Hon. Sir,

I received your favour of Nov. 25. on the 28th of the same. As it required some time to reply as I wished, you will please to excuse the delay. I give an account of my Mission with cheerfulness. Having no cause for concealment, I will endeavor to give as “precise & exact” a statement as I am able.

1. Number of Indians attending Public Worship. 

The number at present, owing to the discontents, is from 12-30 as the weather may be. Through the larger portion of my ministry, I have had many more. Causes beyond my control, more especially intemperance, indisposes considerable numbers to attendance on the means of religion. The number of my audience on the Sabbath, composed mostly of whites residing within or near the bounds of the Plantation, may average 150.

2. Of the Church. – At present 7 coloured members & 21 Whites. During my ministry have admitted to church-membership 20 persons of colour, & 16 whites. Found here at first 5 Indian communicants, & 14 white. I have had but few cases of discipline; in 23 years 2 cases of expulsion, & 2 others have withdrawn to other denominations. I might have had others; but have not thought it desirable to increase the numerical strength of the Church, to the hazard of its purity & moral power!

3. Schools. Though at my settlement here, attention to Them, was not mentioned (as I can recollect) as being a part of my duty, & though I have never had any funds for the promotion of Them, yet I have never been without a feeling of interest on the subject. During the earlier part of Mission, the Overseers, on account of a heavy debt, could not do for schools what was desirable. I have always been urgent with Them, & They certainly have been willing to do what They could. I have been in the habit of visiting the schools; have often procured school-books from abroad, & have furnished them with considerable numbers of my own expense. In 1831 with the aid of the Overseers, I was able to procure the building of two good school-houses, at the expense of the State; & As the Overseers, two or three years since, paid off the public debt, they have appropriated more for the promotion of education, & in future (should no interference take place) will be able to support two good schools for at least
9 months per Annum. [The only returns we have had from the

[verso:

2) majority of the Indians is to be told that have
done nothing for the improvement of the people &
to have the pain of seeing these good houses used for
the purpose of Baptist & Methodist meetings] We have
2 or 3 young persons ^ of colour, who can keep a tolerable school
for reading, writing & Arithmetic; - - one of them, who
attended the same school with my children—
who taught one of the schools last summer, can
teach the elements of Grammar & Geography. ^ To find A child
of proper age, who cannot read is now a rare oc-
currence. To the charge of neglecting The improvement
of the people, I Think I may (on every consideration)
plead, not guilty!

I will now, Sir, make some statements
in regard to something not named in your letter.

1. Preaching. I have been at my post! I do
not think I have been absent more than 6 Sabbaths
for my own pleasure or business, for 20 years past.
The character of my preaching has been plainness,
& a steady aim at the promotion of moral virtue
on Christian principles. My sermons have been
practical, rather than controversial. Persons of the
simplest mind have repeatedly assured me that
they understand me without difficulty.

My weekly lectures have been numerous. My minutes furnish the record of perhaps 100,ds
& many more have not been recorded. Sometimes
they were stated, weekly or two-weekly (as I have one
now among the Indians & have had for a length of time) &
Sometimes occasional. Sometimes I have preached
once in the week, & at others, many times. I have
preached in cabins, where I could not stand erect, &
in wigwams where I could scarcely discern my
audience through the smoke. A person used to a
splendid place of worship – refined society & all
that is inviting in his circumstances, may stand
afar off & by a dashing sentence pronounce my
mission a sinecure; but were he to accompany
me in my course of duties, his bones would hard-
ly cry out of labour & Self-denial.

2. Visits – distributing books, &c. I have
never refused visiting Indian families in sick-
ness & at other times, whenever I could, & without
discrimination, of sect or condition, where I had
reason to think visits would be acceptable or
useful

I have many times obtained books

[folio 2:

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for distribution – Bibles, school-books, tracts of various descriptions – sometimes of my own expense – presented at one time for the promotion of Psalmody book to the amount of $14.

There have been times, I have performed the pastoral duty of the whole Plantation, visiting families, the sick, &c, attending marriages, funerals, lectures, &c, for I have survived as many as 7 different sectarian preachers, who have sought to make a stand here, but could not harmonize with the people.

