

One of the most hopeful fields was Martha's Vineyard and the adjacent islands. For forty-four years the Mahews—father, son and grandson—labored for the good of the poor inhabitants. In 1641, the Worshipful Thomas Mahew had a grant for settlement of these islands and was made the Governor of the English. In 1644, his son Thomas Mahew, the pastor of the English on Martha's Vineyard, became greatly interested in the Indians and began to visit and instruct them in their homes. He often lodged with them, enduring cold and wet, thus bringing upon himself many "pains and distempers." At last he so won upon them that they were willing to meet for preaching and instruction, and in a few years his efforts were so much blessed that "many hundred men and women" in these islands gave evidence of being intelligent Christians. He continued his "painful labors" till 1657, when, intending a short trip to England, the ship in which he sailed was lost. His father took up the work which he had laid down; he visited and encouraged the Indians, and, with the aid of some native Christians, induced those of Gayhead to yield to the gospel. Mr. John Cotton of Plymouth preached to them two years, and in 1670, with the advice of the best men on the island, a church was formed at Martha's Vineyard, and Hiaccooms, the first convert, was made pastor. After this John Mahew assisted his grandfather until the death of the latter, when for seven years the chief work devolved upon him, until he died in 1688, leaving the Indians with well instructed native teachers, and pretty well established in ways of Christian living.

Before Philip's war, when the work was most prosperous, there were about four thousand praying Indians and six churches, two in Massachusetts, one in Plymouth, two in Martha's Vineyard, and one in Chappaquiddick, an adjacent island.

Some obstacles to the work were the various dialects in use, and frequent wars between tribes, especially in Connecticut, and the violent opposition of many sachems, who prevented any instruction of their people. It may be noted that generally only the broken remnants of tribes showed any inclination to lead better lives. The Narragansetts rejected all efforts in their behalf; and when Mr. Eliot visited Philip, hoping to induce him to hear his message, Philip, taking a button on Mr. Eliot's coat, said "that he cared for his gospel just as much as he cared for that button." If Mr. Eliot could not move him, who could have done it?

At the beginning of Philip's war, the condition of all the Indians had been much improved by the coming of the English. The smaller tribes had been preserved from destruction by English protection; a portion had been greatly benefited by these special efforts in their behalf, and all, in a measure, by the introduction of seeds, farming implements and domestic animals, and by the great increase in their trade.