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ESSAYS TO DO GOOD: A PURITAN GOSPEL OF WEALTH,
1690-1740

by

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INTRODUCTION

The ascetic discipline of the Protestant Ethic, with its injunction to labor diligently in a calling, was part of the intellectual baggage the Puritans brought with them to the New World. The Puritans knew that God required all men to work diligently in a calling, but when their diligence produced wealth which often led to sinful worldliness, they were confused. They knew that God assigned prosperity and adversity to men according to his divine plan, but they were uncertain about the significance of riches and poverty in their society. Was wealth a sign of God’s favor? Was poverty, however honest, a sign of secret sin?

The Puritans also knew that God had ordained a natural inequality among men, and that God assigned to each man his rank in the social hierarchy. But diligence in a calling, especially when it resulted in the acquisition of wealth, seemed to threaten that social hierarchy. What if a man pursued his calling right out of his social class and into a higher one? Diligence at a social demand might weaken the very social structure it was designed to support.

The present study is an examination of changes in
attitudes toward the acquisition of wealth and the charitable distribution of it in Puritan Massachusetts. The efforts of Puritans to justify their pursuit of prosperity and to define the place of the lower classes in their society were to have profound effects on their concepts of social order and social mobility, and were an important part of their transformation from Puritans to Americans.

Virginia Purington Bernhard
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CHAPTER I
A MODEL OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

In 1630, when the flagship *Arbella* was in mid-passage on its way to the New World, the Puritan leader John Winthrop called together the "great company of Religious people" on board and delivered a speech. It was a unique time and place—a time of political and religious unrest in England, a little band of Puritans on a hazardous voyage to a land they had never seen. One might imagine that Winthrop spoke to the ship's company of the England they had left behind, of the reasons that justified their departure, of the courage of so many to forsake home and hearth for a wilderness. Instead, Winthrop chose to lecture his companions on "giving, lending, and forgiving" and loving one's neighbor.

Winthrop's choice of subject matter expressed both his hopes for the establishment of a "city upon a hill" and his fears that economic self-interest might undermine it. One wonders what ambitions aired aboard the *Arbella* prompted him to remind his fellow passengers that "in all times some must be rich, some poor" and that all must be prepared to put public good before private gain.
Perhaps certain hopes and dreams voiced during that long voyage made Winthrop feel it necessary to remind the prospective builders of Massachusetts that "no man is made more honourable than another or more wealthy &c., out of any particular and singular respect to himself, but for the glory of his creator and the common good of the creature, man." 3 Winthrop's emphasis on loving one's neighbor, loving him, in fact, enough to exercise "extraordinary liberality" toward him in times of common peril, and to lend, when the need arose, without expecting payment, reveals his fears that worldly ambition might threaten the holy community they were risking their lives and fortunes to establish.

Over and over again in his speech Winthrop used the words "knit together" to express the need for oneness of interest and purpose in the New World venture. 4 Public and private good must be one and the same, since all men were supposed to be pursuing the same end: "to improve our lives to do more service to the Lord; the comfort and increase of the body of Christ, whereof we are members...." 5 The members were not to compete in a race for worldly success, but to cooperate in the establishment of a perfect society. They were to put into practice what had been preached in England. "Whatsoever we did, or ought to have done, when we lived in England, the same
must we do, and more also, where we go...we must love brotherly without dissimulation, we must love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" was a blueprint for the perfect society, the ideal community as drawn up not by man, but by God. It was not what had been, but what ought to be, according to the word of the Gospel and the Covenant with God, the divine plan for human society upon this earth. In a holy community it was understood that there would be no separation of religion from society and politics, no difference between private and public good. It was enough to say that the new community would be under a "due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical." The Puritan church was an integral part of society, a militant institution prepared to do battle with ungodliness in all its forms. The message of the Gospel must govern every aspect of life, public and private. Individuals must consider the public good first and private gain afterward. Ideally, however, the two would not be incompatible.

Christian love, or Christian charity as Winthrop called it, was to be the cohesive force, the "bond of perfection" in the new society. Christian charity did not mean the giving of alms; it meant helping one's neighbor to help himself. It did not mean selling all one had and
giving it to the poor, but rather putting to good use all that one had in order to be able to help the less fortunate. Because of Christian charity the rich would "not eat up the poor nor the poor and despised rise up against and shake off their yoke;" because of it those who were able would cast their bread upon the waters instead of hoarding it for their posterity; because of it the rich would lend to the poor and, if called upon, literally forgive their debts. These things, Winthrop told his audience, were the stuff of which a holy community was made.

The knitting together of a perfect society by Christian love was made possible by man's spiritual equality and also by his natural inequality. Spiritual equality meant that all souls were equal before God; natural inequality meant that all social ranks were not. All men stood equally helpless before God, since every man's fate depended on God's predestination of his soul for salvation or damnation. In what men could achieve in life on this earth, however, they were not equal.

Winthrop was careful to distinguish between the different sorts of men in his speech:

All men being thus (by divine providence) ranked into two sorts, rich and poor; under the first are comprehended all such as are able to live comfortably by their own means duly improved; and all others are poor according to the former distribution.

These two groups had been created by God, said Winthrop,
in order to "have the more occasion to manifest the work of his Spirit." The rich were to glorify God by exhibiting "love, mercy, gentleness, temperance, &c." and the poor were to demonstrate their "faith, patience, obedience, &c."

"Rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them both," said the Rev. William Hubbard in a 1676 sermon justifying traditional social order in Massachusetts. That traditional order was based firmly on natural inequality, which was not to be confused with spiritual equality:

Thus if order were taken away, soon would confusion follow, and every evil work.... Nothing therefore can be imagined more remote either from right reason or true religion than to think that, because we were all once equal at our birth and shall be again at our death, therefore we should be so in the whole course of our lives.†

Puritanism, while assuming a natural hierarchy in society and recognizing differences in social status, nevertheless allowed no differences whatever in moral standards. Spiritual equality demanded sainthood of all men regardless of ability or rank. Catholicism had separate standards for the religious orders and the laity, defining holiness with clerical garb or monastery wall, but Puritanism eschewed such distinctions and made priests and monks of all men. Catholicism's gradations of spiritual demands fitted hand in glove with the traditional idea of society as a divinely-ordered hierarchy in which
each man had his assigned place and where men, like the
angels and the stars, were unequal by divine decree.
On the other hand, spiritual equality, with its insistence
on one standard of holiness for all, offered to all men
an equal opportunity for spiritual perfection.

It never occurred to the Puritans that natural
inequality and spiritual equality were in any way con-
tradictory or incompatible. The tension between the two
ideas, however, was to manifest itself in everyday life
in the New World. Puritanism, by making each man
responsible for his own spiritual welfare, took asceticism
out of the cloister and applied it in the business of
daily life. Grace was not a mystical miraculous sub-
stance conferred through sacraments, by good works, by
confession, by traditional means of easing an individual's
conscience. Grace for the Puritan was an inner miracle
of faith wrought by God in the hearts of his elect, but
it was up to those hearts to be prepared.

Preparation for grace meant that the asceticism of
the cloister had to be practiced by all. Grace was not
to be sought in the contemplative life or any form of
separation from this world, but in the diligent pursuit
of a calling. All Puritans must be in this world and yet
be otherworldly, taking John Cotton's advice: "You must
Buy, and Trade, and Marry, and Weep & Care for these
things, as if you did not." All men must prepare for life in the world to come by a rational pursuit of perfection in this world.

To the Puritan, for whom diligence in a calling was a religious duty, a man who would not work was ipso facto a sinner. Puritanism interpreted St. Paul's statement "He who will not work shall not eat" as meaning that the idle should not share in the fellowship of grace. While Catholicism interpreted the Pauline doctrine of work as labor for a sufficiency, the Puritans read it as an injunction to unceasing labor for the glory of God. If some in the New World lost sight of this end and labored for their own satisfaction, Puritan society would have to find a means of dealing with them.

Mainstream Puritanism had as its ideal not the adoption of radical new social concepts (that was for Diggers and Levellers) but the adaptation of Christian precepts, love of God and love of neighbor, to the traditional hierarchical social structure. But because spiritual equality as Puritanism defined it made each man actively responsible for his spiritual progress rather than passively dependent on grace bestowed through sacraments, the idea of spiritual equality had in it the seeds of social change. If men were equal in one way, might they not become equal in others? By the eighteenth century spiritual equality and Christian charity, as we
shall see, were to make irreparable cracks in the traditional social structure.

Seventeenth-century Puritans assumed without question the necessity and immutability of rank and hierarchy, gradations and classifications, and of rich and poor in the social order. They had no idea that another of their assumptions, the idea of diligent pursuit of a calling, put any strain on the social order. Social order as they knew it was as fixed and permanent as the mountains. They could not imagine change.

John Cotton, whose writings on the idea of the calling form the basis of its American statement, saw no conflict at all between social order and the pursuit of a calling. Instead, Cotton saw the two as mutually reinforcing ideas. A Christian, said Cotton, "would have his condition and heart settled in God's peace, but his life settled in a good calling, though it be but of a day laborer." "Settled" is the key word. Cotton's view of the social order was one in which every man, happy and contented in the place God had assigned him, pursued his calling diligently and did not aspire to advance. To advance would be to upset the social order.

Pursuit of a calling was like running in place: One exerted every effort, but it was the exercise that mattered, not the distance covered. The aim of diligence
in a calling was the glory of God, not worldly success. One must strive, but not after worldly goods. Of the good Christian, said Cotton, "Even when he serves man, he serves the Lord.... "He uses the world as if he used it not." A good Puritan must be able to say, "I have learned in what estate soever I am, therewith to be content," because both riches and poverty came from God.

Acceptance of prosperity or adversity, however, did not mean quiescence. John Cotton reminded his audience that "God would not have a man to receive five talents and gain but two; He would have his best gifts improved to the best advantage." Richard Baxter, an English Puritan, said:

If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept His gifts and use them for Him when He requireth it: You may labor to be rich, for God, though not for the flesh and sin.

The acquisition of wealth was not itself a virtue, but working for God's sake was. The pursuit of wealth for its own sake was sinful.

While Baxter's statement above appears to sanction and even encourage the pursuit of wealth, in other statements he warned against its dangers. Man, said Baxter, might "think he is no worldling
because he useth no unlawful means but the labor of his calling to grow rich."
Prosperity itself was the "commonest cause of men's damnation" because rich men
would "think God, when he prospereth them, is not so angry with them as preachers tell them." Baxter's advice
to the diligent was to "take heed lest, under the pretense of diligence in your calling, you be drawn to earthy-mindedness, and excessive cares or covetous designs for rising in the world."

Rising in the world was never part of the Puritan plan for society. Worldly prosperity was an unreliable measure of spiritual progress. Nevertheless there were many, despite the warnings of Baxter and others, who could not help thinking that prosperity might be a sign of God's blessing on individuals and societies.

The Protestant Ethic, as Max Weber labelled the idea of diligence for God's glory, created a tension in Puritan thought which Baxter and others never quite resolved. Riches attained by the right means (diligence) and for the right end (the glory of God) were good, but riches in and of themselves were not good, and were often snares of the devil to entice a man into loving this world instead of the next. What man must do to avoid such snares, according to Baxter, was to pursue his calling and to consider himself God's steward. If God allowed him to
prosper he then had a solemn obligation to use his worldly wealth for the welfare of the holy community and for the glory of God, the ends of all Puritan endeavor.

Certainly the use of wealth in ways that contributed to the realization of the holy community, such as the leniency in lending and collecting money recommended by John Winthrop was desirable. Love of one's neighbor practiced thus in the exercise of one's calling was infinitely better than outright charity which might encourage idleness and begging. As it turned out, however, charity in forms other than "lending and forgiving" had to be administered in Puritan Massachusetts. Despite their rationalization of the place of rich and poor in the perfect society, the Puritans who came to America in the seventeenth century were not quite certain how to put theory into practice.

In spite of Winthrop's ideal of Christian charity as the concern of each individual, and in spite of injunctions to be God's stewards and help look after the poor, the Puritans who settled Massachusetts made charity a public rather than a private responsibility. It was left to town officials, not to church congregations, to provide sustenance for the poor.

The problem of poor people in the promised land was one for which the Puritans had no ready solution. Preaching
Christian charity in a holy community, they closed their towns to strangers and beggars. They knew that there must be "some rich and some poor" but they hoped the poor would "have enlargement." While preaching industry and frugality as the way to prosperity they warned that riches could lead to sin and corruption.

In Puritan ideology the relationship between acceptance of Providence and diligence in a calling was clear, but in practice it became increasingly muddled. The idea of a world arranged by divine Providence and the idea of man's diligent efforts to acquire wealth, in effect, to alter the divine order, were bound to produce tension and to complicate attitudes toward riches and poverty. Providence told men to accept "Great Things for one, and Small Things for another," while the Protestant Ethic reminded men that "God does not give us Talents, to be wrapt up in a Napkin, but to be employed in his Service." All men should be diligently employed in some lawful business, but what if diligence in business produced "Great Things" for one who began small? If Providence set a man low, would the Protestant Ethic allow him to rise? It was to take nearly a hundred years of New World experience to answer that question.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 33.

3 Ibid., p. 34.

4 Ibid., pp. 34, 40-44, 46. Winthrop used the expression "knit together" eleven times in all.

5 Ibid., p. 45.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 For a discussion of the importance of the idea of the holy community in Calvinism, see Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Olive Wyon, tr., (London, 1931), II, 590-592.

9 Winthrop, p. 34

10 Troeltsch discusses in some detail the concepts of spiritual equality and social inequality in Puritan thought. (II, 620-622).

11 Winthrop, p. 33.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 34.


18 By "traditional hierarchical social structure" is meant the organic, patriarchal theory of society which had been operative since the Middle Ages and to which the Puritans adhered. For explication of this theory and its relation to Puritan attitudes toward social change, see Harry Barnes and Howard Becker, Social Thought from Lore to Science (New York, 1938), I, 241-254; Troeltsch, II, 475 ff.; Weber, p. 177. For an opposing view, see Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints (New York, 1968), pp. 148-170. Walzer argues that Puritans were radicals and attacked the traditional hierarchical scheme of things, including the Great Chain of Being. His argument, however, is based on political attitudes, not social concepts.


20 Ibid., p. 176.

21 Ibid., p. 179.

22 Ibid., pp. 174-175.

24 Baxter's statements in this paragraph are quoted in Winthrop S. Hudson, "Puritanism and the Spirit of Capitalism," *Church History*, XVIII (March, 1949), 3-16.


CHAPTER II

POVERTY AND PROSPERITY IN A HOLY COMMUNITY

Puritan settlements in the wilderness of New England grew in number through most of the seventeenth century, and, after the political upheavals in England in the 1640's, prospered. In Massachusetts not one city upon a hill but many small covenanted communities represented the reality of Puritan society. Covenants signed, land allotted, churches established, officials elected, these settlements adapted Puritan ideals to wilderness reality. That reality for most communities was only a cluster of tilled fields and simple houses around a meeting-house. Boston, the most populous settlement, added wharves, shops, taverns, fine houses, and after 1662, an alms-house. Christian charity, it would seem, was not functioning quite as John Winthrop had hoped.

Christian love in the holy community had not knit together all men, and the poor presented a problem instead of an opportunity for charity. By the end of the seventeenth century the poor as a group had grown larger and more unwieldy in the holy community than Winthrop ever imagined. Both in Boston, where economic complexity and competition tended to force out the less-
enterprising, and in small rural communities where economic immobility often kept the same families on the same land until the sons' inheritance was too small or worn out for comfortable livings, there was from 1700 on, a steady increase in the number of people unable to subsist by their own efforts.

In 1682 the Boston selectmen, in need of funds to rebuild the almshouse which had been destroyed by fire, made a plaintive declaration:

This town being at exceeding great charge, annually for the relief of the poor, & yt arising not only by the necessary supply of those that are sick, aged & incapacitated for labour, but also for the relief of many persons, that would work but have not where-with all to employ themselves, and of many more persons & Families that missspend their time, in idleness & tippling with great neglect of their callings, and suffer the children shamefully to spend their time in the streets; a great part of which charge, (its thought) might be prevented were there a convenient workhouse erected & stock provided for the employment of such persons at the charge of the Town.  

That such misspent time, such neglect of callings, to say nothing of tippling and of undisciplined children, should appear in the city upon a hill was bewildering to responsible citizens. The telling parenthesis "(its thought)" betrays the uncertainty which the presence of a growing number of poor and idle persons brought to a community of diligent saints. In theory the poor provided an opportunity for Christian charity; in practice they were a drain on public funds.
The care of those who did not prosper in the New World was assigned to the town selectmen. A town's poor might be given special privileges by town officials, such as liberal use of the common lands, permission to cut wood on town property, and aid in building their houses, in addition to financial support. Certain poor people were auctioned off at town meetings to responsible citizens who contracted to give them shelter and set them to work. A town's financial obligations ranged from full support paid to the keepers of those unable to work, to nothing at all in the case of able-bodied but idle persons who could be given employment to earn their keep. Other poor in the community who were not paupers but needed aid might receive it in the form of tax exemptions and free medical care. Tax exemptions were also granted to individuals who offered food and shelter to the poor, and to physicians who volunteered to treat charity cases.

Although Massachusetts towns assumed responsibility for the poor who resided legally within their boundaries they did not extend such charity to strangers or non-residents. Fears that indigent strangers might become the responsibility of the towns, that visitors might bring in heretical religious ideas, or both, led to the practice by New England towns of "warning-out." This custom was not new, but if it had not existed the Puritans
in the New World would very likely have invented it. "Warning-out" was the practice of literally warning strangers with no visible means of support to leave town within a prescribed length of time. Assurance in the form of a bond had to be given by a resident of a town for any visitors he might harbor. In this way the town was freed of financial obligation in case the visitors should become objects of charity.

The first settlers in Massachusetts wasted no time in establishing warning-out laws. The first one was passed in 1637, and the practice of warning-out remained legal in Massachusetts until 1793. The colonists, while adapting English precedents to their own needs (warning out in one form or another had existed in England since the time of Richard II) actually antedated English laws on the practice. The English Act of Settlement giving parishes the authority to remove newcomers who might become objects of charity was not passed until 1662.

Puritans in America came by their aversion to indigent wanderers quite naturally, since "masterless men"—vagrants, beggars, and the honest unemployed—had become more and more a problem in English society after the dissolution of the monasteries disrupted traditional charity in the mid-sixteenth century. Masterless men posed a threat to order and orthodoxy. In America
isolation of communities and preoccupation with order and orthodoxy intensified the problem. The Puritans in their holy community had no room for strays. The practice of warning-out kept poor relief funds for bona fide citizens and maintained the towns as exclusive, closed communities. Christian charity not only began at home but stayed at home.

