedias

of a century hence. It is to that truer and more per-

fect record of those whose names are written in heaven

that we, most of us, must look for whatever memorial

is to abide of the fact that we have lived and labored

for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. But,

among the comparatively limited number of names

which arouse recollection as of historic moment as one

turns the pages of such a catalogue as I have men-

tioned, a few seem to exhale a peculiar fragrance that

inclines the reader to linger on them with special

regard. As one glances through the list of those con-

nected with Andover in the first three years of its ex-

istence, what pictures of consecration, of sacrifice, and

of endeavor the names of Adoniram Judson, Samuel

Newell, Gordon Hall, and Samuel J. Mills conjure up

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before the mental vision! The Church proves that it

has never lost the consciousness of that primal apos-

tolic commission in this, if in no other, way, that it

feels a special thrill of satisfaction as it contemplates

the lives of its missionaries. Its Pauls, its Columbas,

its Xaviers, its Careys, its Pattesons stand forth to

grateful recollection radiant with a peculiar charm

which attaches to none of its dogmaticians, teachers,

or administrators. So among the founders of New

England, the name of John Eliot, known since 1660

as the "apostle,"1 draws forth remembrances of the

most winsome aspects of Puritan character, and shines

with a luster distinctly its own among the leaders of

early Congregationalism.

John Eliot was the son of a yeoman, or middle-class

farmer, Bennett Eliot, a man of considerable property,

whose home was at Nazing, county of Essex some

sixteen miles almost directly north of London.2 But

though Nazing was John's boyhood home, the fact

that he was baptized at Widford, some ten or twelve

miles yet farther northward of London, on August 5,

1604, in the church of St. John Baptist, commemorated

'in Charles Lamb's well-known poem, The Grandame,

makes it probable that Widford was his birthplace,

since our modern fashion of delayed baptisms .did not

1 So first named by Thomas Thorowgood, see Dr. Ellsworth Eliot in   
Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography, ii., p. 321.   
2 See N. E. Hist, and Geneal. Register, xxviii., pp. 140-145.

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obtain in the England of that day. Widford, more-

over, was the place of the marriage of his parents,

October 30, 1598.1 Of his boyhood and early educa-

tion we know little. Cotton Mather has preserved a

single remark of Eliot's that shows his thankfulness in

old age for the memories of a religious home;2 but

whatever its degree of religious vigor, the spiritual life

of his parents' home would not appear to have inclined

to Puritanism, for, in March, 1619, he entered Jesus

College at Cambridge instead of the warmly Puritan

Emmanuel College of that University. While a stu-

dent here his father died, and left him L 8 a year for

the prosecution of his education.3 And here Eliot

graduated a Bachelor of Arts in 1622. What next em-

ployed his thoughts we do not know; but it would ap-

pear probable that he was ordained a minister of the

Church of England. Our first definite glimpse of him

after his graduation, however, is seven years later, at the

close of 1629, or the beginning of 1630, when we find

him assisting Rev. Thomas Hooker, afterward eminent

among the founders of Connecticut, in teaching a

school kept by Hooker for a few months at Little

Baddow,4 a country village about thirty miles northeast

of London.

1 See N. E. Hist, and Geneal. Register, xlviii., p. 80.   
2 Magnalia, i., p. 529.   
3 Buried November 21, 1621; will, November 5, 1621; N. E. Hist,   
and Geneal. Register, xxviii., p. 145; Dr. Ellsworth Eliot, as cited.   
4 Magnalia, i., p. 335.

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The circumstances which had compelled Hooker1 to

establish this school were typically illustrative of the

religious state of England. Thomas Hooker had grad-

uated at Emmanuel in 1608, and after further study and

service as catechist and lecturer at his *alma mater*, had

exercised a ministry of some years at Esher, a hamlet

of Surrey, till, in 1626, his fame as a preacher led to

his appointment as Puritan lecturer at Chelmsford.

These lectureships were a favorite device of the more

earnest Protestants of the opening years of the seven-

teenth century to secure a preaching ministry in par-

ishes where the legal incumbent was unable or unwilling

to give sermons to his people. Supplementary services

were conducted, occasionally with the full approval of

the legal rector, by ministers of sermonic ability, sup-

ported by the gifts of sympathetic hearers. And from

his Chelmsford pulpit Hooker preached a deep, search-

ing, spiritual, intensely Calvinistic and powerfully

awakening series of discourses that won him the sup-

port of the more earnest element of the region round

about. But Laud viewed the lectureship system as one

of the chief bulwarks of Puritanism, to the extirpation of

which he had set himself. In spite of the favorable pe-

tition of a large portion of his beneficed clerical neigh-

bors, Hooker was silenced in 1629; and, as a means

of earning his livelihood, took scholars into his fam-

ily in the quiet retreat of Little Baddow. Even this

1 See G. L. Walker, *Thomas Hooker*, pp. 18-51.

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occupation could not shield Hooker from Laud, and

in order to escape imprisonment, or worse, he had to

flee the country, finding refuge in Holland before the

close of 1630.

Eliot's experiences as Hooker's “usher,” or assist-

ant, in the Little Baddow school were therefore brief;

but short as the time of this association was it was

permanently influential in his religious life. As Eliot

himself later said of his sojourn in Hooker's household:1

“To this place I was called, through the infinite riches   
of God's mercy in Christ Jesus to my poor soul: for here   
the Lord said unto my dead soul, live ; and through the   
grace of Christ, I do live, and I shall live forever! When   
I came into this blessed family I then saw, and never   
before, the power of godliness in its lively vigour and   
efficacy.”

