

Colony, that was one of the objects mentioned in their charter, and among the "reasons" for their "undertaking," and on their first seal was an "Indian having a label going from his mouth, 'Come over and help us.'" They surely needed help, for they were in a forlorn and wretched condition, improvident, depraved, living more like animals than men, the "veriest ruins of mankind."

Some efforts were early made in their behalf; Squanto, Sagamore John and a few others in each colony were, as the English rejoiced to believe, the "first-fruits." But the hardships were so great, especially in Plymouth, that it was some years before regular labors were begun among them.

In 1636 Plymouth passed laws to provide for the preaching of the gospel to the Indians, but in the larger colony, the work under Eliot, though later started, progressed more rapidly. Skillful in languages, compassionate, generous, uniting zeal with tact and discretion, truly apostolic in spirit, Eliot was admirably adapted to be the leader in this work. But he was not left to carry it on single-handed; he had the encouragement and co-operation of the General Court, of his church at Roxbury, and of the best men in and around Boston, especially the ministers, those in the vicinity supplying his pulpit when he preached to the Indians. The General Court ordered, in 1644, that the county courts should attend to the civilizing and Christianizing the Indians in their shires; in 1646, that two ministers should be chosen annually to preach to them, and that something should be given by the court to those who were willing to be instructed; and in 1647, that quarterly and monthly courts should be held where Indians assembled, all fines to be used to build houses for worship or schools "or other public use." So Eliot's work was begun with its aid and sanction.

Having made some progress in learning the language, without which he could not have gained even a hearing, in 1646 he began his direct mission labors at Nomantum, a part of the present town of Newton, preaching the first time so that the Indians "understood all." Unwearied by toil, undaunted by hardship and danger, he pressed the work forward and brought it to such a promising state that, in 1649, through the efforts of Mr. Winslow, a society was formed in England for propagating the gospel among the Indians. Its revenue in a few years amounted to £500 to £600 annually; the Commissioners of the United Colonies, while that body had an existence, were the almoners, and returned yearly an account of expenses to the society. The General Court early contributed to it £500, and the towns £1,560.

It seemed to Eliot that no great progress could be made until the Indians could be brought into some civilized way of living. So the "praying Indians," who had "felt the impression of his ministry," and who were desirous of more settled homes, were gathered into towns, built and governed by themselves, under English instruction.