3. Sabbath Schools. As many as 10 years ago, I devoted every Saturday afternoon to lessons from the Bible after the manner of Sab. School instruction. The plan was to meet the children in the different sections successively. For several seasons myself & wife have met these children through the heat of a summer's Sun, at the distance of sometimes 7 or 8 miles.– This plan was not without its use, but I was not able to sustain the interest in these exercises with much uniformity, till I came to have the children assemble on the Sabbath in the interval of Public Service & procured some books, adapted to their years. The Juvenile Library contains more than 350 volumes. To procure these, I have for 5 years devoted the small collection, received at the Sacrament, supplying the table myself; & I have to acknowledge with gratitude two donations of about $13 each from the "Soc.y for Propagating the Gospel." This school, though defective, owing to some impertinent circumstances, yet discovers its happy influence in the [crossed out] deportment, affections & understanding of the young beyond almost any other means. I have now a list before me of more than 40 coloured children, who are, or have been under this kind of instruction, on many of whom an intelligent observer would pronounce, that labour had not been bestowed in vain. At the commencement of the past season, our list shows about 40 scholars; -one half of whom are coloured. We admit all children, who can be induced to come; but Indian children have the preference & are committed to the best instructors. Mrs. Fish, who is accus-
tomed to the instruction of youth, has had under her care for 5 summers a class of 10 Indian girls;

[verso:

4) some of these made fine progress, till our new "Liberator," lectured the parents into the belief that such instructions are worse than none, & now the class consists of two! Some of the children assure me, they wish to come, but their parents will not let them. There this "Apostle of Reform" goes about doing his kind of good!!

I have also attempted Bible classes in instructions with much success as to the whites but my Indian members drop off. It is too much work for them. An exercise of this kind however has been introduced into the common day-School, where both teacher & scholars have taken part with very good effect!

There are pleasant, but laborious services. When I have composed my sermons for the Sabbath—preached twice on the day—superintended the Sab. School—perhaps distributed the books —& then attended a recitation of a Bible lesson in the evening in a meeting for youth & adults, & there remarked & explained to the extent of nearly of another sermon,—at the close of such a day (& all are such in summer) though to others it may seem a trifle, I am obliged to confess my need of rest.—

4. Herring Pond. At that place, 14 miles hence within the bounds of Plymouth are from 40 to 50 Indians. I was instructed by the Corporation, to preach there about 1/7 part of the time. I have complied with the order. When absent on such occasions the Sab. school meets at Mashpee, as on other Sabbaths, I administer the Sacrament at H. Pond through the summer to such communicants, as happen to the present, & those who wish to make a public profession of religion are received as members of the church of Mashpee. There is one Indian & one white member at present residing there. There, is also a small Sab. school under the direction of a worthy female & a few books. I cannot do very much for them on account of the distance. The congregation at home probably experiences detriment from the necessary absences on this account!
5. Temperance Efforts. Little has been done among the Indians, except by preaching & conversation. At a meeting however last Feb. I proposed to them the formation of a Society. About 12 who could best be relied on pledged themselves to total abstinence. They preferred however belonging to a neighbouring society at present, rather than form one among themselves. My most active exertions in this respect have been in surrounding towns; for the root of the evil is abroad, & as information advances in other places, it will benefit us of course. I persuaded 7 retailers in one season to renounce the sale of ardent spirits. I have assisted at the formation of two societies of about 100 members each on two borders of the Plantation. I have done & shall do what I can in regard to this important object. I know it makes me unpopular both with rum-sellers & rum-drinkers— but unless much is done, this people cannot prosper, indeed cannot long subsist.