By 1700 the warning-out period, the length of time required to establish legal residence in a town—or to be warned out—was changed from three months to twelve. With the growth in population it was more difficult for town officials to discover the presence of strangers. Newcomers had the habit of "shifting from place to place, so long before they be discovered that the law makes them Inhabitants." Boston appointed four Overseers of the Poor in 1691 and doubled that number by 1706. In a town of nearly 7000 the task of seeking out strangers and ascertaining the needs of poor citizens required the town selectmen's assistance to "visit the families, dividing themselves with the Overseers of the Poor, Constables & Tithing men...."

Christian charity notwithstanding, the churches left the responsibility for the poor in the hands of town and province officialdom. Voluntary collections were taken up from time to time, and the lament made that "We have been Sluggards in our Callings: the Poor have not had
our Liberal Alms...." but in general the churches maintained a cautious attitude toward the poor in their own congregations, perhaps fearing that they would be made responsible for all charity. In 1691, for example, the First Church at Boston voted to establish a committee to "assist about ordering the poore." This committee, however, decided that "the poor bee maintained by the Town as their cheife Support but releived further by deacons Collection." This statement was later stricken out and revised: "Town poor bee not att the church charge but Towne, only as members to have some Additionall Reliefe...."

Charity as the Puritans saw it was not exactly what St. Paul had in mind when he described it to the Corinthians: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...seeketh not her own...thinketh no evil...." This text, like the parable of the Good Samaritan, is curiously absent from Puritan discussions of charity.

The Puritans in Massachusetts, however, were not dedicated to loving their enemies or to selfless charity, but to the militant establishment of a perfect and exclusive community for the glory of God. A holy community ought not to have in it any nonbelievers, idlers, or any indiscriminate charity to such people. Such, at least, was the opinion of the clergy at the end of the seventeenth
century. Beggars, the antithesis of the Puritan social ethic, were not to be tolerated. "Our beggars," said Cotton Mather in 1698, "do shamefully grow upon us, and such Beggars too, as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath Expresly forbidden us to countenance."

The reluctance of the churches to assume responsibility for even their own poor, inconsistencies in the practice of warning-out (some towns warned out all strangers; others were selective), and somewhat haphazard local methods of poor relief reflect not only the Puritans' uncertainty about the role of the poor in their society, but a further uncertainty about just who—aside from the obviously destitute—were poor. Although Winthrop had identified the poor quite simply as those who could not make a living, in actuality there did not seem to be such a readily identifiable and stable group during most of the seventeenth century. Massachusetts, although it sustained a thriving overseas trade, was by modern standards an agricultural society. Land in the beginning was available for those who in Europe would have been landless poor. Farming provided subsistence for most. But there were some whose subsistence level disappeared when crops were bad, some who fell ill and could not work, and some who would not work. Some, in effect, were poor all of the time, and some were poor only some of the time.
A working definition of poverty in Puritan society was further complicated by the influence of the Protestant Ethic and the doctrine of Providence in the public mind. The concept of the Protestant Ethic, of diligence in the pursuit of a calling for the glory of God—and for the appearance if not the assurance of salvation—was itself incompatible with the idea of poverty. If what God wanted men to do was work diligently in this world, why did he visit some workers with poverty? Were these poor tainted with secret sin, or was God merely testing their faith, as he did Job's, with adversity?

In Puritan terms a "poor man" could be either a man whose pocket was empty or one whose spirit was shrivelled. A 1692 tract entitled *The MAP of Man's Misery, or, the Poor Man's Pocket-book* was not, as one might expect from the title, a book of financial advice, but a religious work dealing with poverty of the spirit. Samuel Willard's *The Barren Fig Trees Doom*, a collection of sixteen sermons preached at Boston's Old South Church in 1691, contained advice that could be read either spiritually or economically: "Improve all the advantages that are offered to you in God's Vineyard...." When Willard told his audiences to "work while the day lasts" he meant activity of both soul and body directed toward the glory of God. Cotton Mather reminded an election-day audience in 1690 that "a people should be with God by
Activity for him."

The idle poor presented a problem for a society which had perfection as its ideal. Said Cotton Mather:

As for your Common Beggars, 'tis usually an Injury and a Dishonour unto the Country, for them to be countenanced; as for those that indulge themselves in Idleness, the express command of God unto us, is that we should Let them Starve; and as for those that when they Get, will melt and wast our Money in Drunkenness; 'tis a Sin to supply those Monsters with what may be Fuel for such a Beastly Vice.  

Idleness was wrong; it was dangerous because it tempted people to indulge in frivolous pastimes; it threatened the very fabric of a community supposed to be knit together. All most work, all must pray in the holy community. But what was to be done with the recalcitrant idlers? Either they were idle because the economy had no jobs for them or because the ideology had no effect on them. In either case their presence was a contradiction of the ideals of the Puritan community.

The practice of the Protestant Ethic, the doctrine of diligence, was supposed to solve the problem of the poor. If everyone could be made to work, it was felt that social wrongs would right themselves. In 1692 when Massachusetts laws were rewritten under the new provincial charter, provision was made to insure that all men who could work did so. Idleness was against the law. If the poor could not or would not work they must be made to work. A holy community had no room for drones.
In 1700 the Boston town meeting observed "the growing Number of Poor Amonge us...." and "great Poverty hastening upon this Town if some suitable methods be not timely Taken to prevent the same." Despite this note of urgency the remedy proposed by the town officials was the same as it had been twenty years earlier. It was voted to raise £500 "to be employed for the procuring of materials & Tools, To Sett and keep the poor and Ill persons at work...." Throughout the seventeenth century diligence remained, as it had been in the 1630's, the way to all success, spiritual and material, individual and collective. It is no wonder that it was also the remedy for failure.

More than half a century had passed since John Winthrop had outlined the perfect society in his speech aboard the Arbella, and although that perfection had not been realized it was still the aim of society. The end of man's earthly existence was the glorification of God and his works; the means was the establishment of a holy community by diligence and devotion. Activity, productivity, and piety were demanded of rich and poor alike.

Diligent application of the Protestant Ethic in trade and manufacture had resulted in prosperity for many in Massachusetts by the end of the seventeenth century. Along with diligence, however, went a pre-occupation with the pursuit of wealth that realized
Winthrop's worst fears. As early as 1632 the complaint had been made at a meeting of the Council for New England of "profit being the chief aim and not the propagation of religion." By 1699 Edward Ward, a British journalist, characterized Bostonians thus:

But tho' they wear in their Faces the Innocence of Doves, you will find them in their Dealings, as Subtile as Serpents. Interest is their Faith, Money their God, and Large Possessions the only Heaven they covet.

Ward's book, A Trip to New-England with a Character of the Country and People, is a parody of contemporary promotional literature about the New World. While Ward gave free rein to exaggeration for humor's sake, his descriptions of life in Boston may have hit uncomfortably close to the reality. He ridiculed the town's inhabitants for their religious fervor: "They keep no Saints-Days...yet they assume that Sacred Dignity to themselves; and say, in the Title Page of their Psalm-Book, Printed for the Edification of the Saints in Old and New-England." Ward gave a vicious stab at Puritan business ethics:

The Gravity and Piety of their looks, are of great Service to these American Christians: It makes strangers that come amongst them, give Credit to their Words. And it is a Proverb with those that know them, Whosoever believes a New-England Saint, shall be sure to be Cheated: and he that knows how to deal with their Traders, may Deal with the Devil and fear no Craft.

Ward observed with some amazement that a number of
Bostonians lived in houses worth £2000 or £3000, and that the "Fathers of these Men were Tinkers and Peddlers." The pursuit of a calling in trade in New England did enable some to make unprecedented progress up the social ladder. From small beginnings some men rose to great wealth. Names such as Fanueil, Hull, Shrimpton, and Belcher in Massachusetts represented fortunes made in trade. It was evident, despite the vicissitudes of currency fluctuations, political changes, and wars with Indians, that the New World for some at least was indeed a land of opportunity.  

For the colony of Massachusetts as well as for certain individuals the New World experience was an economically profitable one. Except for a brief decline after the 1640's and another in the 1690's the Massachusetts economy rose steadily throughout the seventeenth century. A thriving overseas trade in fish and fur, ship-building, and domestic industries such as glass and brick-making, lumber, and printing were established by the 1650's. The first ship in Massachusetts was the thirty-ton Blessing of the Bay, built, ironically, by John Winthrop. Massachusetts' population had grown from 4000 in 1641 to 100,000 by 1690. Boston by 1700 was a flourishing town of 7000.  

From an economic point of view the errand into the wilderness appeared to have succeeded, but Puritan society
was dedicated to the glory of God, not the acquisition of wealth. If the Puritans had trouble assessing the spiritual significance of poverty, they were equally troubled by the meaning of prosperity. Material success in the form of thriving towns and a growing overseas trade was obvious, but in a holy community success had to be measured in spiritual, not material terms.

Prosperity for the seventeenth-century Puritan was an ambiguous term. It was not the accumulation of pounds and shillings, but a felicitous relationship between man and God which might or might not include material blessings. "The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as his own people, and will command a blessing on us in all our wayes," John Winthrop had said in 1630. Such ambiguity led to confusion over the form God's blessings would take, and success in this life was often difficult to measure.

The Boston merchant Robert Keaynes was a devout church member, but his diligence in pursuit of his calling drew censure from both church and state for his high prices. Although Keaynes was criticized for his business practices he bequeathed a sizeable portion of his estate to charitable uses. Was that success or failure? In Puritan terms, God only knew.

In 1690 Samuel Sewall, a successful Puritan by all outward appearances, confided to his diary his "heaviness"
of spirit and resolved to redouble his efforts to lead a good life and to serve God "better in Self-denial, Fruitfulness, Not pleasing Men....Endeavouring to goe and come at God's call and not otherwise; Labouring more constantly and throwly to Examin myself before sitting down to the Lord's Table." Sewall asked God to save him "from the fear of Man that brings a Snare." His resolutions reveal the Puritan predicament of being in this world but not of it, of being fruitful in a way that would please God, not men. Such was seventeenth century Puritanism's definition of the successful life.

If the holy community was afflicted with worldliness, its members knew no remedy but to renew their individual effort to bring forth good fruit, to be industrious spiritually and materially. The Puritans, who could read in the smallest events portentous meanings, who saw the hand of God in a mouse's nibbling or a household fire," sought to determine the meaning of poverty and prosperity in their society. Occasional bad harvests, fires, epidemics, even Indian wars could be explained as signs of God's temporary displeasure, but how could idle poverty and the worldly sins that accompanied prosperity be explained? Were these, like storms and shipwrecks, visitations of divine wrath? If they were, what could be done to set things right again?

Second and third-generation Puritans knew, as their
fathers and grandfathers had known in the 1630's, perfectly well what an ideal society should be. The ideal society could be achieved only by ideal means: the exercise of Christian charity toward one's neighbor, the practice of diligence in one's calling, and the dedication of life to the glory of God. Success in the holy community could be defined only in these terms. If "declension" had set in, the only cure for it was to try harder.
FOOTNOTES


3 The increase in number of poor was a by-product of economic development and population growth. See Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness (New York, 1955), pp. 233-235; Robert Kelso, The History of Public Poor Relief in Massachusetts, 1620-1920 (Boston, 1922), p. 93; Lockridge, New England Town, pp. 147-152, 155-159.


5 The public was not eager to support the workhouse in Boston. In 1686 the constables were ordered to collect from those who had not yet paid their share, and from those who "did refuse to subscribe or pay anything." Boston Records, VII, 186.

6 Kelso, Poor Relief, pp. 103-109.


Warning-out in other New England colonies remained in practice until the end of the 18th century, and in Vermont, to 1817. In Rhode Island warning-out was never authorized by statute, but towns exercised the right to warn out strangers until 1727.


For evidence of the enforcement of warning-out laws see Benton, pp. 18-52. Those persons actually warned out were not condemned to wander through the countryside. After 1675 the Massachusetts legislature assumed payment of expenses for such persons, designated as "state poor," most of whom were refugees in King Philip's War. The act allocating support for them was never repealed and drifters or persons without legal settlement who drew support from it became known as "Province poor." Warning-out in practice varied from town to town. Some towns warned all newcomers as a matter of course; others did not. Medford, Salem, Canton, and Lynn, for example, warned out all newcomers. (Benton, pp. 55-59)

*Boston Records, VII, 206.*

*Ibid., XIII (1885), 57.*

*Ibid., XI (1884), 62.* For similar conditions in other colonial cities see Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, pp. 206-248.

*Cotton Mather, Fair Weather...* (Boston, 1691), p. 7.

Plymouth Church, for example, met needs of individuals in its congregations but did not establish a general "Fund for the relief of poor Members" until 1792. See Plymouth Church Records, Col. Soc. Mass. Publications, XXIII (1923), 371. Foster, "Social Class," pp. 272 ff., notes that the churches did contribute to charity but viewed it as a public, not a private responsibility.

19. Ibid., p. 92 n.

20. Ibid., p. 100.


22. Boston, 1692.

23. Willard, p. 35.


25. C. Mather, Durable Riches (Boston, 1695), p. 20.

26. Acts and Resolves of the Province of Massachusetts Bay (Boston, 1869-1922), I, 67-68.


28. Ibid.

29. Quoted in William B. Weeden, Economic and Social History of New England (Boston, 1890), I, 125.


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., p. 7.

33. Ibid., p. 5.

34. See Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York, 1964), for an excellent account of the Massachusetts economy and the men who made it, especially pp. 192-197 for sketches of some prosperous merchants.
35 Weeden, I, 134.


37 Greene and Harrington, p. 22 n.


39 For an account of Keaynes' activities and religious attitude, see Bailyn, New England Merchants, pp. 41-44.

40 Sewall, Diary, I, 319-320, in MHS Collections, 5th ser., V (1878).


42 For the definitive treatment of "declension," see Miller, Colony to Province, pp. 26-39.
CHAPTER III
THE GOOD LIFE REDEFINED

It would have been convenient for Puritan ideology if all the rich had been saints and all the poor had been sinners. Had that been true, religion and society would have fitted neatly together, and social order in the holy community would not have been disturbed. But material and spiritual success did not necessarily go hand in hand, and it was lamented that "the Visible Church has Hypocrites in it: Bad Fish in the Net."¹

The seventeenth-century Puritans, thinking of themselves as a chosen people in a wilderness Zion, determined to build a perfect society, viewed signs of social change as declension from their ideal of perfection. They had learned to cope with religious heresies and with political opposition, but the growth of worldly ambitions and social aspirations in a community of saints filled them with trepidation.

In the settled communities of Massachusetts Bay, land was parcellled out according to social rank, size of estate, and sometimes size of family. Churches seated their congregations according to social and political rank. Order, whether ideological or social, was
given and was not expected to change--but it did.

Having undergone the ignominious compromise of the Half-Way Covenant, Indian wars, witchcraft, having discovered that selfishness and cruelty existed in the community of saints, and having learned to live with the knowledge that nobody in England was really watching the city upon a hill, the Puritans in Massachusetts entered the eighteenth century well aware they were not the men their fathers had been. Boston society affected a veneer of sophistication and copied London manners; new churches and new communities sought to break away from older ones, and aspirations for worldly success and power touched even the clergy. The definition of success itself, of what constituted a good life, was undergoing profound changes.

The Boston News-Letter, the colony's first newspaper, begun in 1704, is a chronicle of a society in the midst of social change, where the goals of society are uncertain and values are divided between old and new, between religious success and economic and social prosperity. Men still read "remarkable Providences" in storms, fires, and sudden deaths; a significantly-placed stroke of lightning still struck wonder and terror at God's unknowable ways. Days of fast and prayer in times of trouble and days of thanksgiving for blessings were still observed. Society, however, was becoming more
worldly. Along with advertisements of religious tracts and sermons the News-Letter carried such worldly enticements as an announcement of "The Italian Matchean, a Moving-Picture, shown by N. Partridge daily for 12 s."

There was horse-racing on Boston Common with a prize of a "Velvet Saddle with Silver Lace" worth £16. "Any Gentleman" could enter.

With the growth of worldliness in Massachusetts Bay had come a change in attitudes toward extravagance in dress—a change which reflected changes in social structure. In 1634 the General Court had forbidden the purchase of clothing with "any lace on it, silver, golde, silke or thread." Saints in the holy community were to dress simply, avoiding needless luxuries. Nathaniel Ward's Simple Cobbler of Agawam minced no words in disapproving of fancy feminine apparel in 1645. Prosecutions for violation of laws against luxury in dress were enforced until the 1670's, but by the end of the seventeenth century they had fallen into disuse. Town selectmen seemed reluctant to enforce restrictions against long hair and luxurious dress. Dedham's selectmen, for example, were admonished by a grand jury in 1676 for laxity in enforcing statutes on wearing apparel.

In Boston, where the wealth of Massachusetts was concentrated, the clergy made some allowances for worldly manners and fashions. In 1690 Cotton Mather observed
in a sermon that it was not the wearers of wigs but men guilty of "great Immoralities" who would have trouble getting into heaven. Samuel Sewall noted with some amazement in his diary that he "expected not hear a vindication of Perriwigs in Boston Pulpit by Mr. Mather..." Worldly and spiritual values, however, were changing, and the clergy sought to moderate the change. Benjamin Colman, pastor of Boston's Brattle Street Church, wrote a letter of comfort in 1701 to Mrs. John George, the wife of a wealthy merchant, after she had expressed guilty feelings over her fine clothes. Colman reminded her that "We are not to affect nor outvye ye rank above us; but maintain our own we may; not disabling our selves for other works of necessity & charity."

If one may judge from the constant references to wearing apparel during this period, many in Massachusetts besides Benjamin Colman felt that dress was a useful means of maintaining and defining social classes. In a society with no hereditary aristocracy and no traditional class barriers, clothing must distinguish upper and lower classes. Only those "educated in the wearing of rich apparel" should be allowed to appear in it.

The Rev. Increase Mather took the occasion of a disastrous fire in Boston in 1711 to discourse on the sin of pride and its manifestations in upper and lower classes:
The Word of God allows those who are Men of Estates, and such as are in Place and Dignity above others, to be distinguished by the Costliness of their Apparel. If they who are in Kings Houses are Cloathed in soft raiment, if they wear Silk, and Sattens, and Velvet, and Purple, and Silver and Gold, there is no offence to Heaven in it; but for Poor People to do so, is insufferable Pride.... And none more guilty than the poorer and meaner sort of people all the Country over. They will go above their Quality, above their Parentage & above their Estates.16

If such tampering with the social order were not stopped, Mather expected that God would visit Boston with further signs of his displeasure.

Members of a holy community were supposed to remain where Providence had placed them in the social structure. Aspirations to advance from class to class were unheard of. It was decidedly disturbing that the tradesmen and laborers Mather referred to as "the meaner sort" should aspire to own such finery as the "fine Brocaded Silks," "rich Gold and Silver Laces, Looking Glasses of several Sorts," not to mention a "Silver Picktooth case" and a "Very handsome Camblet Bed lin'd with Satin" which were temptingly advertised in the Boston News-Letter.

