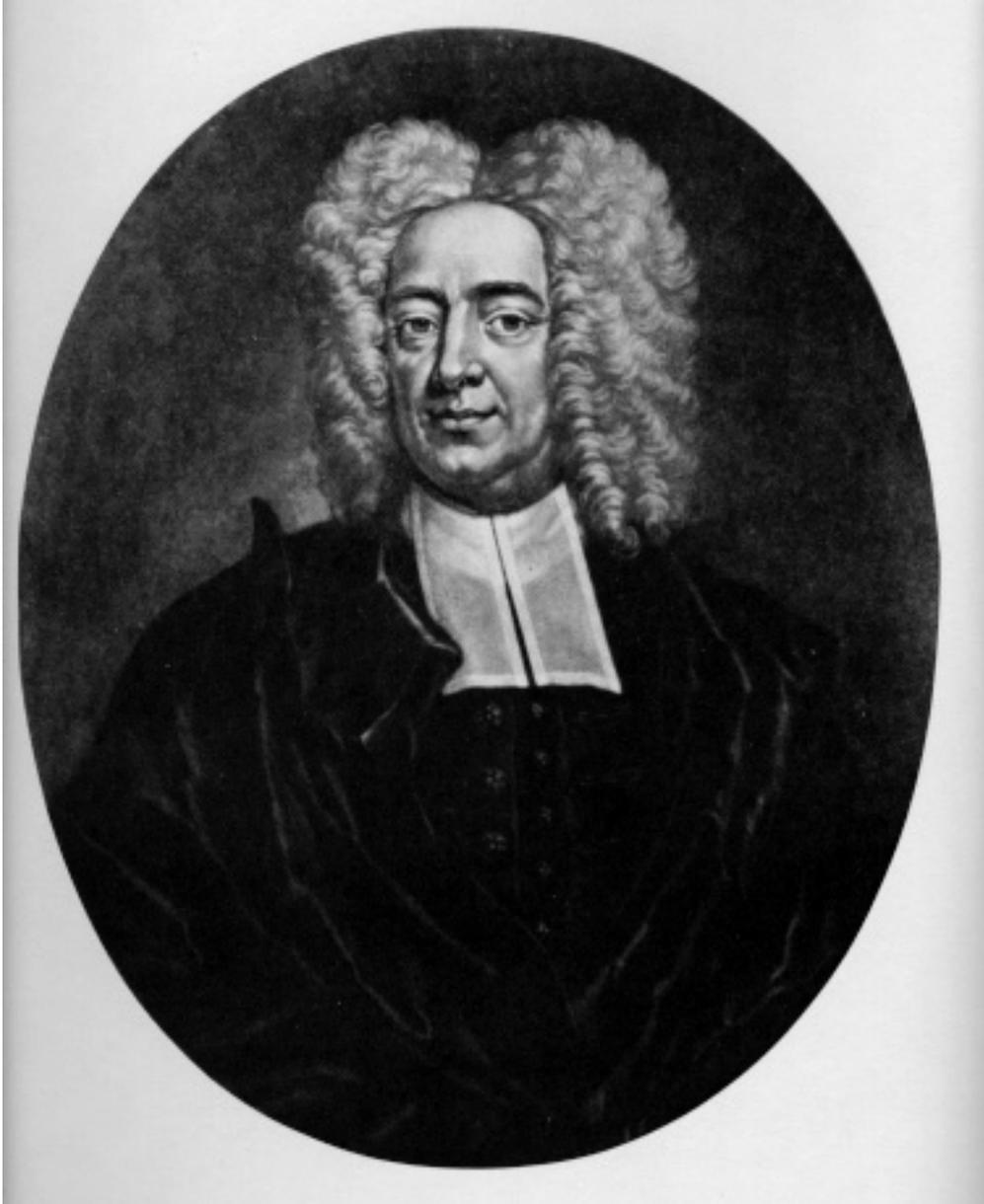


**I:8 DOING GOOD IN THE WORLD: COTTON MATHER AND THE ORIGINS
OF MODERN PHILANTHROPY**



Much as he prided himself on being "self-made," Benjamin Franklin freely acknowledged his debt to Cotton Mather. "When I was a boy," he wrote Mather's son later in life, "I met with a book, entitled Essays to Do Good, which I think was written by your father. It had been so little regarded by a former possessor, that several leaves of it were torn out; but the remainder gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an

influence on my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good*, than on any other kind of reputation; and if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book" (Franklin 1961, 197-8).

In some ways two men could not have been more different --Mather the leading clergyman in New England, scion of the colony's first great intellectual dynasty, and first American Fellow of the Royal Society; Franklin, the ambitious tradesman, the tenth child of a humble tallow chandler, and sometime runaway apprentice. Early in his career, Franklin found himself, writing anonymously in his brother's newspaper, the New England Courant, one of the loudest and most scurrilous voices against Mather and his political faction -- opposing even Mather's advocacy of smallpox inoculation. And yet he clearly took Mather for his model: his first contributions to the Courant, a series of satirical letters written under the name of "Widow Silence Dogood," were quite clearly a reference to Mather's 1710 pamphlet, Bonifacius. And, as he later acknowledged, both his underlying philosophy of doing good and the deeds themselves could be traced directly to Mather's influence. Like his mentor, he even ended up as a member of the Royal Society.