Eliot's conversion evidently made him fully a Puri-

tan, if he had not been so before; and he seems to

have entered into an agreement with friends,2 some of

whom were from his home village of Nazing, to be a

pastor to them if possible in the New World. He

doubtless felt that the opposition which drove his

friend and spiritual father, Thomas Hooker, into exile

would make it impossible for him to exercise an effi-

cient ministry in England. Accordingly, leaving his

“intended wife” to follow him,3 he sailed in the Lyon,

1 *Magnalia*, i., p. 336.   
2 See his own statement in *Roxbury Church Records, in Report of the   
Record Commissioners*, City of Boston, Document 114, p. 76.   
3 Ibid.

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and, after a voyage of ten weeks' duration, landed at

Boston, November 4, 1631.1

The time of Eliot's arrival in Boston was opportune.

The teacher of the Boston church, John Wilson, had

sailed for a temporary sojourn in England in April pre-

vious, and the Boston congregation gladly welcomed

Eliot's services. Eliot himself became one of its

members, and on Wilson's return, in 1632, the Boston

church urged upon Eliot with insistence the position

of association in its pastorate which was a year later

bestowed on John Cotton.2 Eliot felt himself bound

to his English friends, some of whom had settled at

Roxbury, where a church had been formed in July,

1632, of which Rev. Thomas Welde had been made

pastor. On the call of this church in the November

following its organization, just a twelvemonth after

his arrival in Boston, Eliot entered on the office of

“teacher” at Roxbury, which he was to occupy for

more than fifty-seven years.3 He had already gone to

Roxbury to live some months before his settlement,

for the first marriage recorded in that place is that of

Eliot, on September 4, 1632, to Hanna Mumford, the

betrothed bride who had followed him from England,

a woman of remarkable abilities and consecration of

spirit, a true helper to him in his life work, of whom

1 Winthrop, i., pp. 76, 77, 80.   
2 Ibid., i., p. in. He was offered the teachership.   
3 Ibid.; *Roxbury Church Records*, p. 76.

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he could say, as she lay in her coffin after fifty-five

years of companionship, that she was a “dear, faithful,

pious, prudent, prayerful wife.”1 Indeed, it was to

her careful management of his worldly affairs that

Eliot owed whatever measure of outward comfort a

very moderate measure be it said that he attained.

Like Jonathan Edwards or Nathanael Emmons after

him, he believed business cares incompatible with the

ministerial office, and so absurdly divorced himself

from all concerns in his own property, that he did not

even know his own cattle as they stood before his

study window.2 Fortunately for him his wife was

competent to supply his deficiencies in household

economics.

But, however indifferent to his own pecuniary wel-

fare, as a pastor Eliot gave himself unsparingly to his

people. His long ministry was not unaided. From

his settlement in 1632 to 1641, Thomas Welde was his

associate, and indeed his superior in public repute, as

was natural for one older in years and in ministerial ex-

perience. From 1649, till death removed him in 1674,

Samuel Danforth was Eliot's younger colleague; and

in 1688, near the close of Eliot's long life, Nehemiah

Walter was installed by his side; but the enumeration

of these bare names and dates shows how large a por-

tion of pastoral labor came to Eliot's constant share.

Whatever honor is his as a missionary, it should not

1 *Magnolia*, i., p. 529. 2 Ibid,, i., p. 5380

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be forgotten that he was always a pastor, and that the

great toils which his missionary service brought him

were in addition to the strenuous duties of a parish.

No man could have endured such labors had he not

been blessed, as was Eliot, with good health, and that

basis of good health, a cheerful disposition.1 The ex-

pressions of this temperament which have been re-

corded sound a good deal like cant to our time, when

direct religious allusions fall so seldom from our reluc-

tant lips; but they did not sound so then, nor did they

so impress the men of early New England. On the

contrary, they admired his “singular skill of raising

some holy observation out of whatever matter of dis-

course lay before him.”2 Thus, as he climbed wearily

up the hill to his meeting-house, Cotton Mather records

that he said to the man on whose arm he leaned:3

“This is very like the way to heaven, 't is uphill,”

and glancing at a bush by the wayside, he instantly

added, “and truly there are thorns and briars in the

way, too.” The same capacity to draw a lesson from

every-day occupations is shown in his remark to a man

of business whose account books he saw on the table,

while the religious books were in a case against the

wall:4 “Sir, here is earth on the table, and heaven on

the shelf; let not earth by any means thrust heaven out

of your mind." But perhaps Eliot's constant sweet-

ness and kindliness of temper, as well as his transparent

1 *Magnalia*, i., p. 532. 2 Ibid. 3 Ibid., i., p. 533. 4 Ibid., i., p. 534.

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fidelity to fact, most appears in his elaborately kept

church records, from which I quote but a single entry,

illustrative of the spirit of many others. Eliot is not-

ing the death of a member of his Roxbury parish:l

“William Chandler he came to N. E. aboute the yeare   
1637 ... he lived a very religious & Godly life among   
us, & fell into a consumption, to wh he had bene long in-   
clined, he lay neare a yeare sick, in all wh time, his faith,   
patiens, & Godlynesse & contentation so shined, yt Christ   
was much gloryfied in him, he was a man of weak pts, but   
excellent fath & holyness, he was a very thankfull man, &   
much magnified Gods goodnesse, he was pore, but God so   
opened the hearts of his naybe to him, yt he never wanted   
yt wh was (at least in his esteeme) very plentifull & com-   
fortable to him; he dyed ... in the yeare 1641, &   
left a sweet memory & savor behind him.’

The man who penned such records as these cannot

have been other than a good pastor, nor can anyone

doubt what interests he placed first.

Eliot's charity to the poorer members of his flock

was unfailing, and far out of proportion to his means

as charity is ordinarily bestowed even by the generous.

The story is told that one of the officers of the Rox-

bury church, knowing Eliot's freedom in gifts, on one

occasion tied up the portion of his salary paid to him

firmly in a handkerchief lest the pastor should part

with any of it before reaching home. On his home-

ward way Eliot visited a family in distress, and as the

1 *Roxbury Church Records*, p. 83.