A fondness for luxuries, especially among the lower classes, was seen as a threat to both the economic and social order. As Thomas Paine, minister at Weymouth, put it, "the Misery and Iniquity of it is, the inferior sort of People will be clad in as costly Attire as the Rich and Honourable."
People who could ill afford luxuries were tempted to run into debt for them. "Those Flags of Pride, if I may be so bold, Are they Paid for?" asked Cotton Mather of his Sunday-best-dressed congregation. Boston, it was said, was "Over-stock'd with Merchants" whose enticing wares were the cause of "the lower Ranks... aspiring after a genteel Uniformity" in fashionable manners and dress. In Boston churches one observer complained that people could "hardly hear the Minister's first Prayer for the Rustling of Silk Gowns and Petticoats." Sermon after sermon all over Massachusetts condemned the aspirations of the lower classes to fashions above their reach. "Lower your Sails," said Cotton Mather.

Ironically the Protestant Ethic, with its ideal of every man diligent in his calling, which was supposed to give stability to society, was disturbing it instead. Enterprising Massachusetts merchants, for example, pursuing their callings by advantageous connections in England and a profitable import trade, were condemned for encouraging "the extravagant consumption of imported Commodities." Merchants were "Wens in the Body Natural, they Suck the Sap and Nourishment from the Parts that are for Use and Ornament." Diligence in a calling was also giving rise to aspirations which threatened the traditional social structure. Never before had the lower classes desired to emulate their betters, to give
the appearance of prosperity even if they could not
afford the reality.

The Puritan injunction to labor to be rich for God’s
sake was becoming for many an excuse to seek worldly
wealth for its own sake. The clergy, while acknowledging
that a desire for financial success governed men’s
actions: "We all scrable after it as naturally, and with
as much Resolution and Shuffling Sedulity as heavy
bodies to the Centre of Gravity," tried to warn against
the spiritual dangers that accompanied such pursuit of
worldly goods. Covetousness was soundly and repeatedly
condemned. It was defined as "A distemper of the Soul,
which manifests it self in a constant, greedy, insatiable
desire after Riches, and employeth the whole man in
various methods to gratifie that desire."

In 1704 Cotton Mather preached a sermon before the
General Assembly entitled Lex Mercatoria. Or, the Just
Rules of Commerce Declared, and Offences against the
Rules of Justice in the Dealing of Men with One Another,
Detected. Mather lamented that "There is abundance
of Wickedness, thro' a Thirst of Dishonest Gain Committed
among us." He set out three rules for lawful and
honest conduct of business:

1. I am so to Deal with every other man, as
I would have another man to Deal with me.
Mark it; I don't say, I am to deal with
others, as they have dealt with me.
2. I am to Deal with another man, that the man with whom I deal may be benefited as well as myself. That man is indeed, but in a State of Nature, I mean, an Unregenerate man, who thinks, he may in the General Scramble seize as much as he can for himself, tho' it should be never so much to the Damage and Ruine, of other men.

3. Let my Dealings be such, that I should not be Ashamed, of their coming to the knowledge of other men, able to judge of the Honesty in my Dealings. 27

A few years later Benjamin Wadsworth, pastor of Boston's First Church, made the doctrine of a Thursday lecture "Tis a very great Sin, for Christians to wrong and defraud one another (or indeed any Persons) in their Worldly Goods or Outward Estate." Wadsworth then proceeded to enumerate the sins of the community as he saw them. His list is long and specific; the variety of misdeeds astonishing. People who "Secretly remove Landmarks to enlarge their own borders" are singled out for condemnation. Excessive prices are condemned, although "It's no easy matter exactly to state the case and to say, how much profit is justly to be allow'd to the Seller." Buyers, on the other hand, should not defraud sellers by striking unfair bargains and getting goods for less than their true worth. Ship-builders and carpenters should not deceive others with shoddy work. "Griping oppressive Usury" is especially sinful, although usury in moderation is acceptable. One should, however,
ask no interest on loans to the poor who are unable to 
repay them. Persons who appropriate for their own use 
public funds, whether of "a Kingdom, a Country, a Town, 
a College, a Church, a school, a Fort, a Ship or of any 
Society...." are to be condemned. Military officers 
must not bring in false lists of soldiers; taxpayers must 
not withhold taxes; debtors must not delay paying debts. 
"I say, ' tis base and sordid, for any thus to Huff 
and be Angry, when asked to pay what they justly owe." 

Sermon after sermon condemned dishonest business 
practices such as false weights and measures, adulterated 
or counterfeited wares, and high prices. Those 
engaged in trade were advised to "use no Unrighteous 
Methods to Gain in the World...that you don't Cheat and 
Deceive, in your Business and Dealings...nor use such 
Knavish Shuffling Tricks, to advance your Secular interest, 
as are the Shame of a Christian, and the Bane of humane 
society." "Let a man be ever such a Professor and Pre-
tender of Religion," warned Cotton Mather, "if he be 
not a Fair-Dealer THAT MANS RELIGION IS VAIN." 

Not only in Boston lectures and sermons were dis-
honest practices criticized, but in tracts which cir-
culated over the province as well. Peter Thacher, 
minister at Middleborough, warned his congregation against 
"Cheating, Couzening, Defrauding, and Over-reaching one 
another in Bargains.... It is a wicked thing, and a
Reproach to Religion, for a Professing People, NOT TO EXERCISE THE FEAR OF GOD in their Commerce and Dealings with one another." Thacher had opportunity to practice what he preached, since he had a hand in the iron works at Plymouth and was later to become a partner in the Land Bank in 1740.

It is ironic that condemnations of social and economic aspirations came from the clergy, who were themselves condemned to watching the pursuit of gain from a distance. With their noses pressed, as it were, against the glass, they observed the "general Scramble" after economic prosperity and felt occasional pangs of envy. "Had they been brought up into another Calling, or, would they yet betake themselves to a nearer Calling, they would probably grow Rich as fast as You," said Cotton Mather in 1700. "Yea, your Unrighteousness toward your Ministers may be punished by the Righteous God with Spiritual Plagues...."

The Massachusetts clergy appealed to civil authority and to the public conscience to consider their plight, but they met with little result. Benjamin Colman preached a sermon before the General Court in 1708 entitled The Piety and Duty of Rulers to Comfort and Encourage the Ministry of Christ... in which he pleaded
for the passage of provincial laws setting an "honorable maintenance" for the clergy. Children were warned to "have a high esteem to Ministers, for God is very angry with those that despise His ministers...." Cotton Mather warned that evil spirits were abroad in the land: "Our Air is fill'd with them, as with Flies in Mid-Summer. We draw our breath in the place of Dragons," and that the best defense against the devil and his minions was an active and well-paid clergy. "The Devil sometimes does...fill the Hearts of Men with grudges against their Ministers." because "The Devil is afraid lest you should be made Better and Wiser, by those Men of God...."

Pleas for support of the clergy were not new in Massachusetts, but what was new was the repeated demand for more than mere subsistence. In the seventeenth century the comment was made that "Tis a sad thing, if those who break the Bread of Life to Souls should be suffered to want Bread themselves." But in 1724 Jabez Fitch, minister at Ipswich, hoped for the day "WHEN Ministers have not only for Necessity, but also for Delight; and can it be thought disagreeable to the Will of God that Ministers should be so Maintained that they may have not only for Necessity, but also something for Delight?"

That the clergy, dependent on church contributions—voluntary or contractual—for income, felt
economically deprived is obvious. Perhaps they like their flocks were infected by a bit of worldly ambition. Jabez Fitch, for example, apparently found that the church at Ipswich could not give him enough for "delight", although it had paid a mortgage on his house. Fitch accepted a call from the church at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, but Ipswich refused to release him. A heated controversy followed, with letters of entreaty from Portsmouth and a newspaper letter in Boston reminding the people at Portsmouth that "Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Servant...." A council of ministers recommended that Ipswich let Fitch go and at last advised him to go to Portsmouth without the consent of the Ipswich congregation, which he did. Settled in Portsmouth in 1726, Fitch then sued the Ipswich church for his last year's salary, although that year he had refused to perform his ministerial duties for several months. Nevertheless the Ipswich congregation paid him £65, 10 s.

Thomas Paine, the Weymouth pastor who condemned love of luxury in the lower classes, found his salary of £90 a year inadequate for himself, his wife and daughter by 1730. Although Paine admitted he could exist on such a salary he wanted to enjoy the "comfortable & pleasant Things of life" and begged his congregation to release him. In 1734 he moved to Boston and entered into trade, made and lost a fortune, and preached
occasionally for friends.

Samuel Dexter, who became pastor of the First Church at Dedham in 1723 in spite of some opposition to his settlement there, found his salary of £100 (plus an initial settlement of £150) so inadequate for his worldly needs that he and his black slave took on the job of sexton in his church. Since the current price of Negro slaves was £70–£80 in 1724, Dexter's financial position was not quite as bleak as it would appear.

It is significant that friction between the clergy and their congregations over salaries coincided with a period of inflation in all of New England, and in Massachusetts with a heated controversy over currency problems and a land bank. Scarcity and fluctuation of currency played havoc with ministerial salaries as well as the incomes of the laity, and congregations whose members felt the pinch of rising prices did not always see that increasing their ministers' salaries was a pressing need.

As one observer said, "It seems that the want, as well as the love of Money, is in some sense the root of all evil." The General Court had tried to remedy the lack of currency in 1715 by issuing bills of credit, but the advocates of another remedy, a private bank with bills based on land security, were not satisfied. The bank men blamed the state of the economy and of public
morality on a lack of cash. It was "a time, when every man is taking his Neighbour by the Throat; saying, Pay me what thou owest...." and when "Everyone gets what he can & if they can make 15 or 20 per Cent tho' it be by grinding the poor, and trampling on all the positive Laws of Morality...."

The scarcity of a medium of exchange not only made ordinary business transactions difficult, but tempted hard-pressed debtors and creditors to transgress the laws of business morality. The Protestant Ethic's injunction to labor diligently and increase one's capital was warped when there was a lack of capital to begin with. Newspapers carried advertisements of money to lend and pleas for money to borrow. Counterfeiting was resorted to by a few, and punishments for that offense as deterrent as Puritan ingenuity could make them. In 1714, for example, a Boston counterfeiter was pilloried, deprived of one ear, branded on his right cheek, and sentenced to twelve months in prison.

The problem of the clergy was to find a way to channel the "general Scramble" after economic prosperity and to redirect it for the good of the holy community. The desire for financial prosperity and the pursuit of it by diligent and honest means could not be condemned outright, but it had to be harnessed. Like the Trojan horse it has been compared to, the Protestant Ethic, let
loose in a society which lacked the framework of a formal and traditional social hierarchy, had become an engine of destruction in the holy community.

The ideal of a community where all men, rich and poor, were knit together by Christian love (and where each man knew his place) was being unravelled by the Protestant Ethic's definition of success in this world as an implication of success in the next. The more diligent men were in their callings the more worldly success they achieved, the more addicted to success for its own sake they became. Success, intended to be a sign of God's favor, became instead its own reward. In the absence of a hereditary aristocracy, worldly success and outward appearances were becoming the measures of a man's abilities and status in the community.

The Puritans of the early 1700's, compared to their predecessors, were indeed men of this world, and they were beginning to care a great deal about worldly success. What a man wore was nearly as important in Massachusetts society as what he believed. The clergy continued to preach spiritual equality, but it was apparent that natural inequality, the basis of traditional social hierarchy, was being undermined by the aspirations of men "in leather clothes" and the desires of all men for material prosperity.

The clergy warned that material prosperity itself
was no proof of virtue, and that poverty could be a blessing in disguise: "The Humble are more out of the Road of divine Judgments than proved Sinners are. The tall Cedars are exposed to the Blasts and Storms of Heaven, to be shaken and broken by the Winds; when the low Shrubs flourish secure and out of Danger." "There are mean Persons in the Eye of the World, it may be they go in Leather Cloathes, who nevertheless are common blessings to the world, and keep off destroying Judgments."

All men, however, did not wish to flourish as "low Shrubs" or to serve as common blessings. Although the clergy argued that rich men were subjected to great temptations, and that financial prosperity was not "itself an evidence of GOD's Special Love," most men continued in diligent—and sometimes over-diligent pursuit of material success. They could not be sure whether financial prosperity was a sign of God's love or a temptation to sin, but they were certain beyond doubt that such prosperity was a sign of man's abilities in this world. The achievement of material success in a society which lacked royalty, aristocracy, and episcopacy was, after all, the only tangible measure of a man's worth. For the upper classes, larger houses and finer carriages;
for the lower classes, silks and laces; for the clergy, higher salaries gave evidence of individual accomplishment in a way that inner grace and otherworldliness, however laudable, could not. The problem was to acquire the former without losing the latter.
FOOTNOTES

1 Cotton Mather, The Tryed Professor (Boston, 1719), p. 3.

2 See Greven, Four Generations, for a detailed and meticulous demographic study of Andover, Mass.

3 For a discussion of church practices in these matters and their reflection of social attitudes see Ola Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill, 1630–1783 (New York, 1952).

4 The Half-Way Covenant allowed parents who had not undergone a conversion experience and could not qualify for full church membership to have their children baptized. See Miller, Colony to Province, pp. 95–104; and G. G. Atkins and Frederick Pagley, History of American Congregationalism (Boston, 1942), pp. 92–94.

5 For example, see Boston News-Letter, Jan. 27, 1706; Jan. 3, 1719; June 11, 1724; July 7, 1728; June 16, 1737.

6 Ibid., Jan. 21, 1706; Nov. 15, 1708; April 2, 1711; Nov. 10, 1712; April 9, 1725.

7 Ibid., Mar. 7, 1715.

8 Ibid., Oct. 10, 1726.

9 Quoted in Weeden, Economic and Social History, I, 226.

10 Weeden, I, 286 ff.

11 Ibid., p. 286 n.

12 Cotton Mather, paraphrased in Sewall, Diary, I, 342.
Sewall, Diary, I, 342.


For examples of concern over extravagance in dress and its social implications see Benjamin Colman, Some Reasons and Arguments... (Boston, 1719); Thomas Foxcroft, A Discourse Concerning Kindness... (Boston, 1720); C. Mather, Fair Dealing... (Boston, 1715); Mather, The Good Old Way (Boston, 1706); Mather, Ornamental Piety (Boston, 1707); Mather, Theopolis Americana (Boston, 1709); Thomas Paine, A Discourse Shewing... Extravagancy... (Boston, 1721); Benjamin Wadsworth, Assembling at the House of God (Boston, 1711); Wadsworth, The Highest Dwelling with the Lowest... (Boston, 1711); Wadsworth, Vicious Courses, Procuring Poverty... (Boston, 1719); New England Courant, Mar. 1, 1725.

Increase Mather, Burnings Bewailed... (Boston, 1711), pp. 21-23.

Boston News-Letter, Sept. 29, 1737, May 16, 1720; May 28, 1716.

Paine, A Discourse Shewing... (Boston, 1721), pp. 5-6.

C. Mather, Fair Dealing... (Boston, 1716), p. 13.

New England Courant, Feb. 18, 1725.

Ibid.


Paine, Discourse, p. 5.

Thomas Bridge, Jethro's Advice..., 2nd ed. (Boston, 1733), p. 9.

Boston, 1704.
27 Lex Mercatoria, p. 6.

28 Fraud and Injustice... (Boston, 1712), p. 3.

29 Ibid., p. 4.


31 Ibid., p. 15.

32 Ibid., p. 19.

33 See, for example, Robert Breck, The Surest Way to Advance... (Boston, 1721), a sermon at Shrewsbury, a new settlement; C. Mather, The Balance of the Sanctuary... (Boston, 1727), a Boston lecture; Mather, Durable Riches (Boston, 1695); Mather, The Good Old Way... (Boston, 1706), a series of three lectures at Boston; Mather, Lex Mercatoria... (Boston, 1704); Mather, A Man of His Word... (Boston, 1713), a lecture before the General Assembly; Mather, Theopolis Americana... (Boston, 1709), a sermon before the General Assembly; Mather, A Very Needful Caution... (Boston, 1706), a Boston lecture; Peter Thacher, The Fear of God... (Boston, 1720), a sermon at Middleborough; William Williams, The Danger of Not Reforming Known Evils... (Boston, 1707), a sermon at Hatfield.

34 John Barnard, The Hazard and Unprofitableness of Losing a Soul to Gain the World (Boston, 1712), p. 43.

35 Mather, Theopolis Americana..., p. 13.

36 Thacher, The Fear of God..., p. 3.


39 Ibid., p. 15.


41 A Little Book for Little Children (Boston, 1702), p. 23.

42 Mather, Armour of Christianity...(Boston, 1704), p. 6.

43 Ibid., pp. 79-80.

44 John Flavell, Husbandry Spiritualized..., 10th ed. (Boston, 1709), p. 10.

45 A Plea for the Ministers of New-England (Boston, 1724), pp. 4-5. See also C. Mather, Repeated Admonitions...(Boston, 1725).

46 Shipton, IV (1933), 203.

47 New England Courant, Nov. 30, 1724.

48 For a discussion of Fitch's controversy with the Ipswich church, see Shipton, IV, 203-204; Thomas F. Waters, Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Ipswich, 1905), I, 13. See also "Letter of Jabez Fitch to ____," MHS Collections, 6th ser., IV (1891), pp. 4-5; and "Draft of a Letter from the Church in Portsmouth to the Church in Ipswich," MHS Collections, 6th ser., IV (1891), pp. 5-7.

49 See above, p. 39.
50. Thomas Paine, Address at Weymouth (Boston, 1733). Miller, in Colony to Province, p. 320, says that Paine was "so occupied with business sidelines that by 1733 he was to be dismissed from his pulpit." The biographical sketch of Paine in Shipton, VI (1942), 201-207, however, notes that Paine asked to be released from his pastoral duties at Weymouth in 1730 and was refused permission to leave for three years.


52. Fluctuating prices and currency in the early eighteenth century make assessment of financial situations difficult, but with some exceptions the economic plight of the clergy appears to have been more a matter of desire than need. Samuel Dexter's salary compares favorably with the range, £60-£169 per year, of ministerial salaries for 1710-1725. Boston ministers were the highest-paid; Wadsworth and Foxcroft at Boston's First Church both received £169 per year, as did William Cooper, Benjamin Colman's colleague at the Brattle Street Church in 1716. Both Colman and Wadsworth, however, were active in pleading for better salaries for the clergy. (See above, p. 44, and Wadsworth, Essay for the Charitable Spreading of the Gospel... (Boston, 1718). Wadsworth, when he became president of Harvard in 1725, received £400 per year.