Cotton Mather (1663-1728) was the grandson of Rev. Richard Mather, one of the founders of Massachusetts Congregationalism and son of Rev. Increase Mather, the colony's leading clergyman in the second half of the seventeenth century, sometime president of Harvard, and chief defender of the Massachusetts charter against the Crown. He entered Harvard at the age of twelve and graduated in 1678. After teaching school and studying medicine, he finally decided to enter the ministry. By the age of twenty-five, he assumed the pastorate of the largest congregation in New England, Boston's North Church, which he served for the rest of his life.

Mather's active involvement in the witchcraft hysteria at Salem Village in the early 1690s has tended to eclipse the rest of his extraordinary career. Certainly no individual was more important in defining both the rationale and the methods for the subsequent development of New England institutions. As a Fellow of the Harvard Corporation (the youngest ever elected), he took a leading role in the struggle between the clergy

and wealthy laymen for control of the institutions. He had a profound influence on the efforts of the Connecticut clergy to establish their own "collegiate school" and was instrumental in persuading the London merchant, Elihu Yale, to make the liberal gift to the college, which was named in his honor. He advocated the creation of temperance, missionary, and Bible societies, the establishment of libraries for working men, associations for the establishment of morality and public order, and the education of the negro.

If his involvement in the witchcraft hysteria pointed to Mather's roots in the intellectual soil of a pre-scientific age, his courageous and controversial championship of smallpox inoculation underline his importance as proto-modern man of science. He had read in the Transactions of the Royal Society of the methods used in Turkey to prevent smallpox and, during an outbreak of the scourge in the early 1720s, encouraged Boston physician Zabdiel Boylston to try them out, using his own son as the first experimental subject. Mather's 1721 pamphlet, An Account of the Method and further Success of Inoculating for the Small Pox in London excited vicious attacks -- by Franklin, among others [Franklin's own son, who had not been inoculated, would die of the disease in 1736, a fact that he "regretted bitterly."]. Crowds rioted in the streets, denouncing this interference with God's providence as blasphemous; his house was firebombed.

This uproar was the turning point in his career. He was refused the presidency of Harvard, which he had long coveted. His political influence was destroyed. And it was only with the greatest difficulty that he held onto his pulpit in the face of the "incredible scandals" being circulated by his enemies. He solaced himself with writing (he published more than 400 books and pamphlets in his lifetime) and in striving to do good for his fellow citizens.

Bonifacius bridges two worlds -- the late medieval epoch out of which Puritanism emerged (and which is in many ways epitomized by Winthrop's "Modell") and the modern epoch of self-determined individuals and voluntary associations. Winthrop embraced the concept of spiritual sovereignty, but resisted its economic and political

implications: for him, community was defined by the interdependence of the poor and humble on the wealthy, learned, and dependable; as such, it was inseparable from the State, which remained the ultimate arbiter to the community's best interests and which, in all cases, stood above the claims of individuals.

For Mather, on the other hand, because the State and society were untrustworthy and subject to corruption, the source of a truly Christian community was, first of all, the reborn individual and, secondly, the capacity of such individuals to voluntarily associate for the purpose of bringing about the reformation and redemption of society and the State. This distinction between the two, together with an emphasis on voluntary associations as agents of change, was truly revolutionary. Like most medieval men, Winthrop accepted the world as an expression of God's will and intentions. Mather, on the other hand, saw it as chaotic and unformed, awaiting only the application of the organized force of reasonable men organized into voluntary bodies. This is a quintessentially modern outlook -- and its radicalism is suggested by Bostonian's response to Mather's advocacy of smallpox inoculation, which they saw as a blasphemous thwarting of God's will.

Of particular importance is Mather's attention to the methods of reordering the world. His emphasis on the individual's capacity for self-reform, the use of voluntary groups to facilitate this process, and the capacity of such groups to "hive off," producing a network of such organizations was extraordinarily insightful -- and was a key inspiration to Franklin, who, as well shall see, followed this model almost to the letter. Underlying this is a more profound insight into the relationship between individual and society: the fact that Mather, rather than merely enjoining his readers to do good, provides a detailed account of human interrelationships, proceeding from individual, to the relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and families and neighborhoods, as well as between society, State, and the various occupations, presents a holistic model of society in which all activities are both knit together and, as such, subject to the moral force of individuals and associations. It is nothing less than a map for social change.