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pastoral call lengthened his eagerness to aid increased,

till, fumbling in vain at the knots that he could not

loosen, he at last handed the handkerchief and all its

contents to the mother of the household with the

exclamation: “There, there, take it all. The Lord

evidently meant it all for you.”1

Eliot's public prayers had a directness almost as

marked as those of President Finney. When Captain

William Foster of Charlestown and his son Isaac, later

pastor of the First Church in Hartford, were captured

by the Mohammedans on a voyage in 1671, and it be-

came known to their friends that the ruler of the terri-

tory where the Fosters were slaves probably some

part of Algiers had declared that he would never let

his captives go, Eliot prayed:2

“Heavenly Father, work for the redemption of thy poor   
servant Foster; and if the prince which detains him will   
not, as they say, dismiss him as long as himself lives. Lord,   
we pray thee to kill that cruel prince; kill him, and glorify   
thy self upon him.”

And this prayer his congregation believed they saw an-

swered in the speedy death of the piratical ruler and

the release of the captives. So, too, Eliot spoke out

freely in prayer that love of schools which made Rox-

bury eminent, under his care, for its excellent instruc-

tion. At the Reforming Synod of 1679, he uttered

the petition:

1 I Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc., x., p. 186.   
2 For these illustrations, see *Magnalia*, i., pp. 544, 551.

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“Lord, for schools everywhere among us! That our   
schools may flourish! That every member of this assembly   
may go home, and procure a good school to be encouraged   
in the town where he lives! That before we die, we may   
be so happy as to see a good school encouraged in every   
plantation of the country.”

No picture of Eliot would be true that did not recog-

nize another trait, at least of his old age; he made

the impression of being an old-fashioned man. I sup-

pose every age has looked back on its predecessor,

sometimes with truth, as a time of simpler faith and

more strenuous habits. It does, indeed, seem odd

enough to the eye of the modern reader, to see the

page which Governor Bradford wrote in the rude set-

tlement of Plymouth, half-wrested from the wilderness,

where, after describing the plain garb of one of the

Congregational confessors of his early youth, he asks,1

“What would such professors, if they were now

living, say to the excesses of our times?” The ques-

tion is wellnigh as old as humanity. But, undoubt-

edly, Eliot seemed to the men of the third generation

on New England soil kin to a simpler, as he certainly

was to a more heroic, age. His great moderation at

the table was noticeable even in those days of plain

living; his strict observance of the Sabbath, and his

careful preparation for it, were remarked as unusual

even in that age of Puritan strenuousness;2 and Cotton

1 Dialogue, in Young*, Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 447.   
2 *Magnalia*, i., pp. 535, 538.

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Mather, whose full wig showed his conformity to the

supposedly becoming fashions of his age, records that

such was Eliot's preference for the natural and unsup-

plemented covering of the head, which the Puritan

custom of the Roxbury teacher's youth had preferred,

that “he would express himself continually with a

boiling zeal” at sight of examples of what he deemed

a heaven-provoking excess.1 But Eliot was no intol-

erant bigot; on the contrary, few in New England at

that day would have shown the charity that he did, in

1650, in inviting a visiting French Jesuit missionary,

Gabriel Druillettes, to spend the winter as an inmate

of his house.2

Eliot's interest in public and ecclesiastical concerns

was always marked. His share in the preparation of

the Bay Psalm Book of 1640 has already been pointed

out in treating of Richard Mather. But regarding his

more ambitious attempts to suggest an improved or-

ganization of political and religious society it is no

dishonor to his memory to suggest that an undue in-

sistence on the permanent and binding authority of the

institutions of the Jewish state, and a want of any

considerable degree of statesman-like insight into the

conditions of the political life in which his lot was cast,

rendered his speculations more curious than valuable.

This is conspicuously true of his tract on government,

1 *Magnalia*, i. , p. 540.   
2 Palfrey, *History of New England*, ii., p. 308, See ante p. 41.

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published, in 1659,1 at London, under the title of *The*

*Christian Commonwealth*, though written seven or eight

years earlier.2 In this essay he lays down the basal

principle3 that

“the Lord Jesus will bring down all people, to be ruled   
by the Institutions, Laws, and Directions of the Word of   
God, not only in Church Government and Administrations   
but also in the Government and Administration of all   
affairs in the Commonwealth.”

The organic rule for the appointment of civil officers

he finds in Exodus xviii. 25; and from that passage he

deduces the principle that rulers of tens, of fifties, of

hundreds, of thousands, of ten thousands, of fifty

thousands, and so on should be appointed, each with

judicial and administrative authority over his subdi-

vision ; and that each, together with the officers of the

next grade immediately under him, should constitute

a court of justice the lowest court being that of the

ruler of tens, the next higher being that of the ruler of

fifties, together with the five rulers of tens included in

his fifty, and so on till over all the “Chief Ruler,”

chosen by the people, and assisted by his “Supreme

Council,” was reached. Of this reconstructed state

the Bible was to be the sole statute book. The plan

1 J. H. Trumbull, *Brinley Sale Catalogue*, No. 570.   
2 See *Records of . . . Mass*., iv., part ii., 6. The whole tract is   
reprinted in *3 Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc*., ix., pp. 127-164.   
3 *Christian Commonwealth*, Preface.

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was fantastic enough as applied to a country of com-

plex social organization and ancient political traditions

like England, though Eliot carried it out as far as pos-

sible in the regulation of the political affairs of his

Indian converts. But the Massachusetts government,

anxious for its own liberties which were imperilled by

the restoration of the Stuarts, condemned the book in

May, 1661, and ordered its suppression “as justly offen-

cive . . . to kingly government in England.”1 Eliot

expressed his disavowal of certain expressions in the

book that seemed to reflect on the restored monarchy in

a manly letter,2 which speaks the tone of sincerity.