53. For a discussion of economic problems in the early 1700's and their effect on society see Weedon, II, 473-491; and Miller, Colony to Province, pp. 324-344.

54. A Letter to an Eminent Clergy-man... (Boston, 1721), p. 6.


56. John Colman, The Distressed State of the Town of Boston... (Boston, 1720), p. 5.
Letter to an Eminent Clergy-man..., p. 5.

See Boston News-Letter, Jan. 21, 1706; Aug. 10, 1713; 1704-1735 passim. For a comment on townspeople's debts and inflation in Marblehead, see John Barnard's diary, quoted in "Topographical and Historical Account of Marblehead," MHS Collections, VIII (1802), 56.

Boston News-Letter, June 7, 1714.


Increase Mather, Discourse Concerning the Death of the Righteous (Boston, 1711), p. 21.

Nehemiah Walter, A Plain Discourse on Vain Thoughts... (Boston, 1721), p. 17.
CHAPTER IV

"DO GOOD...AND VERILY THOU SHALT BE FED"

The Massachusetts clergy, adept at balancing nicely on fine theological points, were equally adept at riposting the thrusts of secular interests against religion in the holy community. The predominance of worldly over spiritual affairs must be fought against; extravagance must be eliminated; covetousness must be condemned, and prosperity reinterpreted. The dilemma was that in order to do this the foundation-stones of Puritan ideology must be shifted. The Protestant Ethic and the doctrine of Providence were, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, in need of refurbishing. Exhortations to diligence sounded curiously hollow in a society already engaged tooth and nail in the accumulation of worldly goods. What Massachusetts needed, according to the clergy, was stability, not stimulation. Diligence, perhaps, needed to be de-emphasized, and values reassessed. It was covetousness and "contention"—a favorite word—not laziness or apathy that plagued the holy communities of Massachusetts Bay.

In the early eighteenth century it was to the
doctrine of Providence, with its reliance on divine wisdom in appointing "Great Things for one, and Small Things for another" rather than to the Protestant Ethic, with its exhortations to diligence, that the Massachusetts clergy turned for sermon material. The exhortations to be content, to accept one's place in a divinely-ordered social hierarchy which have been interpreted as "smug acceptance of economic inequality" can also be read as efforts to preserve the original Puritan ideal of the holy community blessed by God, where it was understood, as it always had been, that "The Rich and the Poor, are all the work of His Hands."

Contentment, acceptance of Providence, was the ideal of the holy community, and it was contentment that the clergy preached: "If thou be rich, remember him from whence comes all, and be not gaping after more; if poor, be contented likewise, for he that gave it thee, knows what is best for thee...." Of exemplary men it was said that "They have learned in whatever state they are, to be content, with the Will of their Saviour, content with what state the Will of their Saviour shall order for them." "We say 'Enough is as Good as a Feast.' He that has Enough to answer all his Intentions, is a Rich man; When he that has the Great Things of this world, may a very Poor man, because he never imagines, that he has Enough."
The idea of laboring to be rich for God, of improving one's talents in the diligent pursuit of one's calling, had been quietly laid aside by the Massachusetts clergy. The Protestant Ethic, which had functioned as a social value all through the seventeenth century, was no longer stressed as a religious demand. Vestiges of it remained: idleness was still condemned and industry was commended. Diligence in the pursuit of a calling, however, was for the time being laid to rest as a sermon topic. It was not dead, but dormant. It would reappear, somewhat altered, in the spirit of Benjamin Franklin, who recommended diligence not for the glory of God but for self-interest and the good of mankind.

In the meantime it was contentment, not diligence, that the clergy preached. In the interests of economic and social stability ambition and extravagance must be condemned. In 1719 Benjamin Colman wrote that "Now & then we that are poorer may tast of the best too and be thankful, But we should be willing to live low, where God has set us; and having food and raiment (tho' not so much of it as some, nor of so fine a sort) let us be therewith content." In the same year the Massachusetts General Court, noting that "it is very apparent that this Province is of late Years greatly reduced in their Estates, and Impoverisht, which has been in a great Measure occasioned, by extravagancies, in Apparel and
other things," passed "An Act for the Preventing and Discouraging the growing Extravagancies of this Province."

While congregations were reminded that "Man liveth not by Bread alone. 'Tis not Necessary, that you should be Rich in this world..." and "They that are poorer in worldly state should and must give way to the Rich,"

the Puritan community was troubled by an inability to assess the spiritual significance of riches and poverty. The belief that honest industry could not fail to find favor with God, and that God, being just, would give such industry a temporal reward, was ingrained in Puritan ideology, but it was being weakened by the presence of honest poverty.

Although the equation of poverty with sin—"Whoever saw the righteous, industrious Man forsaken, or his Seed begging Bread?"—was still made, it was increasingly obvious that "poor honest people" were different from the poor who were "capable but not willing to worke."

Boston, for example, had placed both sorts of poor in its almshouse since 1662, but by 1712 the town meeting discussed the need for a separate workhouse for idle reprobates. The almshouse would then "be restored to its Primitive & Pious design...for ye reliefe of the necessitous, that they might Lead a quiet Peaceable & Godly life there...."
Uncertainty over the meaning of poverty in a holy community was, however, still apparent. Robert Breck, minister at Marlborough, a newly-settled community, advised his congregation that "He that ordereth his Affairs with discretion, shall be honoured and esteemed wherever he is known: while the poor Man (whose Poverty is the fruit of his Idleness) shall be despised, and I think it is a just reward too." The trouble was, as Breck's parenthetical qualification indicates, that it was difficult to determine when poverty was a man's own fault and when it was not. Samuel Danforth, minister at Taunton, observed that "The reason why some Families flourish not in their Persons, Estates, or Interests, is not chiefly because their Neighbours do not love them, but because Sin...makes them wither and decay."

On the other hand, said Benjamin Wadsworth, "In itself it is no Sin to be poor." The Reverend Samuel Moody told his congregation that "We may not Presently Conclude our Neighbour either Deserted of God, or guilty in himself, because we see him Behind-Hand in the World, fallen into Decay; in Debt and Insolvent...." There were times, given the fluctuations of currency and inflationary prices, years of poor crop yields, devastation wrought by the elements or by the Indians, when honest industry was simply not enough. To those affected in these times "Tis the Diligent Hand that maketh rich"
must have had a hollow ring, indeed.

The definition of rich and poor had changed considerably since Winthrop had defined as "rich" all those who could provide for themselves "by their own means duly improved." and had classified as poor all those who could not. By 1719 Benjamin Wadsworth distinguished between two sorts of poor: those who were not rich, but wanted "neither Food nor Raiment convenient for them" and the "very Poor" who depended on charity for food, clothing, and shelter.

There was in the early eighteenth century a growing number of men who, having the necessities "convenient" for them, also aspired to luxuries. It was these aspirations which appeared to threaten the traditional social order. The desire of a tradesman or his wife to dress in upper-class finery, for example, was seen as a threat to the very foundations of social order and social distinctions. To aspire beyond one's God-given place in society, to entertain ideas of changing one's social class, was heretofore unheard of. How was the holy community to deal with such disruptive aspirations? Contentment, however desperately the clergy preached it, was not the answer.

When ministers warned of the temptations of prosperity, catalogued the sins of the worldly, condemned the covetous, and chastised the contentious they were reminding
all of society, not just the lower classes, that pursuing worldly success for its own sake was dangerous. Appearances were what men strove for, but they were not enough. The prosperous whose gains might be ill-gotten and whose godliness was at best perfunctory were no ornament to the holy community.

Cotton Mather's sermon, *A Weaned Christian, or Some Good Things by which a Serious Christian may be made Easy when Great Things are Deny'd unto him,* for example, reminds all Christians of the joys of the world to come, of the transient nature of this world's wealth, of the difficulties encountered by rich men in following Christ, and admonishes men to seek "great things" in the spiritual world instead of this one.

In *The Good Old Way...*, a series of three lectures given in Boston by Cotton Mather in 1706 (none of which was addressed exclusively to the poor, but to the regular attendants of the Thursday lectures), the "languishing interests" of religion were lamented and the usual list of social sins—drinking, extravagance, selfishness—enumerated. Christian contentment was prescribed as the remedy. "The Christian Religion comes therefore to wean us from this World, and make us Poor in Spirit, and give us a Spirit willing to be Poor." Good Christians should aspire to have "just enough to relieve their own Necessities, and furnish them to Relieve the Necessities of others...."
Ten years later Mather was still exhorting Bostonians to be "Poor in Spirit." In one lecture he addressed himself to business ethics with the explanation that "It shall not be complained, that the Ministers do so confine themselves to Preach Faith and Repentance, that the People forget Moral Honesty, thro' any Default of ours." In the name of business morality and economic stability Mather invoked Providence:

If a Man cannot keep out of a Low and Mean Condition, without a plain wrong to the Estates of other Men, he is then most Evidently called of GOD into a Low and Mean Condition.... The short of it is; If there be any thing that I cannot have without forcing and keeping my Neighbour out of his Right for it, the Great GOD orders me to go without it.... Who are the Poor in Spirit? They that have a Spirit willing to be Poor, if God call them to it.  

Providence, however, in addition to calling some to be poor, seemed to call others to undeserved riches. Discourses were preached on "that great Question, concerning the seeming Inequality of his Dispensations in afflicting good Men, and giving Prosperity to the worst of Men in this World...." Various answers were proposed. The rich man might be guilty of "Heart-Sins" which, though not apparent to the public, would be seen and punished by God. "When God deals best with men," said John Danforth, "they often prove worst.... Prosperity is no guard against the Entrance of Sin.... Kind parents with-hold Knives from their feeble Infants
though they cry for them, and Money from their Spend-thrift Children, because they love them; and why may not God be thought to Deny Prosperity to many, in Mercy to their Souls?"

Increase Mather chose as the topic for a Boston lecture in 1702 the quotation "The Wicked many times fare the better for the sake of the Godly...." His son Cotton consoled an audience a few years later with the thought that Providence "may Advance those, Who are Internally the Basest of Men." But, on the other hand, said Mather, God "furnishes Ill People with Abundance of Good, because he will Employ them to Do abundance of Good." This was the answer: the pursuit of wealth could be justified by the doing of good.

The seventeenth century had stressed diligence in a calling not for the pursuit of wealth but for the good of the soul. The Protestant Ethic was a spiritual discipline, not a social obligation. The pursuit of wealth for its own sake had always been suspect; the pursuit of wealth for the glory of God had proved too vague an end; but the pursuit of wealth for the specific purpose of doing good to one's fellow man was above reproach. It was the justification an acquisitive society needed to quell its religious doubts about getting and spending.

The doing of good, besides easing consciences, was
to be held out by the clergy as insurance against financial losses—as a sort of defense against Providence. The pious and charitable man was offered not only a guarantee against losses but a promise of financial gain from the active doing of good. "'Tis the word of our Saviour, To him that has it shall be given" was indeed a comfortable doctrine for an acquisitive society.

In 1695 Cotton Mather had produced two sermons, "The one, handling, the true cause of loosing; the other, giving the true way of thriving..." under the title Durable Riches. These two sermons set forth the ideas about piety and the pursuit of wealth that were to become the philosophy of Do-Good. The pursuit of wealth for its own sake, said Mather, was not only sinful but financially hazardous: "Riches are a Fine, Gay, Speckled Bird; but it is a Bird in the Bush, not a Bird in the Hand; and it is our setting our Eyes too much upon it that causes its Flight from us; that is, our Loss of it." The possession of wealth and the pious use of it, however, would insure against such losses. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

The idea here is common enough to earlier Puritan sermons on the pious acceptance of God's will in the affairs of this world, but the difference is in Mather's twist of emphasis which makes piety into a promise of increase in worldly prosperity. If one is truly devout,
accepting his place in the world and the losses Providence may visit upon him, he is virtually assured of having "twice as much" both spiritually and materially as he had before.

Passive piety, however, was not enough to insure "the true way of thriving." To do that one had to give in order to get. The second sermon's text is Ecclesiastes XI: 1,2: "Cast thy bread upon the Waters; for thou Shalt find it after many Dayes. Give a Portion to Seven, and also to Eight." The casting of bread upon the waters was not, Mather was careful to point out, "an Allusion to Ventures at Sea," but money devoted to "pious uses." The man who devoted part of his estate to charity would "Receive an Hundred fold now in this Time; and in the World to come, Eternal Life." Temporal rewards were explicitly promised for the doing of good: "Honour the Lord with thy Substance; and so shall thy Barns be filled with plenty."

The means of honoring the Lord were not left to the imagination but were carefully and specifically prescribed. First among the "pious uses" of wealth was the payment of "Publick charges," i.e., taxes for the support of the government and the church. This, next to the support of one's family, was the most important economic demand of Massachusetts society. That it should be listed in a sermon on charity is an indication of just how
close-knit the fabric of politics and religion was in Massachusetts Bay. It was all of one cloth. The participation in society required fulfilling all its demands, political, social, economic, religious. Failure in one implied failure in all.

Second on Mather's list was lending money to those in need of help "for their Trades." Deuteronomy XV: 7, 8: "Thou shalt open thy Hand wide unto thy poor Brother...." was to be used as lubrication for the wheels of the Massachusetts economy. Third was the "Giving of what may supply the Necessities, and Relieve the Calamities of the Indigent...." 43 Last of the pious uses, reminiscent of Winthrop's pleas for forgiving debts in 1630, 44 was the exhortation to forgive a financial debt, to write it off "when the Hand of God has made the Borrower unable to Discharge it." 45

That two of this sermon's four "pious uses" of capital have to do with the lending of money to those in need of cash for business ventures or for necessities when trade or crops were bad is one proof of how heavily economic life weighed upon religious thought. Winthrop had devoted a good part of his speech to the first settlers aboard the Arbella to the proper Christian attitudes toward "giving, lending, and forgiving" 46 and Cotton Mather, over half a century later, discussed "paying, lending, giving and forgiving." 47
The exhortations to do good in Puritan Massachusetts were closely allied to the distribution of capital for the good of society as well as the spiritual welfare of individual souls. What good was the Protestant Ethic unless the capital accumulated by diligence was put to some good use? The problem of disposition of wealth acquired in the pursuit of a calling had troubled Puritans from the beginning. Richard Baxter had written, "You may labor to be rich for God...." but did not elaborate on how the money should be used. What Cotton Mather did was to spell out the practical use of riches so accumulated. The way to true prosperity, said Mather and others, was to devote one's capital not to lending at high rates but to the doing of good. The giving of gifts, however, must be done "Readily..." not "as though they stuck in our Fingers" and generously: "That which we are to Cast, is Bread; it must not be a Scrap...." Charity must be liberal, said Mather, in order that the holy community might prosper.

The definition of prosperity was still, after nearly a century, ambiguous, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century it was more and more often used to mean material, rather than spiritual security. Prosperity, however, still depended on spiritual attitudes toward faith and works. As a sermon preached at Salem in 1712 puts it, A town filled with religious citizens
was "a Town that wants not, either for Sun, or for Shield, and, No Good Thing shall be withheld from it... God will grant much Prosperity to such a Town; But with this Consummating Stroke upon it; when He does Good unto them, the Prospering People shall with an Ingenious Gratitude, set themselves to think, What Good am I now called unto the doing of?"

Residents of Salem were threatened with poverty if they did not devote themselves to works of charity. "God punishes a Town, with one Impoverishing Disaster after another, & condemns it, and confines it unto Perpetual Poverty, where they are indisposed to such Sacrifices." One had only to observe the rules of religion, including moral behavior and Sabbath-keeping in addition to charitable actions, to be rewarded with material success: "Have not the Temporal Blessings of God, on the Estates of those Persons, and those Places, who have kept up the Religion of the Sabbath, been so observable as to Satisfy any One, that he shall be no loser in his Temporal Interests, by the most careful Sabbatizing?"

The temporal rewards of piety and charity were preached not only in Boston and Salem and not only by clergymen who were allied with what might be called the Massachusetts Establishment. Samuel Moody, who depended on subsidies from the General Court to eke out his living
in the frontier community of York, Maine, was a firm believer in Do-Good. "Do Good," he advised his congregation, "and verily thou shalt be fed." Said Moody, "If we...believe and trust in God, He will enable us to Answer, both the Demands of our Creditors, and the Necessities of our Families: We shall have where-with to Live Honestly, and Comfortably."

James Allin, pastor of the church at Brookline, preached a thanksgiving sermon entitled What Shall I Render? which reiterated the fact that prosperity on earth was heaven-sent as a reward for good behavior:

Seek Judgment, Relieve the Oppressed, Judge the Fatherless, and Plead for the Widow—If we are willing and obedient, we shall eat the good of the Land, and God will Bless the ensuing Year, and crown it with His Goodness, and make all his Paths drop fatness....

There is little difference between these assurances and those offered by Benjamin Wadsworth, pastor of Boston's First Church, in a 1718 lecture. God, said Wadsworth, "makes Himself Debtor to the Liberal Charitable giver; God will pay him again, God wont suffer him to be a loser."

The sermons of the early 1700's on the relationship between the doing of good and the acquisition of wealth show how Puritan ideology was subtly changed by the pressures of society. While prosperity in the seventeenth century had always had strong spiritual connotations, in
the eighteenth century Cotton Mather found it necessary to preach an entire sermon reminding his audience to seek "soul prosperity," not material success. Prosperity for the seventeenth century Puritans had been a spiritual and temporal state to be striven for, to work and pray diligently for, but by the eighteenth century prosperity was social and material success, to be attained and insured against losses by attention to good works.

Early in the eighteenth century the popular mind, with many promptings from the clergy, arrived at the conclusion that "to do Good, is, to be Good." The shift of emphasis from faith to works in sermons, however, was by implication only, for to preach the efficacy of good works for salvation was Arminianism, and that, to Puritan orthodoxy, was heresy. Sermons exhorted congregations to good works and promised rewards, but such advice always managed to stay just within the limits of orthodox theology. Puritan preachers, it has been aptly said, were Calvinists when they prayed and Arminians when they preached. While vigorously denouncing Arminianism by name, the Massachusetts clergy preached the doing of good.

As Massachusetts' population grew and its society became more complex, good works became more important than faith in maintaining the health of the community. Doing
good to one's neighbor, or at least refraining from doing wrong to him by cheating, evading debts, profiteering, etc., became a matter of preserving the economic and social stability of the holy community—and, at the same time, a means of individual advancement, both spiritual and material.

That God was the cause of temporal as well as spiritual prosperity had always been implicit in Puritan ideology, but never before had the idea been made so explicit and repeated so often. Never before had earthly rewards been so often used as an enticement to religious behavior. Instead of diligence in a calling, in which the over-zealousness of many had brought discord and instability to the holy community, the clergy would preach the doing of good as a means of attaining prosperity. Instead of the Protestant Ethic, new social ethic would transform acquisitiveness into an "ornament of the spirit."