6. Discouragements. Among these, I may mention the following:— Intemperance— desultory habits of the Indians— their scattered location— readiness to listen to the bad advice of the designing— frequent absence from home, particularly on long voyages— necessity of going young into service in distant families— interference of intermeddlers— sectarian influence & the bigotry of an ignorance— inclination to enthusiasm— backwardness to attend public Worship except where noisy & passion-stirring addresses are to be heard— a tendency to Antinomianism.—

I would now just glance at the causes & consequences of the present discontents. From the days of my able Predecessor Rev. G. Hawley, a Baptist party among the Indians have been intent on attaining what they call liberty. They have repeatedly excited discontents & been the occasion of much expense & trouble. Some time last spring when there was considerable exasperation of feeling on account of some measures of the Guardians, either by accident or design, an Emisary, who has been much about the country, lecturing on the "Civil & religious Rights of Indians" came to this place. He boasts of his abilities & his knowledge, his
influence with the great & powerful. He flatters them that he can enlighten & enrich them— that he can break their chains & in a moment exalt them to happiness & distinction. He tells them, he has seen the Governor & he has no objection to his proceedings. He teaches them to identify me with their immediate Rulers.— He tells them he has seen the Corporation of H. Col. & apprised them, that I was dismissed. He then takes the lead of affairs— summons the board of Overseers— publishes his nullifying Acts— lays his rapacious hands on all property— arrests the course of business— threatens to punish all, who resist his will. He teaches his followers to molest men pursuing their honest occupation & even to gain unlawful entrance into the Meeting house. He declares he will occupy it at a certain time— that he will exclude myself, church & congregation, & no white man shall have any connexion with Indian affairs. He did not perform all his vaunting—but what he has done? He has poisoned their minds— he has corrupted their morals— he has emboldened some of the people to acts, before unthought of— he has discouraged education— prevented the use of the School-Houses.— He has seduced both the Baptist & Congregational Deacons, ruining the moral character of the latter— he has divided the Baptist society & injured their Pastor— has made 3 parties where were only two & generated feelings of enmity where was more kind & Christian—& than had been for a long time before!

What then is the prospect? It is, in my opinion, still good! In some respects, it is better than formerly. Much more may be done for schools— much more may be done for the rising generation. The Temperance Reform will be brought to bear more & more upon all ranks & of course much more may be done in every respect. If the Legislature do not give them up to the misrule, of which they have recently presented such a [ torn ] specimen, the ferment will subside. The sectarian busy-bodies (who now feel quite sure of demolishing the remnant of Congregationalism in this place & who have not thought till lately of the plan of applying to the Corporation for my removal) will become discouraged & there will be an interval of peace, when some barrier perhaps may be raised against the recurrence of a similar crisis!
I have now made as faithful a statement respecting myself & labours, as I am able. I am confident many disinterested persons, who have an opportunity to know, will attest the truth of my representation; & I would here beg leave to inquire how far a Missionary of tolerable diligence & faithfulnes is to be held responsible for the degree of success? It certainly is cause of deep affliction to me, that my services have not been more abundantly blessed. It is more painful to me, than all my labours. But it is my opinion that no man can insure success to himself. The Corporation at the time of my settlement here, were apprized of the state of affairs. They did not expect, that I should certainly unite the people, much divided; nor even that I should improve their character in any respect; for when does this often take place even in much more favorable circumstances? A passage contained in a letter to me from the venerable Dr. Lythrop affords a conception of their views. Says he (1810) “You must not expect your people will be brought to the state in morals & religion, in which you wish to see them, without great labour & perseverance & lasting attention; & after all, should many of them remain ignorant & stupid & vicious, it would not be wonderful. Should you be the happy instrument of restoring a few from vice & folly & thus preparing them for the happiness of heaven, you will have your reward”.

Permit me also, very respectfully to inquire, whether in such a case, decided success, or relinquishment of the plan, should be the only alternative? May not some different direction be given to the means? Is not such the course dictated by reason? If I have committed faults, let me be admonished. If another mode of operation is expedient, might I not prove successful at least in that? When the Missionaries to the Society Islands labored 12 years before they gained a single convert; & the Moravians in Greenland, as many more, did the respective societies so much as mention relinquishment of the scheme? Have I been equally unsuccessful with them?