But though Eliot might renounce the full application

of his theories to civil affairs, he was much enamored

of his plan of subdivisions and graded courts therein

outlined, so that, in 1665, he printed his Communion

of Churches, in which he carried very similar principles

over to the realm of ecclesiastical affairs. Perhaps his

experiences with the Massachusetts legislature already

narrated inclined Eliot now to caution, for the volume

was not published, and is accounted the first “pri-

vately printed American book.”3 In this tract Eliot

proposed that every twelve churches should unite in a

“first council,” composed of pastors and delegates,

and meeting once a month at least; twelve “first

councils” should, in turn, send a chosen pastor and a

1 *Records of . . . Mass*., iv., part ii., p. 5. 2 *Ibid*. f p. 6.   
3 J. H. Trumbull, in *Brinley Sale Catalogue*, No. 760.

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delegate to a quarterly “provincial council”; twelve

“provincial councils” should in the same way send

representatives to a yearly “national council,” and

twelve “national councils” might be represented in

the same fashion in an “oecumenical council,” the de-

liberations of which might be conducted in Hebrew.1

It is needless to say that this fanciful outline of church

polity found as scanty acceptance as Eliot's proposed

reconstitution of civil government. He could not

have done the work of Thomas Hooker or of John

Cotton.

Eliot's fame rests on none of the publications just

described, but primarily on his labors as a missionary,

though as a pastor he would well have deserved com-

memoration had he never preached to the Indians.

The thought of labor for the Indians of the New

World did not originate with Eliot. To say nothing

of the missionary efforts of the Spaniards to which

all America from California southward bears witness

to this day, or of that bright page of heroism and sac-

rifice which French Jesuits wrote as the chief glory of

the early history of Canada, the English colonists,

both of Pilgrim and of Puritan antecedents, had it as

one of their main aims in coming to America to carry

1 I have taken this epitome from Dexter, *Cong, as Seen*, pp. 509, 510.   
Eliot would provide for fractions by counting each group of more than   
twelve and less than twenty-four, as twelve; a device that had already   
appeared in his *Christian Commonwealth*, where, for instance, a " ruler   
of ten " may rule over any number from ten to nineteen.

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the Gospel to the native inhabitants. But no syste-

matic plan had been adopted for so doing, and the

task of founding homes in the new country proved of

such difficulty that little attention could be given at

first to the Christianization of the Indians. The lan-

guage, moreover, was a formidable barrier, and even

more the dissimilarity of thought between a civilized

and a barbarous race. The Indians were accessible

with difficulty save on the side of trade; to go among

them, to become acquainted with them in any sense

that would render an Englishman familiar with their

thoughts, and permit the impartation of religious

truth, implied days and nights in filthy wigwams,

loathsome fare, and deprivations not merely of the

comforts but of the decencies of life, such as few, how-

ever willing to make the sacrifices involved in setting

up a home in the new land, cared to undergo. The

Puritans from the first treated the Indians with con-

sideration and tried to protect them by law. In spite

of the short, sharp struggle with the Pequots in 1637,

New England feeling did not turn strongly upon the

Indians as a race to be guarded against, as against the

wolf and the lynx, till after the outbreak of Philip's

War in 1675. But the two peoples were apart, mutu-

ally misunderstanding each other, and finding any

terms of intercourse difficult save those on the level of

the exchange of the skins of the beaver and the otter,

for the cloth, the knives, the kettles, and too often the

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muskets and the rum, of newcomers to New England

soil.

The first New Englander who made protracted and

successful effort to master the language of the Indians

of eastern Massachusetts was that eccentric, opinion-

ated, yet in many ways far-seeing and devotedly Chris-

tian man, Roger Williams.1 As early as 1632, it would

appear that Williams had begun to acquire an Indian vo-

cabulary. On this task he labored while ministering at

Plymouth, and he continued the work after his removal

to Salem, so that by the time of his settlement at Provi-

dence in 1636, after his banishment from Massachu-

setts, he had a considerable command of the dialects

of the tribes of the region a linguistic acquaintance

which proved of great value to the colonies, as a whole,

in the negotiations consequent upon the Pequot war

the year following. The fruit of these studies was the

publication, in 1643, of Williams's Key into the Language

of America, a word and phrase list, principally in the

Narragansett dialect, that is our best monument of the

colloquial speech of the aboriginal inhabitants of south-

eastern New England. Williams's purpose in all this

labor was to carry the Gospel to the Indians; but

though he preached to them, as he tells his readers,

many hundred times, and not without results, he did

not undertake systematic missionary work in the exec-

1 See the Preface, by J. Hammond Trumbull, to Williams's *Key into   
the Language of America, in Publ. Narragansett Club*, i.

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utive and organizing spirit that the situation demanded

for any permanent success.1

Now it was just this patient, persistent, consecrated

endeavor that Eliot gave. Just what circumstances

induced him to undertake his work among the Indians

it is hard to say. The time was not blind to the mis-

sionary duty, for on November 13, 1644, the Massa-

chusetts legislature had directed the county courts to

see to it that the Indians in their several jurisdictions

were “instructed in y e knowledge & worship of God.”2

Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, had

been interested in efforts for the Indians certainly

since 1641.3 Some instances of the conversion of In-

dians had already occurred and had been narrated in

*New Englands First Fruits*, published in 1643. But

there is no reason to question Eliot's own belief, what-

ever earthly causes may have conduced to the result,

that “God first put into [his] my heart a compassion

for their poor souls and a desire to teach them to know

Christ and to bring them into his Kingdom.”4 His

first step in preparation was the reception into his

household of a young Indian servant, who had acquired

some knowledge of English, that by his aid he might

1 In 1674 Daniel Gookin wrote: “God hath not yet honored him   
[Williams], or any other in that colony [Rhode Island] that I can hear   
of, with being instrumental to convert any of the Indians.” Palfrey,   
*Hist. N. E*., ii., 195, 196.   
2 *Records of . . . Ma*ss., ii., p. 84.   
3 Lechford, *Plaine Dealing*, pp. 152, 153.   
4 Quoted by A. C, Thompson, *Protestant Missions*, p. 57.