As specific instructions to do good took precedence over general exhortations to be good, a subtle shift occurred in men's attitudes toward their roles in society. When what a man did became more important than what he was, when actions (good works) spoke louder than words (testimony of conversion experience) a new dimension was added to the holy community. New opportunities for individual development, spiritual and material, social and political, were made possible.
FOOTNOTES

1. Mather, A Weaned Christian... (Boston, 1704), p. 8.

2. Miller, Colony to Province, p. 401.


4. The Pious Man's Directions... (Boston, 1729), p. 22.

5. C. Mather, Christodulius (Boston, 1725), p. 10.


7. On contentment, acceptance of Providence, and maintenance of social order see Eliphalet Adams, A Discourse Putting Christians In Mind to Be Ready for Every Good Work... (Boston, 1706); Benjamin Colman, Piety and Duty of Rulers... (Boston, 1708); Colman, Some Reasons and Arguments... (Boston, 1719); Thomas Foxcroft, Discourse Concerning Kindness... (Boston, 1720); Nathaniel Henchman, A Holy and Useful Life... (Boston, 1721); Increase Mather, Burnings Bewailed... (Boston, 1711); Mather, Discourse Concerning the Death of the Righteous... (Boston, 1711); Solomon Stoddard, The Way for a People to Live Long... (Boston, 1703); and the following sermons by Cotton Mather: The Armour of Christianity... (Boston, 1704); Fair Dealing... (Boston, 1716); The Fisher-mans Calling... (Boston, 1712); The Good Old Way... (Boston, 1706); Icono-clastes... (Boston, 1717); Ornamental Piety (Boston, 1707); Pascentius (Boston, 1714); The Retired Christian, or the Duty of Secret Prayer... (Boston, 1703); Pastoral Desires... (Boston, 1712); The Man of God Furnished... (Boston, 1708).

8. Some Reasons and Arguments... (Boston, 1719), p. 12. Miller uses the first part of this passage, ending with 'where God has set us' (Colony to Province, p. 400) to...
argue that the clergy were guilty of exhorting the poor to remain poor as a means of social control and as a way of cementing the clergy's alliance with the upper classes. For another interpretation, see below, pp. 87–89, 92–93.


10 Ibid., p. 163.

11 C. Mather, Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704), p. 44.

12 Colman, Some Reasons and Arguments..., p. 12.

13 Henry Flynt, Twenty Sermons (Boston, 1739), p. 182.


15 Boston Records, VIII, 93. The town meeting at last voted to build a separate workhouse to be financed by the town funds and by private subscription. It was built in 1735. (Boston Records, XII, 111, 235–240). Similar discussions and establishments for the indigent appeared in other Massachusetts communities before the middle of the eighteenth century. Ipswich built an almshouse in 1717 and used it as a school when it was unoccupied. (Waters, Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, II, 396–397). Amesbury discussed building an almshouse with Newbury and Salisbury, in 1737 and again in 1741, but met with little success. (Joseph Merrill, History of Amesbury and Merrimac [Haverhill, Mass., 1850], pp. 200–206).

16 Sreec, The Surest Way to Advance a People's Happiness and Prosperity... (Boston, 1720), p. 18.

17 Danforth, The Duty of Believers to Oppose the... Kingdom of Sin... (Boston, 1708), p. 8.

18 Wadsworth, Vicious Courses, Procuring Poverty... (Boston, 1719), p. 4.

20. Wadsworth, Vicious Courses, p. 4.

21. See Miller's chapter on "Do-Good," Colony to Province, pp. 395-418. Miller argues that the clergy, feeling their prestige and the state of religion both declining, made an attempt to market religion by preaching ideas which appealed to the upper classes. Many sermons and tracts were "addressed, shamelessly, to the poor as an incurable class" (p. 401) in an effort to control the lower classes whose aspirations order. With one or two exceptions, however, most of the works Miller refers to were either regular Sunday sermons or Thursday lectures addressed to church congregations which included both rich and poor. See, for example, John Barnard, The Hazard and Unprofitableness of Losing a Soul to Gain the World (Boston, 1716); Barnard, The Peaceful End of the Perfect and Upright... (Boston, 1714); Robert Breck, The Surest Way to Advance a People's Happiness... (Boston, 1721); John Danforth, The Vile Prophanations of Prosperity... (Boston, 1704); Samuel Danforth, The Duty of Believers... (Boston, 1708); Henry Flynt, Twenty Sermons... (Boston, 1739), especially sermons XV, XVI; Andrew Jones, Black Book of Conscience... (26th ed., Boston, 1732); the following sermons by Cotton Mather: The Case of a Troubled Mind... (Boston, 1717); Honesta Parsimonia... (Boston, 1721); Lex Mercatoria (Boston, 1704); Piety and Equity United... (Boston, 1717); A True Survey... (Boston, 1712); Valerius, or Soul Prosperity... (Boston, 1723); A Very Needful Caution... (Boston, 1707); Joseph Sewall, A Caveat Against Covetousness (Boston, 1718); Peter Thacher, The Fear of God Restraining Men... (Boston, 1720); Benjamin Wadsworth, Fraud and Injustice Detected... (Boston, 1712); William Williams, The Danger of not Reforming Known Evils... (Boston, 1707).

22. See pp. 5-32.


24. Ibid., p. 28.


26. Ibid., p. 2.

27. Ibid., p. 13.


*The Vile Prophanations of Prosperity*, pp. 6-7.


Quoted in Sewall, *Diary, II*, 50.

Mather, *Ornamental Piety*, pp. 6-7.

See Robert S. Michaelsen, "Changes in the Puritan Concept of Calling or Vocation," *NEQ*, XXVI (1953), 315-336. Michaelsen, citing Baxter, Mather, and Steele, comes to the conclusion that late 17th-century Puritans preached an undiluted Protestant Ethic, exhorting all to industry and the acquisition of wealth, and condemned sins of the flesh more than covetousness. Riches came to be regarded as desirable; poverty became associated with sinfulness, says Michaelsen, where earlier Puritans saw riches and poverty both as assigned by God. For a different view, see earlier pp. 60-61. Clive Day, "Capitalistic and Socialistic Tendencies in the Puritan Colonies," AHA Report, 1920, 223-235; finds in "several score" sermons no exhortations to wealth, but rather condemnation of those who selfishly seek worldly goods. Day finds the preaching of contentment, not the doctrine of the calling, emphasized. Day's sources cover approximately the same period as this study.


C. Mather, *The Serviceable Man* (Boston, 1690), p. 18. This nicely ambiguous quotation and similar sentiments were often used in sermons. For other references to the profits of religion, see James Allen, *What Shall I Render?* (Boston, 1721); Colman, *The Merchandise of a People*, (Boston, 1736); Thomas Crosby, *The Work of A Christian*... (Boston, 1736); C. Mather, *Benedictus* (Boston, 1715); Benjamin Wadsworth, *Essay for the Charitable Spreading of the Gospel*... (Boston, 1713).
37. Boston, 1695.


39. Ibid., p. 20.

40. Ibid., p. 1.

41. Ibid., p. 23.

42. Ibid., p. 24.

43. Ibid., p. 8.


45. Mather, Durable Riches, p. 9.


47. Mather, Durable Riches, p. 4.


49. Mather, Durable Riches, p. 11.

50. Mather, A Town in its Truest Glory...Recommended Those Things by Which a Town May Come to Flourish with All Prosperity (Boston, 1712), p. 13.

51. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

52. Ibid., p. 40.

53. For a biographical sketch of Moody, see Shipton, IV, pp. 356-365.


55. Ibid., p. 7.

56. What Shall I Render (Boston, 1721), p. 27.
57 Essay for the Charitable Spreading of the Gospel, (Boston, 1718), p. 34.

58 Valerius: or Soul Prosperity..., (Boston, 1723).

59 New England Courant, March 12, 1726.


61 R. H. Tawney, in the foreword to Weber's Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, says the Protestant Ethic, with its sanction of acquisitiveness, "converted a natural frailty into an ornament of the spirit." (Weber, Protestant Ethic, p. 2).
CHAPTER V

ESSAYS TO DO GOOD

In the effort to adapt religion to the needs of an acquisitive, worldly society the Puritan clergy of the early eighteenth century gradually developed a set of ideas that seemed to resolve the tensions between seventeenth-century ideology and eighteenth-century society. Variously referred to as "practical godliness," "practical piety," or simply as doing good, the essence of the new creed was charity to one's neighbor. It was no longer enough to lay hold on the Covenant, to profess one's faith in public meeting, to be diligent in one's calling and devout in one's prayers to be a member in good standing in the holy community.

Covenant ideology had been supposed to provide the roots of a healthy social plant from which the flowers of charity and contentment would naturally grow. But by the early eighteenth century that social plant had produced contention and covetousness, not to mention a cluster of "evil customs" the recounting of which comprised the nearest thing to a formal liturgy in Puritan services. The holy community, it seemed, was more in need of sermons on charity and morality than on Covenant theology.
The Massachusetts clergy found

Sabbath-breaking, Profane Swearing and Cursing, a Contemptuous Neglect of God's Publick Worship, Notorious Disobedience to Parents, Murders, Malicious Quarrellings, Fornications, Adulteries, Filthy Unclean Practices, Drunkenness, Rioting, Chambering, Wantonness...Night-Revels, Mad Frolicks, Stealing, Cheating, Defrauding, Oppressing, Promise-Breaking, Lying, Slandring, Backbiting, Perjuries, Briberies....

rampant in a society supposedly dedicated to moral and spiritual perfection.

While the irrepressible "Silence Dogood" argued in the New England Courant that "Night-Walkers" who offered their charms in Boston's streets were "not only beneficial to those who have been fatigu'd with Business or Study...." but provided work for shoemakers as well, it was generally acknowledged that the Puritan community was more than ever in need of reformation. Benjamin Colman reminded Governor Dudley and the General Court in 1708 that "Our Comfort greatly depends on the Laws in force, and from time to time Enacted, against Blasphemy, Cursing and Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, Undutifulness of Children and Servants, Seditions, Murders, Pernicious Strifes, Uncleanness, Drunkenness, Thefts, Abuses of our Neighbours Good Name, and whatever Moral Turpitude there is to pollute a Land and corrupt Good Manners."

Private citizens were encouraged to aid civil authorities in the enforcement of public morality through the practice of informing on offenders. For the convenience of would-be informers Cotton Mather published in
1704 an abstract of Massachusetts laws against social
crimes entitled A Faithful monitor...with Some Directions
and Encouragements, to Dispense Due Rebukes, & Censures..."
The disorders listed are those endlessly recounted in
contemporary sermons: swearing, drunkenness, theft, for-
nication, lying, gambling, Sabbath-breaking, etc. These
were crimes punishable by law, by fine, imprisonment,
corporal punishment, or a combination of the three. Fines
usually went "to the use of the Poor." In some cases, such
as gambling, half the fine went to the informer—am
encouragement, no doubt, to zealous enforcement.

Peace in the holy community was not to be disturbed,
and if disturbance presented itself it must be suppressed.
In 1710 The Constable's Pocket-book appeared with instruc-
tions and admonitions for local officials in performing
their task of preserving the peace. If a constable
neglected his duties he was to be fined twenty shillings,
the fine going to the poor of the town. Persons who did
not conform to the social demands of Puritan community
life were to be placed outside it, perhaps, Cotton Mather
thought, in a house of correction in each county. Such
outcasts were

Rogues, Vagabonds, Common Beggars...Pretenders
to any Subtil Craft, Juggling, or Unlawful Games
or Playes, Pretenders to Skill in Physiognomy,
Palmistry, Fortune-telling, &c. Common Pipers,
Fidlers, Runawayes, Stubborn Servants, and
Children, Common Drunkards, Common Night-Walkers,
Wanton Persons, Common Railers and Brawlers, and
such as Neglect their Callings, and provide not for their Families.

The comprehensiveness of Mather's list suggests how far the holy community had wandered from the original model. It is safe to say there were no "Common Pipers, Fidlers," much less fortune tellers in John Winthrop's Boston. These people were not, however, all put into workhouses. Here the ideal departed as usual from the reality. Boston did have a workhouse, but it was seldom full, and most other communities did not even consider the necessity of such institutions until the 1730's and 40's.

If civil authorities were reluctant to take responsibility for the health of the holy community it was up to the laity and the clergy to put matters right. "Every man must be his Neighbours Keeper, and Counsellor, and, if there be a call for it, he must be his Neighbours Reprover too." Pleas for every man to be his brother's keeper and to assume responsibility not only for his own spiritual welfare but for that of his neighbor as well became more and more frequent in sermons of the early eighteenth century. An equal amount of attention was devoted to exhorting the practice of the Golden Rule and to doctrines such as the proposition "That Kindness to others is one part of Practical Christianity, of indispensable Obligation...." Benjamin Colman put it more bluntly: "We do not comfort and assist one another thro' this Land as we ought...."
Time and again the clergy preached simple consideration for one's fellow man and pleaded for harmony in society—in business, in church affairs, in personal relationships. In more graphic terms Cotton Mather often found

...the Husband a Churl, and the Wife a Shrew; the Parent an Ostrich, and the Child a Viper; the Master a Dragon, and the Servant a Drone; Brethren and Sisters like Dogs and Cats to one another; Neighbours Unsociable and Unneighbourly; Rulers like Hungry Lyons, and Subjects like Raging Waves of the Sea; Pastors but Idol Shepherds, and Flocks no otherwise a Crown but as a Crown of Thorns unto them.  

Joseph Sewall, in a funeral sermon on the death of John Winthrop's grandson Wait Still Winthrop in 1717, contrasted earthly shortcomings with heavenly bliss: "There will be no difference in opinion, no distance in affection....There are no misunderstandings, no ill humours, no envy, no uncharitable jealousies among the Saints in Light...." Sewall's ideal was the original Puritan ideal. In a holy community as in heaven itself there should be no "difference in opinion." Saints should and must be of one mind. It was this concord, this conformity that the Puritan community had failed to make a reality, and the awareness of that failure made contention harder to bear.

In an effort, perhaps, to set the holy community on the right track, to combat immorality and discord, in 1710 Cotton Mather published a little book entitled Bonifacius, An Essay Upon the Good, that is to be Devised and Designed,
by those Who Desire to Answer the Great End of Life, and to Do Good While they Live. This work, better known by its running title, Essays to Do Good, has been called "possibly the most important work in the early eighteenth century." As an "engine of piety" it became the ancestor of "small-town, Middle Western culture of the nineteenth century...." Benjamin Franklin read it and claimed it influenced his life profoundly.

The philosophy embodied in Bonifacius was not particularly new, even in the early eighteenth century. The ideas in it had been present in one form or another for at least twenty years. Cotton Mather simply gathered them from his own and other sermons and tracts, into a concise and practical form. A vital part of Christian life had always been the doing of good to one's fellow man. The Puritans who came to the New World with John Winthrop had assumed such a doctrine needed no explicit statement.

What was new about Mather's Essays to Do Good was precisely its explicitness, its spelling out of ways and means to do good. That such instructions, comprising a hand-book for those who aspired to do good but were not quite sure how best to go about it, was necessary in Puritan society by the early eighteenth century tells a great deal about the changes in the ideology of the holy community. Vague exhortations to be and to do good were no longer enough; the means must be explained, the actions dictated.
The doing of good was for the good of mankind as well as for the glory of God. John Winthrop had spoken with great urgency of the need for the holy community to be "knit together" and the design of Mather's book was "for brethren to dwell together in unity." The end was the same; only the means had changed.

It has been argued, however, that in early eighteenth-century New England the practice of charity—the doing of good—was allied with an effort to keep the lower classes from disrupting the social order. The poor were exhorted to remain poor; charity was invoked not for the health of souls but for social control. The preaching of contentment, according to this view, was to prevent the lower classes from nourishing aspirations which would threaten the traditional social order, and the doing of good was to be done only by the upper classes. This interpretation would make Do-Good a means of cementing an alliance of religion with the propertied classes, thus giving the clergy a foothold in a society where their prestige was waning.

Welding the cause of religion to that of property might be a clever means of obliging champions of property to protect the churches; but it also meant that when spokesmen for religion undertook to instruct the people in obedience, to urge upon them resignation to fixed status, they in effect made Christianity a minion of property. In the name of piety, they required the poor to be content with poverty.17

While it is true that much of the social criticism in
the early eighteenth century dealt with fears of the disruption of the traditional social order and with the apparent disintegration of time-honored social distinctions and deference, with "refusing the decent ceremony of the Hat or Knee...and neglecting to give Persons their proper Titles of Respect...tending to destroy all Distinctions of Order and Quality among Men, & Throw all into Confusion," Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good* is anything but a book in support of resignation to fixed status.

To argue that Do-Good was a defense of the status quo and that acceptance of charity was urged upon the lower classes would require a uniform definition of "the poor" and an assumption that references to "small mechanics," "men in Leather Clothes," "the poorer sort," and "the meaner sort" all meant the same group of people. This simply was not the case.

Cotton Mather thought of the poor, for example, not as the lower classes in general, but as those who were literally unable to feed and clothe themselves. The incompetent, the insane, the indigent, the widows and orphans were the poor, the ones to be done good to. "Find out, Who is Poor; Who Sick, who Heart-Broken with Bereavements, and Stooping and Sinking under heavy Burdens; and be Thoughtful, What shall be done for them!" Mather scattered observations of the state of the poor throughout his diary and recorded his own charitable
intentions, which were more concerned with improvement than resignation. Mather, for example, resolved to "Releeve a poor man clothed with Rags, at the South End of the Town; 21 At the same time, rebuke him, and exhort him." On another occasion he noted:

I thought I would now take some care of the Poor, that have not a Character of Godliness upon them. So I found out ten or a dozen of such People, and I carried them some Releeve of Money, and I gave them the best Council I could, and I left also a good Book in their Hands to direct and excite the Practice of serious Religion on them. Who can tell, but in this Way of treating such poor Creatures, there may be some of them won over to the Ways of Piety! 22

Had Mather wished to set apart the poor as a separate and permanent part of society he could easily have devoted a chapter to them in Bonifaciual, which addresses itself "unto MAGISTRATES, unto MINISTERS, unto PHYSICIANS, unto LAWYERS, unto SCOLEMASTERS, unto Wealthy GENTLEMEN, unto several Sorts of OFFICERS, unto CHURCHES, and unto all SOCIETIES...." Instead, Mather held out to these and "unto all CHRISTIANS" the promise of spiritual and temporal improvement. Do good, said Mather, "Knowing that whatsoever Good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord." 24

In the first chapter Mather acknowledges that his readers are motivated by self-interest:

How full, how full of devices are we, for our own secular advantage! And how expert in devising many little things, to be done for ourselves!...It is with a very strong application of our thoughts, that we study, what we
shall do for ourselves, in our Marriages, in our voyages, in our bargains, and in many, many other concerns, wherein we are solicitous to have our condition easy.25

The worldly, says Mather, would do well to "Assume and assert the liberty of now and then thinking on the noblest question in the world: What good may I do in the world?" The doing of good is ingeniously coupled with the promise of its reward, which could be both spiritual and material. The promise is based on the nicely ambiguous Biblical quotation, "Unto Him That Hath, Shall Be Given." Says Mather: "The men who give themselves up to GOOD DEVICES, and who take a due notice of their opportunities to do good, usually find a strange growth of their opportunities."

