Mashpee May 1. 1824 --

Rev. Sir,

It has been a long time indeed since I have made a statement of affairs in this place. Had I known that any thing of the kind had been particularly expected, I should have done it, though there is seldom any thing of an interesting nature to be mentioned, & my letters might be tiresome. I must beg you to admit my omission to answer your letter sooner to an apology. Your letter travelled some out of the way & since receiving it, I thought I would wait a little in order to bestow somewhat more attention to the subjects on which I should write than convenient then. In future I will unless otherwise instructed, make an annual statement, or oftener if required, of the religious & moral condition of the people here.

I wish I could give a more pleasing account of the Indians. But though I hope all efforts for their good are not unavailing, yet taking them as a whole, I fear their course is retrograde. They need more schools. As it is, most of them find means to teach their children to read, yet if they could be more accustomed to the discipline of a good school, it, would unquestionably have a happy influence upon their character & habits.

Last summer & summer before my wife & I undertook a Saturday school. The plan was to meet all the children. & of a descriptions, that would come at the church to converse with them familiarly & hear them repeat passages of scripture, hymns, &c.- Through the first season they attended with much interest & some of the coloured children would frequently recite with very little prompting a whole chapter from the Gospels. - Last season their interest declined. The parents often wanted their children & some said it was too far to send in the heat of summer. We kept on for some time, till not being able to collect more than four or five, we thought it best at least for a time to discontinue the school. I have now some thoughts of meeting the children in different parts of the District perhaps once a month, where ever it may be most convenient for them to come together. I think –differ-
ence is perceptible in some of the children in consequence of what has been done for them already & I have seen enough to feel convinced that the best prospect of doing good is amongst the young.

The Church rather languishes. There has been not addition of a coloured person for three or four years. I have now a hope of two or three. There are several, who would probably do very well should they make a profession. But when I have conversed with these on the subject, they have expressed fears lest they should only have, as others have done heretofore, who set out with great ardour, & soon returned to their habits of profligacy. Indeed I have had so many proofs of the instability of the Indian character, that I have myself been very cautious (perhaps excessively so) how I urged them to come into covenant obligations. Those who now profess - conduct with general propriety. Isaac Coombs, the deacon proves a very substantial & exemplary character. He has more than ordinary solidity of mind. None have hitherto pretended to impeach his character, I may say, in the smallest matter. & he is really very useful among us.

The people of colour attend public worship at present better than at almost any period of any being among them. I hope it is a favorable symptom. The more respectable Battists have relaxed much of that rigidity, which has been so peculiar to them; attend religious meetings with considerable constancy & some of them have proposed coming to communion.

Some of the Indians are industrious. I lately witnessed a remarkable specimen of this. Going to preach at the house of one of them who is near ninety & has for a long time been rather remarkable for sobriety, on approaching his dwelling, I saw him at a little distance on his knees, occupied in digging up the soil with a hoe. During the [fine?] weather of last winter, though almost totally blind, he has actually in that manner conquered a considerable piece of rough land. I wish that industry could be more generally promoted among them to keep them from those low & brutal vices which [hole] ever fails to be the attendant of indolence. [hole] & preach occasionally among them as I have for [hole] ly done, & I hope something may be done to justify your trouble & expence in establishing me in this
place. Any advice which you may think proper to offer me will be very acceptable. I am Rev. Sir.
Your most obedient humble
Servant --
Phineas Fish

[verso:

Rev. Phineas Fish
Missionary
1st May 1824

Cambridge

May 1st

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Rev. Kohn T. Kirkland D.D.

Cotuit Village §§