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master the dialect of the Massachusetts tribe.1 By this

help the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments

were translated ; and Eliot was ready to begin his mis-

sionary work.

His first attempt, of which we know little, appears

to have been discouraging. About the middle of Sep-

tember, 1646, he sought out some Indians under

Chutchamaquin in Dorchester; but they showed little

interest in his message, and asked him questions as to

the cause of thunder, the nature of the tides, and the

source of the wind, instead of those more spiritual in-

terrogations which he hoped to awaken.2 But Eliot

was not discouraged and soon repeated his missionary

efforts in another quarter; this time with success.

An account of those beginnings, probably from the

pen of Rev. Thomas Shepard, of Cambridge, was

printed in London in 1647,3 and though very familiar,

is of such interest and importance that I shall not hesi-

tate to quote freely from it.

It was “upon October 28, 1646,” the narrative

states, that “four of us” went to Waaubon's wigwam,

at Nonanturn, in the northern part of what is now

1 Eliot, *Indian Grammar*, p. 66.   
2 *The Day-Breaking*, p. 3 (see following note).   
3 The story of this first missionary undertaking is told in *The Day-   
Breaking, if not the Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-   
England*, London, 1647. Dr. J. H. Trumbull ascribed its authorship   
to Shepard, *Brinley Sale C*at., No. 445; Palfrey thought the author   
Rev. John Wilson of Boston, *Hist, of New England*, ii., p. 191 ; and   
it has been attributed to Eliot himself, though page 18 of the tract   
shows that this is incorrect.

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Newton, and “found many . . . Indians, men,

women, children, gathered together,” at Waaubon's

invitation. In their hearing Eliot, or one of his com-

panions, began the work with prayer, “which now

was in English, being not so farre acquainted with the

Indian language as to expresse our hearts herein before

God.” Then Eliot, using the scarce familiar speech

of the Massachusetts aborigines, preached “for about

an houre and a quarter” a time none too long for the

contents of the sermon for the narrative records that

“he ran through all the principall matter of religion, be-   
ginning first with a repetition of the ten Commandments,   
and a briefe explication of them, then shewing the curse   
and dreadfull wrath of God against all those who brake   
them . . . and then preached Jesus Christ to them the   
onely meanes of recovery from sinne and wrath and eternall   
death, and what Christ was, and whither he was now gone,   
and how hee will one day come againe to judge the world in   
flaming fire; and of the blessed estate of all those that by   
faith beleeve in Christ . . . the creation and fall of   
man, about the greatnesse and infinite being of God, . . .   
about the joyes of heaven, and the terrours and horrours   
of wicked men in hell, perswading them to repentance for   
severall sins which they live in, and many things of the like   
nature; not medling with any matters more difficult.”

Questions being asked for at the end of the sermon,

the four companions felt that six queries that were

propounded by their Indian auditors were so serious

and pertinent as to indicate some special directing

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influence of God. The first inquiry was that funda-

mental question, “How may wee come to know Jesus

Christ?” To which Eliot answered that such know-

ledge came by reading or hearing the Word of God, by

meditation, and by prayer. This last-named sugges-

tion led to the query, “Whether Jesus Christ did

understand, or God did understand, Indian prayers”;

to which Eliot gave the only answer possible to a

Christian, that “Jesus Christ and God by him made

all things, and makes all men, not onely English but

Indian men, and if hee made them both . . . then

hee knew all that was within man and came from man.

If hee made Indian men, then he knows all

Indian prayers also.” Next came that query, so often

asked of missionaries the world over, and so difficult

to answer: “Whether English men were ever at any

time so ignorant of God and Jesus Christ as them-

selves?” To this Eliot replied “that there are two

sorts of English men, some are bad and naught . . .

and in a manner as ignorant of Jesus Christ as the

Indians now are; but there are a second sort of Eng-

lish men, who though for a time they lived wickedly

also . . . yet repenting of their sinnes, and seek-

ing after God and Jesus Christ, they are good men

now.” The remaining questions had to do with the

nature of idols, the possibility of the acceptance by

God of the good son of a bad father, and the peopling

of the world after the Deluge.

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I have entered thus fully into an account of this first

meeting because it shows the type of preaching of

these missionaries. Nor was it without speedy results.

On November 28th, after a third meeting had been

held at Waaubon's wigwam, some of his dusky hearers

came to Eliot's house, confessing their sins, and offer-

ing their children for Christian education,1 and Waau-

bon himself was reported to have begun the practice

of prayer.

Eliot did not confine his efforts to these spiritual

instructions alone. Like more modern missionaries in

Central Africa or the Pacific islands, he felt that civil-

ization and education must go hand in hand as insep-

arable companions with evangelization. At this first

meeting the Indians had asked him that land be as-

signed them for a permanent town.2 That request,

seconded by Thomas Shepard of Cambridge and John

Allin, the minister at Dedham, who were probably

two of Eliot's three companions in his Nonantum

visit, the Massachusetts legislature granted about a

week after the missionary sermon just described, the

purpose being “for ye incuragmt of ye Indians to live

in an orderly way amongst us.”3 At the same time

the Massachusetts legislature practically became the

first missionary society in the English colonies, direct-

ing the ministers to choose two of their number

1 *Day-Breaking*, pp. 19, 20.   
2 *Ibid*., p. 7. 3 *Records of , . . Ma*ss., ii., p. 166.