In the chapter on "Rich Men" Mather is more explicit on the rewards of those who do good: "And very often, I say, very often, they have been rewarded with a strange success, and increase of their estates; even in this world, seen the fulfilment of that Word: 'Cast thy grain into the moist ground; for thou shalt find it after many days.' And that word: 'Honor the Lord with thy substance; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty.' History has given us many and charming examples, of those, who have had their conscientious decimations followed and rewarded with a surprising prosperity of their affairs; and small mechanics, or husbandmen, have risen to estates, which
once they never durst have dreamed of."

Here is the Protestant Ethic reinterpreted in its American setting; the first version of the American Dream tentatively put forth. Not diligence in a particular calling, but the diligent practice of Christian charity would allow men to rise to estates undreamed of. Provided the small mechanics and husbandmen followed the right rules, Mather seems to be saying, there is no reason they must be forever bound to one economic status or one social class. Was this the Mather who, it has been said, employed Do-Good as a means of social control, who saw his duty as "reducing those who, as his father put it, go in 'Leather Cloathes' to consent that good be done to them and for them"?

Essays to Do Good, while by no means defending or even advocating social mobility, for the first time suggests that an upward movement (accomplished by the right means, i.e., honest industry and charity) might not be the social catastrophe that some thought. Mather was not preaching insubordination in a deferential society, but merely realizing and acknowledging that change was possible and not always for the worse. Do-Good was thus in a sense democratic: "A mean mechanic, who can tell what an engine of good he may be, if humbly and wisely applied unto it!" Even a man in leather clothes might have some
aspirations, but he must realize them by charity, not
tfrugality, by giving and praying, not getting and
spending.

There are poor in Essays to Do Good who exist to be
done good to, but they are the "very Poor" who cannot make
a living unaided. "It were an Excellent Thing, for Persons
that are very Poor, to have a Godly Contentment, sweetening
of their Poverty...Satisfied in the Low Degree that God
has ordered for them...." On the other hand, said Cotton
Mather, "It were an Excellent Thing, for men to whom
God has given Power to get wealth, to have a strong Persuasion and Impression of their Stewardship: to be Rich in
Good Work, to abound in Riches of Liberality."

Throughout the early part of the eighteenth century
other clergy echoed the idea that the poor should be grateful
and that doers of good would be rewarded. The poor
they referred to, however, were not the lower classes in
general, but the incompetent and the destitute.

Peter Thacher, minister at Middleborough, observed
that God "tries our Obedience, by disposing the poor to be
always with us. Mercy to the Poor, hath a gracious notice
taken of it, and ample rewards annexed to it." Benja-
min Colman said that God takes note of the good done by a
charitable man, and "accordingly rates the Gift in the
Book of Account." Charity did not go unrewarded. The
charitable man would be "satisfied in Himself, God answers
him in the Joy of his Heart. The greatest Pleasure of Life is to be good and do good."

The poor man, if he were properly grateful, might come in for his share of pleasure too: "when the poor Man exceeds in Grace, in the manner of his receiving; and then the Tide turns on his Side." "The poor especially should be very thankful to God, for his unspeakable Gift to them, in all the Charities of the rich and bountiful."

John Barnard advised a Boston audience in 1712 to "Let therefore a suitable Portion of your worldly Interest, be more peculiarly devoted to His Service, that all the rest may be Sanctified to your use and improvement." Guilt over perhaps too-diligent pursuit of worldly goods could be assuaged by charitable contributions, and what remained enjoyed in good conscience.

In addition to the doing of good by individuals Cotton Mather had another remedy for the ills of Massachusetts society. The organization of "Reforming Societies" was not Mather's own idea, but one which had, as he said, "begun to grow somewhat into fashion" in England and elsewhere. The English versions began in the late 1690's and caught on around the turn of the century in New England. Mather was toying with the idea of association for beneficial results by 1693, when he published Rules for the Society of Negroes, proposing the establishment of a society to meet on Sunday evenings for prayer
and mutual exhortations to virtue. One of this society's resolutions was "We will...set our selves to do all the Good we can, to the other Negro-Servants in the Town."

In 1703 Mather's *Methods and Motives for a Society to Suppress Disorders* appeared, exhorting people to join in a fight against sin: "What can One man do, when he is Alone?" A society, however, could inquire "What are the Disorders that we may see Rising among us? And what may be done, either by our selves, immediately, or by others, thro' our Advice to suppress those Disorders?"

That Mather meant his social panaceas for all classes and in fact encouraged the crossing of class lines in social organizations is evident from his enthusiastic citation of English societies for the reformation of manners in which "Noblemen, Clergy-men, Gentlemen, United with Persons of Inferiour Stations." Mather advised, however, that societies keep themselves fairly exclusive, requiring unanimous consent for the admission of a new member. Secrecy was also advised, the better to inform against and improve the conduct of non-members. Mather had high hopes for success such as the English models had: In London alone, said Mather, "thousands of Impious and Scandalous Persons were punished..." The principal work of these societies, however, was "to DEVISE GOOD."

And so there came into Puritan society in the early eighteenth century one of the first forms of community
association: the society for the doing of good. It has met ever since, through the years, under various names, in the cause of social concern. The first groups, mostly societies of "young men," originated in Boston. Mather, with perhaps some exaggeration, observed in 1710 that there were "more than Six times Three Such Private Societies in this Neighborhood." They sprang up in other Massachusetts communities—Marblehead, Rumney-Marsh, Ipswich, Medfield, Newtown, Brookline, Sudbury, Taunton, Wenham—from the early 1700's to the Great Awakening.

In 1705, for example, the Reverend Samuel Danforth, minister at Taunton, arranged for concerned citizens to meet with him once a month "to consult what might be done to promote a Reformation of Disorders." Soon "the greatest Part of the Youth" had been gathered into "Societies for religious Exercises....The good Effect whereof was the putting an End to & utter Banishment of their former disorderly and profane Meetings to drink, &c."

Led by ministers on both ends of the theological spectrum from New Light to Old, these societies were "engines of Piety" designed to revive both religious fervor and social concern. They must "look upon themselves as bound up in a Bundle of Love, and count themselves obliged, in very close, and strong Bonds, to be serviceable to one another," said Cotton Mather, who
observed confidently that where such groups met they "kept up a lively Christianity in the Neighborhood.""

Winthrop had hoped the city upon a hill would be "knit together," but by the beginning of the eighteenth century the best that Mather could hope for was "bundles of love." If the social fabric could not be whole, at least it could be strengthened by small knots of believers, select groups which adhered to the ideas of the founders and practiced Christian love in pious prayer and practical charity.

Countless sermons to societies of young men on the virtues of early piety attest to the zeal of the clergy in implanting religious attitudes in the young. If it was perhaps already too late for the parents at least the children might be marshalled to correct the sins of society. The New England Primer instructed small children in the philosophy of Do-Good:

Good Chilren must,
Fear God all Day,
Parents obey,
No false thing say,
By no Sin stray,
Love Christ alway,
In secret pray,
Mind little play,
Make no delay,

In Doing Good.

For worldly pleasures must be substituted the delights of doing good: "The pleasure of doing good is a refined, rational, intellectual pleasure, 'tis angelical; and there is no sensual pleasure that is any ways comparable
to it." The wealthy must learn instead of frugality, to "count that best laid up, which is so laid out."

Even the poorer members of society could contribute their widow's mite in church collections and share in the "promises made by God to those that are merciful and bountiful...." Do-Good's promises were open to all and for the advancement of all.

As Cotton Mather had said a few years ago before the publication of Essays to Do Good, the good Christian and the good citizen must be able to say, "I wish, That all my Talent, my Learning, my Estate, and my Interests of all Sorts, may be Employed in doing all sorts of Good, for all sorts of men." If all sorts of men could unite in combating sin and doing good, "And if Religion flourish, and Iniquity dare no longer show its Head, what Prosperity of every Kind, and in every Thing, would be the Consequence?" Diligence in the pursuit of social evils was bound to produce prosperity for all.
FOOTNOTES

1 Wadsworth, Fervent Zeal, p. 8. Other arrangements of this same list are to be found in William Burkitt, The Poor Man's Help... (Boston, 1731); Benjamin Colman, The Piety and Duty of Rulers... (Boston, 1708); William Cook, A Sermon Preach'd to a Society... (Boston, 1730); William Cooper, Serious Exhortations... (Boston, 1732); John Danforth, Judgment Begun... (Boston, 1716); Danforth, Vile Prolphanations of Prosperity... (Boston, 1704); and the following works of Cotton Mather: Advice from the Watch Tower... (Boston, 1713); The Bostonian Ebenezer (Boston, 1698); Fair Weather... (Boston, 1691); Fisher-Man's Calling... (Boston, 1712); Frontiers Well-Defended... (Boston, 1707); The Good Old Way... (Boston, 1706); C. Mather et al., A Serious Address (Boston, 1726); and A Testimony Against Evil Customs... (Boston, 1719). The two preceding selections bear the names of the leading ministers in Boston. See also Joseph Sewall, He That Would Keep God's Commandments... (Boston, 1728); Peter Thacher, The Fear of God... (Boston, 1720); Benjamin Wadsworth, An Essay to Do Good... (Boston, 1710); John Webb, A Seasonable Warning... (Boston, 1720); Samuel Willard, Israel's True Safety, Boston, 1704.

2 New England Courant, Sept. 24, 1722.

3 The Piety and Duty of Rulers..., p. 16. For similar thoughts on the unity of religious and civil authority see Colman, Sermon for the Reformation of Manners... (Boston, 1716). In that same year, after a recommendation from the clergy, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed An Act for the Promoting and Encouraging of Children and Servants in the Principles of Christianity. (Journals of the House, I, 142-154, 156).

4 This was something new. Heretofore the enforcement of such matters was usually placed in the hands of officially-delegated individuals. In 1698, for example, the Boston selectmen appointed a committee "to inquire into & Consult, the most proper methods to be taken for
preventing Disorders, for the setting the poor on Work, and the Reforming of what is amiss, and to advise about any matter or thing whatsoever wch shall be by them judged to be of bennifit and advantage to the town...."
(Boston Records, VII, 231.)

5 Boston, 1704.
6 Boston, 1710.
7 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
9 Thomas Foxcroft, Discourse Concerning Kindness (Boston, 1719), p. 7.
10 Piety and Duty of Rulers (Boston, 1708), p. 28.
11 The pleas of the clergy for an end to "contention," for better relations in families, in churches, and in society are strikingly similar and often repeated. See, for example, William Balch, Duty of a Christian Church... (Boston, 1735); Balch, Reconciliation with an Offended Brother... (Boston, 1740); Colman, Piety and Duty of Rulers, (Boston, 1708); Colman, Sermon for the Reformation of Manners... (Boston, 1716); John Danforth, Judgment Begun at the House of God... (Boston, 1716); Foxcroft, Discourse Concerning Kindness... (Boston, 1720); Israel Loring, Private Christians... (Boston, 1735); and the following sermons by Cotton Mather: Armour of Christianity (Boston, 1704); Christianus per Igenem... (Boston, 1702); Febrifugium... (Boston, 1717); Heavenly Conversation... (Boston, 1710); A Man of His Word... (Boston, 1713); Orphanotrophium... (Boston, 1711); Piety and Equity... (Boston, 1717); Religious Societies... (Boston, 1724); Rules of a Visit (Boston, 1705); A Town in its Truest Glory... (Boston, 1712); The Serviceable Man (Boston, 1690); A Very Needful Caution... (Boston, 1706); Wonderful Works of God Commemorated... (Boston, 1690). See also Solomon Stoddard, The Way for a People... (Boston, 1703); Wadsworth, Assembling at the House of God (Boston, 1711); Wadsworth, Fervent Zeal (Boston, 1718).
12 Mather, Piety and Equity, p. 23.

13 Sewall, Character and Blessedness of the Upright... (Boston, 1717), p. 37.


15 Franklin's account of his reading of Essays to Do Good was given in his letter to Samuel Mather, Cotton Mather's son: "When I was a boy, I met with a book entitled Essays to Do Good, which I think was written by your father. It... gave me such a turn of thinking as to have an influence upon my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a doer of good than any other kind of reputation; and if I have been as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes all the advantages of it to that little book." Quoted in Thomas J. Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), I, 93.

16 Miller, Colony to Province, pp. 395-418.

17 Ibid., p. 399.

18 Foxcroft, Discourse concerning Kindness, p. 18.


20 Pastoral Desires, (1712), p. 72.

21 Diary, II, 335.

22 Ibid., I, 580.


24 Ibid.
29 Miller, *Colony to Province*, p. 415.
30 *Bonifacius*, p. 32.
31 For other references to the doing of good as a means of advancement and self-improvement, see *Bonifacius*, pp. 39-40, 56, 73, 79, 107, 110-114, 133, 138-139, 150, 152.
38 The Hazard and the Unprofitableness of Losing a Soul to Gain the World (Boston, 1712), p. 46.
39 The first benevolent society in New England was formed in Boston by and for Scottish immigrants in 1657. The Scots Charitable Society provided for its sick and poor and buried the dead. (Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness* [New York, 1955], pp. 81-82.) Mather mentioned this society in his diary in 1711 and noted that because of his contacts with the University of Glasgow he "might have some Claim to an Admission in their Society." *Diary*, II, 49.
40 Boston, 1693.
41 Boston, 1703, p. 2. In 1702 Mather recorded in his diary the establishment of two societies, a "Society for the Suppression of Disorders" composed of "About a dozen or fourteen good men, whereof some are Justices...." and a Society for the Propagation of the Christian Religion composed of "a Number of our more significant Gentlemen." Diary, I, 418-419. See also I, 500, 516, 517, 523, 531; II, 27, 42, 77, 89, 107, 131, 156, 235, 268, 573, 602, 634, 767.

42 Methods and Motives for...Disorders, p. 5.

43 Ibid.

44 Christianity Demonstrated (1710), p. 41.

45 The names of these towns are taken from the locations mentioned in printed sermons. See the following numbers in Charles Evans, American Bibliography: A Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States...1639...1820 (Chicago, 1903-1934): 3384, 4112, 3102, 3809, 3396, 3010, 3408, 3041, 3153, 4413, 3120. It is likely that many other communities had such societies, but reliable evidence is lacking.

46 Quoted in Shipton, III, 245.

47 Religious Societies (Boston, 1724), p. 2.


49 Israel Loring, Private Christians, p. 22. This is a paraphrase of Mather's statement in Bonifacius, pp. 150-151.

50 Colman, The Merchandise of a People... (Boston, 1736), p. 9.

51 Ibid., p. 23.

52 Christianus per Ignem (Boston, 1702), p. 52.

53 Ibid., p. 6.
CHAPTER VI
THE DOING OF GOOD: AMERICAN AND ENGLISH VERSIONS

In many ways Cotton Mather's *Essays to Do Good* was peculiarly American, coming from a land of social and economic opportunity and encouraging those traits considered natural to the American character: acquisitiveness, enthusiasm, and boundless optimism. In a century which came to consider the happiness and advancement of man in this world as important as the glory of God in the next, Do-Good offered a unique opportunity for individual improvement and social reform. In an age of joint-stock ventures Do-Good praised individual effort; in a period when little attention was paid to the common man, Do-Good extolled his potential; in an age which stood in awe of offici aldom Do-Good minimized the importance of magistrates.

In another way Do-Good was part of a larger concern with piety, morality, and charity which occupied England and other parts of Europe during the eighteenth century. In England the impulse toward the doing of good, while innovative in form, was in content well within traditional views of social order. A nascent social conscience showed
itself in efforts to reform society's manners and morals and to help the poor, but such efforts widened rather than crossed social class barriers. The eighteenth century in England was an age of philanthropy, a time of marshalling vague charitable impulses into associations for the founding of hospitals, charity schools, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and its successor, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. It was even the time of the founding of Georgia, a colony in America where the poor were to make their fortunes by cultivating silkworms.

The early eighteenth century was also a period of interest in social reform, a time when private citizens began to concern themselves with aiding civil authorities in the enforcement of laws against vice. The same list of sins—profaneness, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, lewdness—which appeared in New England was also familiar in the mother country, and the methods of combating these evils were similar.

It was felt in Old and in New England that one way to reform society was through associations for that very purpose: Societies for the Reformation of Manners, which appeared in Massachusetts under the name of Societies for the Suppression of Disorders, were founded in England before the end of the seventeenth century. By 1697 there were twenty such societies in London alone. The idea,
aided by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, soon spread as far afield as Germany, Brussels, Holland, and Denmark. It also spread to Massachusetts. A tract entitled Help to a National Reformation reported in 1705 that Boston, Massachusetts, had "Religious Societies without Number."

The English societies, the first of which appeared in 1691, were founded in an effort to combat lax morals after the Glorious Revolution. Since English law required witnesses for conviction of drunkenness, swearing, gambling, and lewdness, the Societies for the Reformation of Manners set about witnessing. Some societies devoted themselves exclusively to discovering a particular vice. A society of tradesmen in London directed all its efforts toward witnessing against lewdness. The English societies published an annual "Account of the Progress made in Suppressing Profaneness and Debauchery" from 1693 until 1738, listing those prosecuted. In all, during that 45-year period, 101,683 persons came under prosecution from the efforts of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners.

The efforts of private citizens to improve society were given encouragement and cooperation by Parliament and the Crown. Parliament, for example, passed an act in 1695 "For the more effectual suppressing of profane cursing and swearing" which was to be read four times a year in all
churches. William III issued a Proclamation for Preventing and Punishing Immorality and Prophaneness in 1697, and Queen Anne followed that with a similar one at her accession in 1702.

Not all of English society, however, was concerned with the state of manners and morals. Despite the claims of the Rev. Josiah Woodward, in An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners in 1699 that "Considerable Citizens of London" belonged to the organizations, and that "many Societies and Bodies of Men, of different Ranks and Persuasions" took part in the reform efforts, the movement languished for want of support from the upper classes.

The eighteenth-century campaign for morality did not seriously affect the upper classes, whose own morals somehow escaped prosecution. Contemporary writers such as Defoe and Swift criticized the gulf between theory and practice which exempted the upper strata of society from censure. Defoe was of the opinion that reformation of society should begin at the top and progress downward, and Swift suggested that Queen Anne should give preferment only to the virtuous and the pious, thus making it fashionable to be so.