In especial manner, when it is recollected, that I have been here so many years without supervision or advice or inquiry or even an encouraging word, what am I reasonably to expect, when but a degree of indulgence, when investigation begins to be made? - If I have proceeded silently in my course it was because I believed my self to be moving right. [crossout] So long as nothing was said to me, I certainly had no peculiar reason for supposing I was going wrong. I may indeed have committed error, I may at times have given way too far to discouragements,
but I trust I have never lived to myself – or had any
other than a fine desire to "make full proof of my minis-
try". permit me also to remind you that your mis-
ionary at the Vineyard, though useful, has not been
more (as I can find) more acceptable as a preacher, than
myself, if he has been otherwise, might not
some better method be pointed out to me?

Honored Sir, If your aid shall be withdrawn
from here, what is to be the fate of those not few among
the Indians, who are the friends of order & on the whole
if religion? They say they want their minister & their
meeting. They dislike sectarian preaching & all their
wild, fanatical customs. Among them are not want-
ing Indian families of pure blood & they beg not to
be overlooked. They are grateful for past favours &
if required, they are ready to lift up their voice & make
their desires known.

Withdraw your aid– & will not such a
measure be a virtual sanction of all the irregular-
ities, that have lately taken place among us? It will
be the ruin of a Congregational Church & Society, the
only Barrier for a long time against sectarian fa-
naticism for many miles round, & the object of
peculiar malevolence on this account. The ruin
of this ancient church is a darling object with the
enemy. They are at this moment exulting in the hope
that we shall soon be deprived of your patronage. All
the disorganising people of this region despair of any
other means of victory; They build on this alone. With
draw your aid,–& you will fulfil their predictions.
They will triumph gloriously & the malice of their
hearts will be gratified to the utmost.

What shall I say in regard to myself? If it does
not appear that I have essentially failed in duty, shall
past efforts be forgotten, & at the “suggestion” of any more
informers is it right that I should be cast out as a
worthless potsherd? – Surely no one need envy me
a residence in this “obscure sojourn.” Intercourse with
the poor & with such only, may be depressing to the vi-
sits, but cannot add to one’s wealth. Though I have
been accused of enriching myself– I have not done
so. Perhaps, Sir, you may not be aware that for
7 years past I have suffered a deduction from my
salary of more than $100 per Ann. By rigid econo-
my I can just bring the year round. To build here
was matter of necessity. I venture to do so, because
I was given to understand that my situation would be permanent. My house remains in part unpaid for to this moment. If I sell, it must, in such a place as this, be at a large sacrifice; indeed it is nearly a certainly, that I should not be able to sell it at any price. If I go from here, there, I must go forth in indigence & in debt. I must leave a place where I have spent the best of my days; I must leave with impaired health & with habits, most probably disqualifying me for stated employment elsewhere. Were I alone, I should not regard it; but I have a family more expensive than even before & likely to be more so for some time to come. And I cannot easily believe that Gentlemen of sympathy & Christian feelings will, without weighty cause expose me & them to all the distresses of uncertainty & destitution.

At any rate, Sir, If this Mission is to be abandoned, let it not be without severe investigation. When reports, unfavorable to the usefulness of Mr. Baylies, transpired a year or two since—some of the Gentlemen repaired to the spot & ascertained the truth for himself. I entreat for a similar measure (if what I now write is not satisfactory)—The truth cannot be known at a distance—it cannot be known except on the spot.—I do not shun the light.—On the contrary I challenge in scrutiny. Let some gentleman of candid mind visit us.—Let him examine my sentiments—my sermons—my method of instructing—my intercourse with this people—my intercourse with all people.—Let him point out what is amiss, & I will correct it—let him mark out a place & I will pursue it—If he see good cause let him condemn me—& I will endeavor to say “The will of the Lord be done”. How? & dear Sir, let me know; if you please, that you have received this. Inform me, as soon as may be, of the result—& oblige your most obedient & humble Servant. Phineas Fish.

Hon. Josiah Quincy L.L.D.
Cotuit, Ms.} 30
Decm 5th }

Hon. Josiah Quincy L.L.D.
President
of Harvard College
Cambridge–

(Postalmark) 5, Dec 1833
Letter
Recd. Phineas Fiske's

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