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annually to labor among the Indians, and promising

assistance in the work. 1 Six months later May, 1647

the legislature voted Eliot L 10 “in respect of his

greate paines & charge in instructing ye Indians in

ye knowledg of God.”2 So generally interested were

the ministers in the work that, on the occasion of the

second session of the Cambridge Synod in June, 1647,

Eliot preached in its presence, in their own language,

to a large concourse of Indians.3 Contributions began

to come in from Puritan sympathizers in England.

One donation had, indeed, anticipated Eliot's work,

that of Lady Armine, a granddaughter of the Earl of

Shrewsbury, who had given 20 a year as early as

1644, for the evangelization of the Indians a sum

which the Massachusetts legislature in May, 1647,

appropriated to Eliot's enterprise.4

So strong was the interest excited in England by the

printed accounts of these missionary beginnings, that,

on July 19, 1649, less than six months after the execu-

tion of King Charles I., the Long Parliament passed

an act incorporating the first English foreign mission-

ary society, under the name of the " President and

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New

1 *Records of . . . Mass*., ii., pp. 178, 179.   
2 *Ibid*., ii., p. 189.   
3 Winthrop, ii., p. 376.   
4 See *Some Correspondence between the Governors and Treasurers of   
the New England Company*, etc., p. ix., London, 1896 ; also *Records of   
. . . Mass*., ii., p. 189.

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England,” with power to hold lands to the yearly

value of L 2000, and the right to collect money through-

out England and Wales. 1 The response amounted to

the then unprecedented sum of L 11,430, and the Soci-

ety which thus came into being continues to the present

day, though its principal labors since the war of Ameri-

can independence have been confined to Canada. This

Society made the Commissioners by which the four

Congregational colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts,

Connecticut, and New Haven were represented in the

loose political confederacy in which they had been

joined since 1643, its direct agents in superintending

the work. By 1658 the Society was spending L 520 a

year in New England, of which Eliot received L 50, as

his salary. 2 That year the Society paid L 190 for the

education of nine Indian young men at Roxbury and

Cambridge, and, besides the stipend to Eliot, seven in-

habitants of New England of English parentage and

seven Indians were paid, in 1658, for various forms of

missionary labor. 3 All this activity implied wide in-

terest in the work on the part of the people of England

and of New England alike; but it was not without its

vigorous opponents in both lands, as useless, result-

less, and a waste of money needed for religious effort

at home.

1 See *History of the New England Company*, etc., pp. I, 2, London,   
1871 ; Palfrey, *History of New England*, ii., pp. 197-199.   
2 Palfrey, ii., pp. 332, 333.   
3 *Ibid*.

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I have already pointed out that, with Eliot, Chris-

tianity, civilization, and learning were inseparably

united, and that, at the beginning of his missionary

endeavor he sought to gather his converts into a town

on the English model. But Nonantum, where this set-

tlement was first made, proved unsuitable, and there-

fore, in July, 1650, a more ambitious village was begun

at Natick. Here houses were built, chiefly by Indian

labor, gardens and orchards planted, and a combined

schoolhouse and meeting-house erected. For the

government of the little community the Indians were

encouraged to choose, in 1651, rulers of tens, of fifties,

and a ruler of a hundred; a pattern of civil government

which, as we have already seen, Eliot urged upon

England a little later as that prescribed by the Scrip-

tures. Here, after long testing, a church was estab-

lished, on the Congregational model, in 1660, which

numbered fifty Indian members by 1674, and to which

Eliot preached, while his health permitted, once in

two weeks, though before the close of his life, it came

under the charge of a native Indian pastor. 1

Eliot felt keenly the need of education for the spirit-

ual training of his disciples, and there is no more self-

denying or more successful endeavor in the annals of

American missionary labor than that he made to give

to his pupils the Word of God. Save for the

1 *Magnalia*, i., pp. 564-566; Palfrey, ii., pp. 336, 338, iii., p. 141. See   
also, *A Late and Further Manifestation*, pp. 1-6. London, 1655.

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phrase-book of Roger Williams, the Indian dialects of

New England were unwritten; their structure was pecu-

liarly difficult from a grammatical point of view; their

literature was wholly to be created. That one who was

all his New England life a busy pastor of an English-

speaking congregation, and, also, from 1646 onward,

an active evangelist among the Indians not only at

Nonantum and Natick but over a wide stretch of the

eastern portion of Massachusetts, should find time also

for such an immense labor in the study of the vocabu-

lary, grammar, and idioms of the Massachusetts dialect,

and for so prolific and creditable publication of trans-

lations into that tongue, is one of the marvels of mis-

sionary accomplishment. How he strengthened himself

for such toil, he expressed in one of his volumes in a

phrase that gives the key to his industry and courage:

“Prayers and pains through faith in Christ Jesus will

do anything.”1 And what Eliot accomplished as a

translator alone constitutes a monument of which any

scholar might be proud.

His first work in the Indian language was a Cate-

chism which he published in i654.2 It enjoys the dis-

tinction of being the first volume in the Indian tongue to

be printed in New England ; though, unhappily for the

collector, every copy has disappeared. But the volumes

1 *Magnalia*, i., 562, from Eliot's *Indian Grammar*.   
2 Dexter, *Cong, as Seen*, Bibl., 1661. Was it the Catechism used at   
Roxbury, June 13, 1654, and printed in English in *A Late and Further   
Manifestation*, pp. 11-20?