There were certain individuals, such as those who formed the corporation to settle the colony of Georgia as a haven for English poor, and the indomitable Thomas Bray,
who founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, whose social concern manifested itself in the forming of associations for charitable purposes. Charity schools, for example, were often joint-stock enterprises. They, like the societies for the reformation of morals, flourished from the end of the seventeenth century to the second quarter of the eighteenth. Because of religious and political antagonism involving High Church and Low Church parties the S.P.C.K., which contained members of both parties, withdrew its support of both the societies and the charity schools. After the 1730’s it turned to the publication of religious tracts and the carrying of the Gospel abroad under the aegis of the Society for Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The English upper classes tended to limit their doing of good to participation in certain charitable associations and joint ventures.

The English aristocracy did not concern itself much with the actual first-hand doing of good, nor was it expected to do so. As Bishop Kidder wrote,

'Tis advisable that the alms-giver bestow his Charity with his own hands. That he do both inquire out for the Needy, and afterwards relieve them himself....'Tis a most Christian office to do this, and would well become persons of the greatest Quality and the fairest Circumstances. But this may not be expected. Kidder's doubts about the inclination of the rich to do good reflect the same cynicism that Richard Baxter, writing
How to Do Good to Many in 1682, had felt about the like-
lihood of the poor to be grateful for charity.

Baxter's book, How to Do Good to Many, or, the Pub-
lick Good is the Christians Life, is said to have inspired
Cotton Mather's Essays to Do Good, but the differences
between the two works are more striking than the similari-
ties. In contrast to Mather's book, which constantly
stresses the benefits, both spiritual and temporal, which
accrue to the individual in the doing of good, Baxter's
work offers little promise of reward, and in fact cautions
its readers to expect little gratitude for good works.
Selfless devotion to the public good, says Baxter, promises
no reward but a heavenly one.

Baxter is not concerned with self-improvement but
with "the good of multitudes, of City and Church and Common-
wealth...." For "the truly Christian Merchants and other
Citizens of London" Baxter's work is a handbook on ways
to enhance "the common good of England." "He that will
do his Country good," says Baxter, "must know what is
good, and what is bad...."

What was good, for Baxter, was, as it was for all
Puritans, the fulfillment of God's will and the realiza-
tion of God's glory on earth. Like Cotton Mather Baxter
acknowledges that "First we must begin at home with our
own Souls and lives...and then to our nearest Relations,
and Friends, and Acquaintance, and Neighbours." While
Mather, despite his talk of "a perpetual Endeavour to do good in the world" really confines his ideas to the immediate community, Baxter does not stop there. He proceeds to "our Societies, Church and Kingdom, and all the world....Tho God set up Lights so small as will serve but for one room, and tho we must begin at home...the good of the world, the Church, of Nations, of multitudes, is greater than the good of few."  

Baxter, considering how such universal good can be obtained, is at once more expansive and more cautious than Cotton Mather. Great good is to be desired, but the doer of good for Baxter must "be furnished with considerable abilities: Especially prudence, and skill in knowing, when, and to whom, and how to do it. Without this he will do more harm than good." Mather, while warning his readers that doing good often brings criticism, never for a moment suggests that good works themselves might be misdirected, or that any special talent or knowledge is required to do good. All that is necessary for Mather is "an unfainting resolution to do good, and an unwearied well-doing," —whatever the consequences.

Baxter's catalog of ways of doing good is somewhat similar to Mather's: feeding men's bodies as well as their souls, setting up schools, instilling piety in the young, distributing Bibles and religious books, supporting the ministry, and praying for rulers and magistrates. On
their attitudes toward magistrates Baxter and Mather again part company. Both agree that the power of a ruler comes from God, and that such power must be employed for the service and glory of God. Baxter, however, assigns to magistrates a special and unquestionable rank among doers of good: "Magistrates are the Capitals in the Societies and Publick Affairs of mankind. They are placed highest that they may have an universal influence."  

Mather, on the other hand, begins his chapter on magistrates in a flurry of indecision as to their exact role:

> The opportunities that RULERS have to do good, are so evident, so numerous, and they have so much power to do good, that he who addresses them, cannot but be overwhelmed with some confusion of thought, where to begin, or when to conclude, or how to assign a fit order unto them.  

Between the lines of this section is the implication that magistrates are actually not much good at improving society, and in fact are not always themselves good. The best Mather can offer such men is to

> ...observe a decorum in our PROPOSALS, and not suppose unattentiveness or incapacity in those to whom we offer them. It shall only be proposed, that since MAGISTRATES are usually men of abilities, they would retire sometimes to a contemplation on that generous point, What good may I do in the world?

Baxter is convinced beyond doubt that "A Prince, a Lord, a Ruler, must do much more good, in promoting Piety, Conscience, Vertue, than the best inferiors...."
but Mather takes just the opposite view:

My friend, thou art one that makes but a little figure in the world, and a brother of low degree, behold, a vast encouragement! A little man may do a great deal of hurt. And then, why may not a little man, do a great deal of good! It is possible the wisdom of a poor man, may start a proposal, that may save a city, serve a nation! A single hair applied unto a fly, that has other wheels depending on it, may pull up an oak, or pull down an house.

The whole point of Mather's argument is that humble efforts produce mighty results; that "small men" may do as much as those in high places for themselves and their society. For Mather it is the doing of good itself, not the magnitude of it, which is valuable. To those whose opportunities to do good are small, he offers a consolation:

'He that praises God only on a ten-stringed instrument, with his authority extending but unto his family, and his example but unto his neighborhood, may have as thankful an heart there, and as high a place in the celestial choir hereafter, as the greatest monarch, that praiseth God upon a ten-thousand-stringed instrument, upon the loud sounding organs, having as many millions of pipes as there be people under him.'

Where Cotton Mather's argument for doing good is based on the benefits good works bring to the doer as well as to society, Baxter's concern is with the public good, even at the expense, literal and figurative, of the individual. Baxter offers no reward for the doing of good but pleasure: "there is a present delight in doing good, which is it self a great reward. The Love of others makes it delightful to us: And the pleasing of God..."
While Mather acknowledges the pleasures of good works as "inexpressible," "unparalleled," and "angelical," he is certain that "While we are at work for God, certainly, He will be at work for us, and ours: He will do for us, more than ever we have done for Him, far more than we can ask or think!" To make his point even more explicit Mather quotes Thomas Gouge, a philanthropic clergyman who was a friend of Baxter's:

I am verily persuaded, that there is seldom any man, who giveth to the poor proportionably to what God has bestowed on him, but if he does observe the passages of God's Providence towards him, he shall find the same doubled and redoubled upon him in temporal blessings."31

Baxter did not agree that a charitable man could hope for much in this world. Where Cotton Mather is full of enthusiasm and optimism, Baxter is cynical and resigned:

The poor are so many and so indigent that no man can answer their desires. If you give twenty pound to twenty of the poor, forty or an hundred, that expected the like, will murmur at you and be displeased....32

He that does good, says Baxter, must "look for his reward in Heaven, and not as the Hypocrite in the praise of men, much less as the worldling in the hope of temporal advantage...."

Worldly hopes of temporal advantage, however, were not without value as enticements to charity, as Cotton Mather well knew. So did Sir Robert Nelson, an Englishman whose writings on the benefits of doing good are quite similar to Mather's. In 1715 Nelson published An Address to Persons
of Quality and Estate, a message for those who "value their high Rank and Station in the World, chiefly as it is an Instrument of doing Good." Nelson's work is literally a gospel of wealth. It is similar in intent to Cotton Mather's Essays to Do Good in that it holds out the promise of temporal rewards to the doer of good. Even though Nelson claims that "If Doing Good were attended with no other Advantage, than the Pleasure that results from such Actions, surely that is sufficient to make You in Love with it," he nevertheless says that "GOD vouchsaftes very often to increase the Riches of those, who lend to Him by having Pity upon the Poor." Lest his meaning be unclear, he continues: "An unexpected Inheritance, the Determination of a Law-Suit in our Favour, the Success of a great Adventure, an advantageous Match, are sometimes the Recompences of Charity in this World."  

Nelson, as does Mather, spells out for his readers the ways and means of doing good, but for a reason Mather did not need: "But since we cannot expect that Persons of Quality should have an actual Knowledge of that great Variety of Misery, which afflicts the Lowest Part of the World...." The contrast between this statement and a question from Mather's Essays to Do Good, "Would it be amiss for you, to have always lying by you, a list of the poor in your neighborhood, or of those whose calamities may call for the assistances of the neighborhood?" is
the contrast between two worlds.

Do-Good, American-style, never assumed an unbridgeable gulf between "persons of quality" and the lower classes. While Baxter's *How to Do Good to Many* and Nelson's *Address to Persons of Quality* are explicitly directed toward the upper classes, and while the writings of others on charity in the eighteenth century assume a great social gap between the doers of good and the recipients of it, Mather's *Essays to Do Good* is a manual of practical charity intended not for one class but for the community at large. Nearly one-half the book is addressed "Unto people of all conditions and capacities."

Robert Nelson, on the other hand, devoted an entire book to prescribing piety, patience, and resignation for the "poorer sort." Nelson published another book in 1715 entitled *The Practice of True Devotion*. It was written "in so short a compass, that it might be easily purchased by the poorer sort, for whose use this undertaking was chiefly engaged in...." It has in it no promise, no hint of improving one's earthly condition by the practice of piety. Nelson offered that only to the rich. To the poorer sort he preached humility, contentment, and acceptance of Providence.

Cotton Mather had already decided that piety had practical applications, not the least of which was the efficacy of prayer in "jogging the high wheels of Providence." Piety rightly applied by any sort of man offered
the prospect of improvement, both spiritual and temporal. In *Essays to Do Good* Mather assumes that the poor man who is an honest and devout participant in Puritan society will fit himself into the category of "all Christians," apply the injunctions of Do-Good, and attain success both in this life and the next. There is nothing in the pages of *Essays to Do Good* to compare with the English attitude toward the lower classes as expressed, for example, in Geoffrey Mandeville's *An Essay on Charity Schools* (London, 1723): "Men who are to remain and end their days in a Laborious, Tiresome and Painful Station of Life, the sooner they are put upon it at first, the more patiently they'll submit to it for ever after."

The American sermons preaching contentment and resignation were not addressed to the lower classes as a group, but to those of all classes whose covetousness and worldly aspirations led them into business practices and extravagances which threatened Massachusetts' economic and social structure. Those whose aspirations exceeded their abilities, whose participation in the "general Scramble" after economic prosperity consisted in running up debts, in borrowing and not repaying, in buying finery which they could ill afford, said Cotton Mather, had better be content with less and do more good. To those who adhered faithfully to the Puritan social ethic, who practiced the Puritan virtues of diligence, piety, and morality, Do-Good
offered the combined pleasures of spiritual and economic success.

While the English were using a double standard: rewards for the upper classes and resignation for the lower—the Puritans in Massachusetts had managed to reconcile the Protestant Ethic and the doctrine of Providence for all. Contentment for rich and poor alike was to be found in the doing of good, and in addition the doing of good carried with it the promise of prosperity. Do-Good in America was the Protestant Ethic reinterpreted.

In the seventeenth century prosperity had been achieved by diligence in an earthly calling and by owning the Covenant. In the eighteenth century, however, socially acceptable prosperity was won not so much by plain diligence, which too often degenerated into avarice, nor by owning the Covenant, because appearances were not enough, but by practical piety evidenced in the doing of good to one's fellow man. God would grant prosperity not to the diligent, but to the doers of good. Doing good, at least, could be measured by society, as the state of a soul could not.
FOOTNOTES

1 G. V. Portus, Caritas Anglicana (London, 1912), p. 61. This is an excellent study of the rise and fall of the religious societies and the societies for the reformation of manners in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

2 Bodleian pamphlet 265, quoted in Portus, p. 113.

3 See Portus, pp. 30-49, for discussion of the aims of the founders.


5 Portus, pp. 254-255.

6 Ibid., pp. 59-60.

7 See Woodward, op. cit., p. 10; Portus, p. 67 n.

8 Woodward, p. 10.

9 Ibid., p. 25.


concludes that the major assumption of the eighteenth
century was that the poor and the lower classes existed
for the benefit of the upper classes.

12 See H. B. Fant, "Picturesque Thomas Coram,
Projector of Two Georgias and Father of the London
Foundling Hospital," Ga. Hist. Q., XXXII, 77-104, and
R. A. Roberts, "The Birth of an American State:
Georgia, an Effort of Philanthropy and Protestant

13 See V. W. Crane, "The Philanthropists and the
Genesis of Georgia," AHR, XXVII, 63-69 for an account
of Bray's charitable activities. See also Marshall,
English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 43-46;
Betsy Rodgers, Cloak of Charity: Studies in Eighteenth-
Century Philanthropy (London, 1949), pp. 5-10 for dis-
cussions of attitudes and motives for charitable
endeavors in this period.

14 For an exhaustive study of the charity schools,
see M. G. Jones, The Charity School Movement (London,
1938).

15 For a discussion of political opposition's
effects on the charity schools, see Jones, pp. 110-134.
For its effect on the religious and reforming societies,
see Fortus, pp. 88 ff.

16 Bishop Richard Kidder, Charity Directed (London,
1676), quoted in Gray, pp. 85-86.

17 Miller (Colony to Province, p. 411), says
Mather's work "may owe something to a work of Baxter's
published in 1682, but undoubtedly owes more to reports
reaching New England around 1700-1710 about the forma-
tion in England of societies for the reformation of
manners." Most of Essays to Do Good, however, is
devoted not to societies but to the general practice of
piety and charity.

18 Richard Baxter, How to Do Good to Many (London,
1682), p. 5.

19 Ibid., p. 6.
20 Ibid., p. 5.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 10.
23 Bonifacius, p. 13.
24 Baxter, pp. 35-36.
25 Bonifacius, p. 91.
26 Ibid., p. 96.
27 Baxter, p. 37.
28 Bonifacius, p. 25.
29 Ibid., p. 63.
30 Ibid., p. 150.
32 Baxter, pp. 11-12.
33 Ibid., p. 12.
35 Ibid., p. 245.
36 Ibid., p. 251.
37 Ibid., p. 254-255.
38 Ibid., p. 103.
39 Bonifacius, p. 59.

40 The Practice of True Devotion, vi.

41 Mather, The Retired Christian, or, The Duty of Secret Prayer... (Boston, 1703), p. 32.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: FROM THE SACRED TO THE SECULAR

As sociology occasionally draws upon history for examples from the past to illustrate present theory, history may in turn find certain sociological theories useful in explaining the past. The "sacred-secular" theory, for example, which describes societies in terms of their aversion or willingness to change, is particularly applicable to Puritan Massachusetts. A "sacred" society is one which is either unwilling or unable to change its basic values and social demands. It has a rigid value system which may be explicitly stated in formal creeds, catechisms, and rules. Often the role of explaining and justifying the "sacred" social values may be assigned to a special group such as priests.

In the seventeenth century the colony of Massachusetts was a near-perfect model of a "sacred" society. Covenant theology, set forth in the Cambridge Platform, amplified by synods, altered reluctantly by the Half-Way Covenant, and justified by the clergy, was the prescribed value system for Puritan Massachusetts. Based on a contract with God which could be fulfilled only by certain types of behavior, the Covenant set forth love of God and love
of neighbor in prescribed ways as the primary social
demands. The founders of the early church-settlements
drew up covenants which were blueprints for a perfect
society, a holy community in which all members must bind
themselves to practice Christian love, to submit their
differences to mediation, and to abide by such rules of
social and political organization as the community should
device. Members of the holy community must attend church,
be devout in prayers, and diligent in their callings.
This was the prescription for perfection. Alteration of
it could only be assumed to lead to imperfection, and thus
social change, seen as departure from the ideal, was
anathema to the founders of Massachusetts Bay.

The drive for perfection—one has only to look at the
language of the initial covenants to realize how serious
the settlers were about it—was intensified by the iso-
lation of the colony. Separated from interference by
three thousand miles of ocean and the charter of the
Massachusetts Bay Company, the colony's founders were in
an ideal position to set up a perfect social model, a city
upon a hill. They were in agreement "that we shall by
all means labor to keep off from us all such as are
contrary minded, and receive only such unto us as may be
probably of one heart with us."

According to the "sacred-secular theory" a sacred
society's aversion to change is related to its isolation,
which may be geographical, ideological, or a combination of both. Strangers or individuals who do not conform to the prescribed values are objects of suspicion in the sacred society, which tends to isolate itself from them in one way or another. Howard Becker's description of social isolation in totalitarian societies is curiously descriptive of Puritan Massachusetts in the seventeenth century: "Not only are foreigners distrusted and in many cases excluded, but in addition many groups within the society are held to be subversive, at the very least, and are therefore expelled, imprisoned, or liquidated." Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, Robert Child, "warned out" strangers, and a number of Quakers would no doubt agree. Christian love, as practiced by the Puritans, was reserved for conformists. The aim of the holy community was not to generate new ideas but to realize and preserve existing ones.

As a sacred society seeks response, recognition, and security rather than new experiences, so did Puritan society. The Puritans sought response and recognition from God and from the rest of the world, and they sought security in Covenant theology. Above all they sought to glorify God by establishing a holy community. But God responded, so they thought, by punishing them; the rest of Europe failed to recognize their city upon a hill, and Covenant theology provided confusion instead of security.
The idea of the Covenant, the contract between God and man, bred confusion and insecurity because Puritan ideology could not clearly define the Covenant's terms. As the preceding chapters have shown, Puritan society's ambiguous attitudes toward wealth and poverty in this world reflected an uncertainty about the right means of achieving success in the next. The doctrine of Providence (stasis) and the idea of the Protestant Ethic (progress) were pulling the fabric of the holy community apart at the seams. Was the primary social demand contentment with one's lot or was it diligent pursuit of material gain? Apathy was dangerous; avarice a sin. How, in terms of the Covenant, was success to be measured?

As individuals, as churches, as an entire people the Puritans in New England had entered into a covenant with God, but for all their rhetoric they were never quite certain how to fulfill it or what form divine favor would take. How, they wondered, could God allow their city upon a hill to become materially prosperous and yet (so they thought) spiritually destitute? Having clearly in mind what the perfect society ought to be, they knew they had fallen short. Bewailing their sins in jeremiads, bound by a network of covenants, the seventeenth-century Puritans in Massachusetts viewed social change—worldly manners and morals, admiration of wealth and social position, and the aspirations of the lower classes to rise—
as declension, not progress.

Change, could not be kept out of the holy community, but it was unforeseen and unwelcome. For most of the seventeenth century it was met by laments for the lost virtues of the founders and predictions of doom for their progeny. Deviation from the past was seen not as development but as destruction of the ideal community.

