

Topic Page: [Eliot, John \(1604 - 1690\)](#)

Definition: **Eliot, John** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

American missionary, b. England. He travelled to Massachusetts (1631) as the first Christian missionary in New England. He became known as the 'Apostle of the Indians' for his evangelistic work.



Image from: [By the end of the Colonial Period, many of... in The Encyclopedia of American Folk Art](#)

Summary Article: **Eliot, John**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1604–90, English missionary in colonial Massachusetts, called the Apostle to the Indians. Educated at Cambridge, he was influenced by Thomas Hooker, became a staunch Puritan, and emigrated from England. Arriving in Boston in 1631, he became pastor at the church in Roxbury in 1632 and held that position the rest of his life. He studied the Native American language spoken around Roxbury and was soon preaching in it. His determination to Christianize the Native Americans led him to establish villages for the converts—the “praying Indians”—with simple civic and religious organization. He won the aid of the colonial authorities and achieved the founding in England of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England under the auspices of Parliament. Funds and workers came to him, and he and his helpers founded some 14 communities on lands granted for the purpose. The most prominent and successful was at Natick. King Philip's War (1675–76) caught the “praying Indians” between the hostile tribes and the native-hating whites and all but wiped them out. White settlements took over most of the villages. The pamphlets by Eliot and, even more, his translation of the Bible into an Algonquian language usually called Natick (1661–63; the first Bible printed in North America) and his *Indian Primer* (1669) are prime sources of later knowledge of the peoples of Massachusetts. Eliot also helped to write the *Bay Psalm Book*.

See biographies by C. Francis (1849), repr. 1969), C. Beals (1957), and O. E. Winslow (1968).

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Eliot, John. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/eliot_john_1604_1690



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