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on which Eliot's fame as a translator chiefly rests were

his New Testament of 1661, and his complete Bible of

1663. I can, of course, express no personal estimate

of the qualities of this version. So utterly has the

Massachusetts race and its speech perished from among

men, that few are able to read Eliot's Bible; though

probably it is not quite true to say, as used to be said

during the lifetime of the late Dr. J. Hammond Trum-

bull, that only he could do so. But Dr. Trumbull,1

whose competency as a judge no one will criticise,

affirmed regarding Eliot's Bible that it was

“a marvellous triumph of scholarship; achieved in the face   
of difficulties which might well have appeared insurmount-   
able. It may be doubted if, in the two centuries which   
have elapsed since the Indian Bible was printed, any trans-   
lation of the sacred volume has been made from the English   
to a foreign tongue of more literal accuracy and complete-   
ness. If a different impression has been popularly received,   
slight study of the Indian text will. suffice to remove it."

It was deemed the great honor of William Carey

that he was the translator of the Bible into the lan-

guages of India; can we give Eliot less meed of praise?

Eliot's Indian Bible was only the beginning of a

series of translations and publications in the Indian

speech. Bound up with the volume was a translation

of the Psalms in meter. The year 1664 saw the

1 Trumbull in Pub. *Narragansett Club*., i., pp. 6, 7 ; see also regard-   
ing this Indian literature, Trumbull's chapter in *Memorial History of   
Boston*, i., pp. 465 sqq.

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putting forth by Eliot, in Indian dress, of Baxter's *Call*

*to the Unconverted*; in 1665, a translation of Bishop

Bayly's *Practice of Piety* was issued; in 1666 there fol-

lowed Eliot's *Indian Grammar Begun*; and, in 1669,

his *Indian Primer*; the year 1680 saw a second edi-

tion of the New Testament, and in 1685 of the whole

Bible; and, finally, in 1689, Eliot put forth a transla-

tion of Shepard's Sincere Convert. These volumes

were printed at the New England Cambridge, and

chiefly, if not entirely, at the expense of the English

Society, which thus supplied Christian literature, as

well as tools and other material instruments of civiliza-

tion to the Indian converts.1 Of course this literature

demanded instruction in reading; and therefore Eliot

made the schoolmaster as prominent as the minister in

his Indian settlements.

It is evident that a movement of such widespread

interest as that in which Eliot was a leader could be

confined to no one portion of New England. He was

indeed the foremost always in leadership and service;

but many others were associated with him, or entered

independently into the missionary enterprise moved

by the secret promptings of the Divine Spirit. Of

these the most conspicuous, perhaps, were the two

Thomas Mayhews, father and son, of Martha's Vine-

yard. There the work had begun, almost without

1 For an example of some expenditures of the Society, see N. E. Hist,   
and Geneal. Register, xxxvi., pp. 297-299.

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effort, in 1643, by the awakening of Hiacoomes, one

of the leading Indians; and in 1646, the same year

that Eliot began his work at Nonantum, the younger

Mayhew commenced systematic efforts for the Chris-

tianization of his Indian neighbors.1 After the death

of this missionary the undertaking was carried on by

his father, and in turn by his son, grandson, and great-

grandson, till the demise of the latter in 1806, making

this record of five generations the longest chain of

hereditary endeavor in the annals of missions.2 This

labor on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket was re-

markably successful. By 1651 Mayhew could report

one hundred and ninety-nine converts, and in 1670, a

church was formed on Martha's Vineyard,3 that was

soon followed by several others on the islands of this

group. In all this work the same English Society

that aided Eliot lent its assistance from 1651 onward.

Other, though smaller centers of activity developed

on Cape Cod, at Marshpee, where a church was formed

under Richard Bourne about 1670,4 and at Eastham,

where Rev. Samuel Treat long labored for the spiritual

good of the Indians.5 At Plymouth, the pastor of the

old Pilgrim church from 1669 to 1697, John Cotton,

1 See Mayhew's letter in *A Farther Discovery of the Present State of   
the Indians*, pp. 3-13. London, 1651.   
2 A. C. Thompson, *Protestant Missions*, p. 87.   
3 *Magnalia*, ii., p. 431.   
4 *Ibid*., i., p. 567.   
5 Sibley, *Graduates of Harvard*, ii., pp. 305-307.

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son of the more famous John, did much for the In-

dians, and helped to revise Eliot's Bible for its second

edition.1 Branford, in Connecticut colony, saw some

work for its Indian inhabitants by its pastor, Abraham

Pierson, father of the first president of Yale.2 Eliot's

own immediate mission grew, so that by 1654 a second

town, on the plan of Natick, was organized at Punka-

pog, now known as Stoughton.3 And he had the

assistance of consecrated and self-denying men, like

Daniel Gookin, whom the Massachusetts government

made, from 1656 to 1687, the “ruler” or superinten-

dent of its Indian subjects.4 Eliot had the satis-

faction, before his death, of seeing that his work

would be carried on by those in the New England

ministry who were in hearty sympathy with it, like

Grindall Rawson of Mendon, and Samuel Danforth

of Taunton.5

The missionary endeavor was crowned with unde-

niable success. In spite of its difficulties, by 1674

those Indians who had been brought in some measure

under the influence of the Gospel, or “Praying In-

dians” as they were called, numbered four thousand,

of whom nearly one half were on the islands of the

1 Sibley, i., pp. 496-508; *Magnalia*, i., p. 568.   
2 Palfrey, ii., p. 340.   
3 *Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel*, p. 2.   
London, 1655.   
4 Palfrey, ii., p. 338.   
5 Sibley, iii., pp. 163-168, 244-249.