By the end of the seventeenth century, however, new towns and new churches portended complexity and diversity where before had been simplicity and unity. Some settlements grew more urban, others, if anything, more rural. Some towns gave birth to other towns, some fought to contain new settlements in old boundaries. Some men, zealously practicing the Protestant Ethic, moved in search of economic opportunity; others remained fixed where Providence had put them. The enterprising sought new land, the less adventuresome preferred to wear out the old. New churches, sometimes spawned from theological disputes, weakened Puritan orthodoxy.

By the end of the seventeenth century the role of the saints was past, the charter of 1691 had placed a royal governor over the General Court, and the social ills diagnosed by the Synod of 1679 appeared to be growing worse. In the early eighteenth century the prescriptions for a perfect society, the demands placed on men to be diligent and devout and to succeed spiritually and
materially for God's sake were in need of alteration. The holy community had become a worldly one, and its values must take into account success in this world as well as in the next. In the uncertain present, what attributes—besides virtue—should a magistrate possess? How far into secular matters did the clergy's authority—once all-encompassing—extend? In a society which took itself seriously if any society ever did, how much, if any, levity could be allowed?

The case of the New England Courant, "the first clear encounter in America between worldly wit and other—worldly rigor," is the record of a society's reaction to change. Begun in the midst of the smallpox controversy in 1721, the Courant, with its irreverent attitude toward matters religious and social, trod on enough toes to get itself muzzled by the General Court. After two years that body found that "the Tendency of the said Paper is to mock Religion...that the Reverend and faithful Ministers of the Gospel are injuriously Reflected on, His Majesty's Government affronted, and the Peace and good Order of His Majesty's Subjects of this Province disturbed, by the said Courant...." No more damning indictment in that time could be imagined.

One did not make light of the Establishment; one did not disturb the peace and good order in Massachusetts Bay. One did not criticize the Reverend Cotton Mather, even
indirectly, as one of those who built up a reputation for piety so "every one will be ready to trust to their Honesty in any Affair whatsoever." The opinion of the Courant was that "a Clergyman, while he keeps within the Sphere of his Duty to God and his People, is an Angel of Heaven; but when he shall degenerate from his own Calling, and fall into the Intriques of State and Time-Serving, he becomes a Devil." The implication was clear: the clergy, instead of telling society how to conduct itself, had better tend to their churches and leave secular matters to others. Perhaps it was the clergy's condemnations of contention and of covetousness which bred such anti-ministerial sentiments.

When it was asserted that "many are disposed to give a fairer hearing to what they find in a News-Paper, than in a Sermon," when Silence Do-Good could write a wicked satire on funeral sermons, and when the time-hallowed practice of "lining out" the Psalms for congregational singing could be referred to as "praising God by Peace-Meal...a confused Noise, made up of Reading, Squeaking, and Grumbling." the secular had begun its encroachment on the sacred. Religious values—piety, morality, and charity—had not lost their hold on the community, but the means of maintaining them were changing. Old forms, old formulas were being questioned.

Social values in early eighteenth-century Massachusetts
were still a reflection, albeit a blurred one, of John
Winthrop's holy community. Political, social, and
economic developments, like rocks thrown into a placid
pond, had disturbed but not destroyed the static image
of the ideal community. The means of preserving it, how-
ever, were undergoing change. Christian charity, for
example, was still a cohesive social force, but with an
added appeal: to do good was to benefit the doer as well
as the recipient. "If we consider the Poor, we are pro-
mised a Blessing...." 14 "One natural Benefit of Trade
and Commerce to any People is, that it enlarges their
Hearts to do generous Things." 15

The doing of good as preached by Cotton Mather and
other Puritan clergy was done not so much to improve the
lot of the poor as to give satisfaction to the doers and
to ease consciences troubled by the pursuit of wealth.
Do-Good reaffirmed the social values of the holy community:
charity, piety, morality, and diligence. By its promise
that doing good brought prosperity for more doing good,
the philosophy of Do-Good vindicated the pursuit of
prosperity as the Protestant Ethic had not. The pursuit
of wealth for God's sake, the idea behind the Protestant
Ethic, had proved too vague an end for a society where
wealth, not birth, was the measure of social status. Max
Weber observed that "What the great religious epoch of
the seventeenth century bequeathed to its utilitarian
successor was, however, above all an amazingly good, we may even say a pharisaically good, conscience in the acquisition of money, so long as it took place legally."

In the case of Puritan Massachusetts, the acquisition of wealth, be it ever so legal, was fraught with moral danger, and required constant definition and justification. Said Cotton Mather: "To Desire Wealth, to pursue Wealth, to be thankful for Wealth, will not fix upon us the Brand of Covetousness; While we keep within the Rules prescribed unto us, by the God, who gives us power to get Wealth." The rules to be followed were those of personal piety, morality, and above all, charity.

It was charity, not frugality in the sense of accumulating capital, that Puritan society demanded. The free use of one's capital for the benefit of one's neighbor had been preached from John Winthrop to Cotton Mather. Mather's remarks on doing good are the Protestant Ethic rewritten:

Our opportunities to do good are our TALENTS. An awful account must be rendered unto the great GOD, concerning our use of the TALENTS, wherewith He has entrusted us, in those precious opportunities.... Our opportunities to do good, lie by unregarded, and unimproved, and so 'tis but a mean account that can be given of them."

Diligence must be exercised not only in the improvement of talents in an earthly calling as the Protestant Ethic demanded, but in the practice of Christian love as Do-Good demanded. "'Tis the best way of spending our
time; 'tis well-spent, when spent in doing of good." Charity, not frugality, was the way to wealth, for "the loaves will multiply in the distribution." If enough good could be done, said Mather, "what prosperity of every kind, and in everything, would be the consequence...." Frugality in the sense of avoiding extravagance and luxury was always a Puritan virtue, but frugality in the Franklinian sense of "a penny saved is a penny earned" was not. The laying up of capital did nothing for God's glory, nothing for the Puritan ideal of the holy community, and nothing for a new social aim: the happiness of man.

The holy community, which had existed for the founders only to reflect God's glory had, by the 1720's and '30's acquired an additional purpose: "As the ultimate and general End of all the Actions of Men, and so of Government, ought to be the glory of the divine Being, so the next & more immediate End, is the Happiness of the People." As a 1728 election sermon put it, "Happiness is what all Mankind are in an eager pursuit of, in this there is an unanimous agreement." It was not quite clear to the Puritans, however, just what happiness was. In 1719 the Reverends Cotton Mather, Benjamin Colman, and Benjamin Wadsworth published A Testimony against Evil Customs... condemning the levity in Boston social affairs, especially at ministers' ordinations, weddings, lectures,
military training-days, huskings, commencements, and court sessions. The eighteenth-century clergy, however, as their seventeenth-century predecessors had not, grudgingly granted that pleasure as well as business benefited a healthy society:

We suppose there are Diversions undoubtedly innocent, yea profitable & of use, to fit us for Service, by enlivening & fortifying our frail Nature, invigorating the Animal Spirits, and brightening the Mind, when tired with a close Application to Business.26

Recreation should "give place to Business...subserve Religion, and so minister to the great Ends of human Life, the Glory of God, and the Good of Men." 27

The Massachusetts clergy, faced with and sometimes infected by the worldliness of their society, had to compromise, to adapt to social change when they could not prevent it. No longer secure as undisputed moral and social arbiters, they had to choose between accommodating or accusing their worldly flocks.

In 1719 Cotton Mather preached an entire sermon on the dangers of sleeping during church services, and excused those who dozed unintentionally. "But when Persons, Voluntarily, Deliberately, with Intention, Set themselves to Sleep in Devotions; take long Naps, and make a Trade of doing so: Surely, the Transgression says, The fear of God is not before their eyes." 28

Benjamin Wadsworth was reduced to pleading with his congregation to attend church, at least on the Sabbath if they could not come to the
Thursday lectures. Being too tired from business, or lacking Sunday clothes, said Wadsworth, were poor excuses for absence from Sabbath services. Unlike Mather, Wadsworth found no excuse for sleeping during services, in fact, he warned his congregation, "We read of one, Sleeping at a Sermon, who fell down, and was taken up dead."

Although a spirit of compromise was evident, the eighteenth-century clergy of all shades of theological opinion devoted time to preaching the security of religion and the danger of being without it. Cotton Mather advised all frontier settlers: "Sirs, A Church-State well-form'd, may fortify you wonderfully!" ... "When you get up in a Morning, you don't know, but a fierce Enemy may bury his Pole-Ax in you before the Evening...." Years before the Great Awakening and Jonathan Edwards' Enfield sermon, Massachusetts ministers were describing in vivid terms the terrors of hell and the agony of death which awaited the unconverted. Doers of good, on the other hand, lived happy lives, died holy deaths, untroubled by the fears of hellfire. Their funeral sermons said so.

The Puritan funeral eulogy, although it borrowed from the jeremiad its warnings of dangers portended by the deaths of pious citizens, was a distinct literary form. As such it prompted young Benjamin Franklin to compose a satire containing "A Receipt to make a New-England
Funeral ELEGY." The age of the deceased does not matter, according to Franklin, but "it will be best if he went away suddenly..." Those wishing to compose such laments are advised to "season all with a Handful or two of Melancholy Expressions, such as, Dreadful, Deadly, cruel cold Death,...&c." In a subsequent issue of the New England Courant Franklin observed that "...some of the most considerable Persons among us have been constrain'd to do but little Good, and appear useless all their Life Time, to avoid the Persecution of an Elegy at their Death."

Franklin's wit provoked the Reverend Nathaniel Henchman, pastor of the church at Lynn, to remark in the course of a funeral sermon, "I well know that the Commonness of Funeral Orations have brought them into Contempt..." Mortality rates being what they were, opportunities for funeral eulogies were abundant, and such solemn occasions were employed to exhort the living to do good. Doing good by works of charity was always listed among the virtues of the departed. "'He that has Mercy on the Poor, happy is he.' She had Mercy on the Poor, and now happy is She...."

Said Benjamin Colman of Grove Hirst, a Boston merchant who died in 1717, "he was bless'd with a generous and publick Spirit to do Good." A broadside verse described the exemplary qualities of Hannah Sewall, the wife of Samuel Sewall, at her death in 1717:
Full of Contentment and Devoid of Strife, 
In Golden Characters She wrote her Life.

Wisdom, with an Inheritance, she had: 
Her Charities did make her Neighbours Glad. 39

Newspaper obituaries also extolled the charity of the departed. George Corwin, a minister who died at Salem in 1717, was praised for having been "a great Benefactor to our Poor." 40 The New England Courant itself, despite Franklin's satire, printed praises of the dead: Joseph Scotley, a baker whose obituary appeared in the Courant, was observed to have been a paragon of piety, honesty, and charity. 41 The Boston Newsletter noted that Daniel Oliver, a council member who died in 1732, was "one of the most considerable Merchants of this Place..." and that "He was a great Friend to the Poor..." 42 Of John Jekyll, customs-collector at Boston who died in 1733, it was said that "He excelled in Charity to the Poor, Compassion towards the Distressed, Hospitality to Strangers, and Benevolence to all Mankind." 43

The funeral eulogy was in a sense the first American success-literature. Here in the lives of exemplary persons might be read the key to success—which was piety, morality, and the charitable distribution of wealth. Material success had become as important in society as spiritual success; the former, at least, was measurable. Faith could be and probably often was simulated, as the sermons dealing with outward signs and hypocrisy attest, 45
but there was no mistaking financial prosperity.

The measure of a man had come to be his economic and social accomplishment, not his religious conversion. Doing good was a means of making such a measure of individual worth socially and religiously acceptable. While never claiming that works had any merit without faith, the clergy who accommodated and did not accuse—accusation being left to the proponents of the Great Awakening—drifted more and more into emphasizing utilitarian social aims and less to bewailing the secularization of society.

It was the philosophy of Do-Good that brought Puritan ideology down to earth, to a "regard of this Life." Doing good was done not only for the glory of God, but for the happiness it provided the doer and the opportunities, spiritual and material, that it promised. It was, in fact, a formula for social mobility. Men were advised to consider "what Opportunities and Advantages arise out of any peculiar Station and Capacity of Life we are in, for the Advancement of the Interest of our Lord, of doing Good to others, and of getting Good to ourselves, both in Regard of this Life and the Next; for both are to be taken Care of."

Do-Good, American-style, was in the eighteenth century and has been ever since colored with the idea of self-improvement as well as social justice. Edward Banfield, in *The Unheavenly City*, a recent study of urban
problems, observes that "In reality, the doing of good is not so much for the benefit of those to whom the good is done as it is for that of the doers, whose moral faculties are activated and invigorated by the doing of it, and for that of the community, the shared values of which are ritually asserted and vindicated by the doing of it." So it was in the days of Cotton Mather.

The ideal of a holy community where all men live together in harmony did not vanish with the Puritans or even with the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the Age of Reason, however, the means of achieving such an ideal had changed, and Puritan society had adapted to the change. Massachusetts society was on its way to becoming a secular society, one in which change was acceptable and in which communities would be built not for the glory of God but for the happiness of men.

Instead of jeremiads bewailing the sins of New England, Do-Good offered societies to reform sinners. Do-Good was the epitome of confident amateurism, a spirit which was to reappear in the know-how and self-confidence of Benjamin Franklin and in that peculiar American characteristic which Bernard Bailyn has called "refusal to truckle." If "small men" believed they could do as much good as the "greatest monarch," there was little to prevent them from believing that they were as good.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 154.

3 See, for example, Lockridge, New England Town, pp. 4-9 on Dedham's covenant. See also the covenant of the town of Woburn in Edward Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, J. F. Jameson, ed. (New York, 1910), p. 216.

4 Dedham Records, III, pp. 2-3, quoted in Lockridge, p. 5.

5 On isolation vs. accessibility of societies see Becker, op. cit., pp. 165-169.

6 Ibid., p. 168.

7 The New England Courant: A Selection of Certain Issues Containing Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Boston, 1956), Introd. by Perry Miller, p. 8.

8 New England Courant, Jan. 21, 1723; Boston News-Letter, Jan. 21, 1723.

9 New England Courant, Jan. 14, 1723. The reference is to Mather's advocacy of inoculation against smallpox at a time when public opinion opposed the practice.

10 Quoted in a letter by Peter Hakins in the New England Courant, Dec. 4, 1721. For other letters on the smallpox controversy and the clergy's role in it see the Courant, Aug. 7, 1721 to Feb. 5, 1722.
11 New England Courant, Dec. 29, 1721.

12 Ibid., June 25, 1722.

13 Ibid., Feb. 24, 1724.

14 John Colman, The Distressed State of the Town of Boston (Boston, 1720), p. 5.

15 Benjamin Colman, The Merchandise of a People (Boston, 1736), ii.


17 A Very Needful Caution...with Some Antidotes Against the Infection of Covetousness and Earthly-Mindedness...(Boston, 1706), p. 9.

18 Bonifacius, pp. 31-32.

19 Ibid., p. 149.

20 Ibid., p. 79.

21 Ibid., p. 133.


23 Edward Holyoke, Integrity and Religion to be Principally Regarded...(Boston, 1736), p. 25.


25 Boston, 1719.

26 Cotton Mather et al., A Serious Address to Those Who Unnecessarily Frequent the Tavern and Often Spend the Evening in Publick Houses (Boston, 1726), p. 10.

27 Ibid.
28. *Vigilium, or, the Awakener...* (Boston, 1719), p. 4.

29. See *The Danger of Hypocrisy...* (Boston, 1711), p. 13 ff.


33. See, for example, Mather Byles, *A Discourse on the Present Vileness of the Body...* (Boston, 1732). Byles, pastor of Boston's Hollis Street Church, opposed Whitefield and the Great Awakening. (See Shipton, VII, 477.) See also Isaac Chauncy, *The Loss of the Soul...* (Boston, 1732); William Cooper, *Man Humbled by Being Compar'd to a Worm...* (Boston, 1732). Cooper was an enthusiastic supporter of the Great Awakening. (Shipton, V, 624-634.)


36. *A Holy and Useful Life, Ending in a Happy and Joyful Death...* (Boston, 1721), ii.

37. Increase Mather, *A Discourse Concerning the Death of the Righteous...* (Boston, 1711), p. 25.


42. July 27, 1732.
**Boston News-Letter, Jan. 11, 1733.**

For other examples of funeral eulogies, see Benjamin Colman, The Peaceful End of a Perfect and Upright Life...the Death of Thomas Steel, Esq., Merchant in Boston...(Boston, 1735); Timothy Cutler, The Final Peace, Security and Happiness of the Upright...(Boston, 1735); Cotton Mather, A Good Character(Boston, 1723); John Rogers, The Perfect and Upright Man...(Boston, 1739); and obituaries in the following newspaper issues: Boston News-Letter, July 31, 1704; Dec. 23, 1717; May 22, 1721; Boston Post-Boy, July 28, 1735; Mar. 14, 1737.

These are too numerous to list, but for good examples see Isaac Chauncy, The Unprofitableness of Superficial or Hypocritical Religion...(Boston, 1731); Cotton Mather, The Religion of the Closet...(Boston, 1705); Mather, The Tryed Professor...(Boston, 1719); James Pierpont, Sundry False Hopes of Heaven...(Boston, 1717); William Williams, The Danger of not Reforming Known Evils...(Boston, 1707).


Edward C. Banfield, The Unheavenly City, p. 250.

Becker says that a society may be termed "secular" when change is accepted or tolerated as long as basic principles are in force, and when change can be justified in terms of these principles (pp. 156-157).

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A Note on Sources

The sermons and religious tracts printed in Boston in the 17th and 18th centuries are a curious and formidable collection of theology, ethics, and social criticism. For one who can tolerate their turgid prose, they provide a fascinating guide to what concerned society in general and the clergy in particular. They can be read as a fairly accurate reflection of social conditions, in that what the ministers condemned may be assumed to have been prevalent in society. Numerous sermons on the sin of covetousness, for example, suggest that there was indeed a good deal of preoccupation with getting and spending.

On another level the choice of sermon topics gives some insight into what subjects were of general interest, not only to the clergy but to the rest of society. Ministers, especially those whose living is provided by their hearers, are generally careful to preach about subjects that relate to and have some interest for their audiences. Thus changes in sermon topics, repetition of certain ideas, and changes in tone provide clues to the acceptance of certain ideas and to certain changes in society.
The sermons listed below were particularly valuable for this study. The rest are listed in Charles Evans, ed., *American Bibliography: A Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States...1639...1820*, Chicago, 1903-1934.

What the sermons have indicated has been, wherever possible, checked against subject matter in newspapers, broadsides, and selected diaries. Because of the quantity of source material on Puritan New England, limits were set at the use of printed rather than manuscript sources, and at the boundaries of Massachusetts, since it contained over half the Puritans in New England and Cotton Mather besides.

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