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Martha's Vineyard group.1 About eleven hundred

were in Eliot's villages. They were gathered into six

churches, numbering in all one hundred and seventy-

five members, and in at least twenty places preaching

and schools were regularly maintained, chiefly by edu-

cated Indians. The villages of the " Praying Indians "

numbered thirty-three. But the stronger tribes of

southern New England, the Narragansetts and Wam-

panoags, were scarcely touched by Christianity, and

probably wholly misunderstood the intentions of the

missionaries.2 They probably conceived the purpose

of settlements like those at Natick and Marshpee as an

attempt to render more formidable the white man's

tribe by the familiar Indian method of the adoption of

weaker neighbors; and doubtless the fear thus excited

in these stronger Indian confederations had something

to do with bringing on the terrific struggle for the

possession of southeastern New England, known as

Philip's war. That awful experience of murder, fire,

and robbery cost New England six hundred men in

1675 and 1676 to say nothing of the complete or

partial destruction of more than forty towns. It cost

the Indians far more, and permanently removed the

Indian menace from southern New England. But it

was a staggering blow for the missionary enterprise.

1 Palfrey, iii., pp. 141, 142; see Eliot's report for 1673 in I *Coll. Mass.   
Hist. Soc*., x., 124. The churches were Natick, Grafton (Hassanamisitt),   
Marshpee, Nantucket, and two on Martha's Vineyard.   
2 See Fiske, *Beginnings of New England*, pp. 208-210,

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While most of the converts remained faithful to the

English, arid some, like those on Martha's Vineyard,

were even trusted to guard captives of their own race,

many of those who had come merely into external

connection with the missionary movement went back

to their savage companions, and some even of the

converts vied with their heathen associates in the

cruelties which they inflicted on the settlers. Even

those of Eliot's disciples who remained faithful, as

most of them did, were regarded with such suspicion

that they were compelled to leave their villages and

live under the surveillance of the colonial authorities.1

And when the war was over there remained a bitter

and often undiscriminating feeling of resentment that

rose against every Indian as a natural enemy. Yet

the work went on. Eliot, Gookin, Mayhew, and their

associates faltered not; and, had it been the war alone

that hindered, Indian missions in New England would

have suffered only a temporary check. As late as

1698, more than twenty years after the war, Rawson

and Danforth could report seven churches of Indians,

and twenty stations where preaching was maintained

and schools were taught. Before Eliot died in 1690,

twenty-four Indians had been ordained to the Gospel

ministry. His own first colony of Natick was under

the pastorate of a devoted convert, Tackawompbait,

who served the spiritual interests of the community   
  
1 Palfrey, iii., pp. 199-202, 220,

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till death came in 1716; and some traces of this work

of Indian evangelization, especially on Cape Cod and

Martha's Vineyard, continued till far into the nine-

teenth century.

But it was a dying race for which Eliot labored, and

even the Gospel could not greatly check its decline.

Devoted as the missionaries were, the story of these

Indian churches is one of rapid decay a decay not

owing to a spiritual exhaustion, but. to the fading away

of the Indian race itself. From Philip's war onward it

rapidly dwindled, its decrease being well illustrated in

the story of Natick, where the population of Eliot's

time diminished to one hundred and sixty-six in

1749, to about twenty in 1797, and in 1855 to one.1

From the standpoint of permanency it must be con-

fessed that Eliot's work has not endured the test of

time; but its failure was not due to any inherent lack

of spiritual power; and I suspect that the historian, two

hundred years in the future, who writes the story of the

missions of the nineteenth century, will have much

the same tale to narrate of that success of the Gospel in

the islands of the Pacific in which our fathers saw the

hand of God almost visibly displayed, and whose real

power and significance no passing slurs by politicians

anxious to assert the authority of a stronger race can

wholly obscure. Like Eliot's, it is a work for a dying

race ; and like his, its only permanent record will   
  
1 I *Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc*., x., p. 136 ; Bacon, *Hist, of Natick*, p. 21.

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probably be in that book of those whose names are

written in heaven. But was it less worth doing? Only

he who values a soul at less than the Master's estimate

can answer in the negative.

Eliot's life was long, far beyond that of any other

conspicuous in the founding of New England. Cotton

died at sixty-seven; Richard Mather at seventy-three;

Hooker was sixty-one; Davenport was seventy-two.

Eliot had nearly reached eighty-six when death came

on May 20, 1690. He saw the passing away of the

generations who were the leaders in his early manhood

and the companions of his maturer years so completely

as to come to remark, with that cheerful humor that

never deserted him, that “his old acquaintances had

been gone to heaven so long before him that he was

afraid they would think he was gone the wrong way

because he stayed so long behind.” But, happily, he

did not see the fatal decline of the mission work in

which he had been so long engaged. He “was shortly

going to heaven” he would say in his last days; “he

would carry a deal of good news thither with him

. . . to the old founders of New England, which were

now in glory.”`l And the taking down of the mortal

house, timber by timber, so trying an experience often-

times in old age, was for him a kindly process. In-

firmities crept upon him. But, as late as 1687, he was

able to preach to the Indians perhaps once in two

1 *Magnalia* i., p. 579.

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months;1 and when weakness would no longer permit

even this labor, his strong missionary spirit turned to-

ward some effort for the despised negro slaves, for

Massachusetts had slavery in those days, and he

gathered those of his vicinity once a week for cate-

chetical and spiritual instruction.2 As the sands of

the glass of his life ran out, and he was confined to

his house, so that even this endeavor was beyond his

powers, he took the blind son of a neighbor into his

own home, as Cotton Mather says, “with some inten-

tions to make a scholar of him.”3 It is a fitting

picture that the worn-out missionary presents to us in

his last days, seated by the fireside in his Roxbury

home, teaching a crippled boy to repeat by heart that

Bible which he had long before translated with such

diligent fidelity into the Indian tongue. And we may

well leave him there, with his own characteristic re-

mark to those who asked him “how he did”? “My

understanding leaves me, my memory fails me, my

utterance fails me; but, I thank God, my charity holds

out still.”4

1 Letter of Increase Mather, *Magnalia*, i., pp. 566, 567.   
2 *Magnalia*, i., p. 576.   
3 *Ibid*., i., pp. 576, 577.   
4 *Ibid*., i., 541.