Mather demanded of his readers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system. Systematic rational planning of the life of the individual could not, he recognized, be contained within the individual but had to, by virtue of its dynamic and the interconnection of individuals to one another, take on broader social and political dimensions. In this, he was well ahead of his time: although he tried to organize "moral societies" in Boston, the idea never really took off. However, later generations -- led on the secular side by Franklin and on the religious by Edwards and the other proponents of the Great Awakening -- would make good use of his suggestions. A century later, the clergymen who sparked Second Great Awakening would use his ideas for moral, tract, charitable, and missionary societies to assemble the most powerful organizational effort in American history.

Readers may find Mather's religious preoccupations somewhat puzzling and tiresome. Although we live in a world in which religion has been largely segregated from the mainstream of our concerns, Mather and his contemporaries did not. For them, the issue of salvation permeated every aspect of daily life. Bonifacius reminds us not only of the fact that the historical development of philanthropy and voluntarism are inseparable from the development of religion, but also the extent to which, however much we might try to treat them as secular activities, religious ideas inevitably "prowl about" them. Any effort to intervene or alter the lives of others in a democratic society requires justification by reference to "higher purposes" -- to values, ethics, or purposes that lie beyond individual self-interest. And these are, whatever we choose to call them, essentially religious ideas.

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*. (1710)

. . . *A Capacity to Do Good, not only gives a Title to it, but also makes the doing of it a Duty. Ink were too vile a Liquor to Write that Passage. Letters of Gold were too Mean, to be the Preservers of it. Paper of Amyanthus would not be Precious and Perennous enough, to perpetuate it.*

To be brief, Reader, The *Book* now in thy Hands, is nothing but an Illustration, and a Prosecution of that Memorable Sentence. As *Gold* is capable of a Wonderful Distillation; Experiment has told us, it may be so dilated, that the Hundred thousandth part of a *Grain*, may be visible without a *Microscope*: This *Golden Sentence* may be as much Extended; no man can say how much. This *Book* is but a *Beating* upon it. And at the same time, 'tis a Commentary on that Inspired Maxim, Gal. VI. 10. *As we have Opportunity, let us do Good unto all men*: Every PROPOSAL here made upon it hopes to be able to say, *When I am tried, I shall come forth as Gold.*

O have not been left altogether Uninformed, That all the Rules of *Discretion* and *Behaviour*, are embryo'd in that One Word, MODESTY. But it will be no breach of *Modesty*, to be very *Positive* in asserting, That the only *Wisdom* of Man, lies in *Conversing* with the Great GOD, and His Glorious CHRIST; and in *Engaging* as many others as we can, to joyn with us in this our Blessedness; thereby Promoting His *Kingdom* among the Children of Men; and in *Studying* to *Do Good* unto all about us; to be *Blessings* in our several Relations; to heal the Disorders, and help the Distresses of a Miserable World, as far as ever we can Extend our Influences. It will be no *Trespass* upon the Rules of *Modesty*, with all possible *Assurance* to assert, That no man begins to be *Wise*, till he come to make this the *Main Purpose* and Pleasure of his Life. . . .

Millions of Man, in all Ranks, besides those whose *Dying Thoughts* are collected in, *The Fair Warnings to a careless World*, have at length declared their Conviction of it. . . . The Man who is not Satisfying of the *Wisdom* in making it the Work of his *Life* to *Do Good*, is always to be beheld with the Pity due to an *Ideot*. . . . None but a *Good Man*, is really a *Living Man*; And the more *Good* any Man dos, the more he really *Lives*. *All the rest is Death*; or belongs to it. Yea, you must Excuse me, if I say, The *Mahometan* also shall condemn the Man, who comes not into the Principles of this Book. For I think, it occurs no less than Three Times in the *Alcoran*; *God Loves those that are inclined to do Good*. . .

Sirs, An Unfainting Resolution to *Do Good*, and an *Unwearied well-doing*, is the Thing, that is now urged upon you. And may this Little *Book* now be so Happy, as herein to do the part of a *Monitor*, unto the Readers of it!

ESSAYS to Do GOOD.

SUCH *Glorious Things are Spoken* in the Oracles of our Good God, concerning them who *Devise Good*, that, A BOOK of GOOD DEVICES, may very reasonably demand Attention & Acceptance from them that have any Impressions of the most *Reasonable Religion* upon them. I am *Devising* Such a BOOK; but at the same time Offering a Sorrowful Demonstration, That if men would Set themselves to *Devise Good*, a world of *Good* might be done, more than there is, in this *Present Evil World*. It is very sure, The World had *Need Enough*. There Needs abundance to be done, That the Great GOD and His CHRIST may be more Known and Serv'd in the World; and that the *Errors* which are *Impediments* to the *Acknowledgements* wherewith men ought to Glorify their Creator and Redeemer, may be Rectified. There needs abundance to be done, That the *Evil Manners* of the World, by which men are *drowned in Perdition*, may be Reformed; and mankind rescued from the Epidemical Corruption and Slavery which has overwhelmed it. There needs abundance to be done, That the *Miseries* of the World may have *Remedies* and *Abatements* provided for them; and that miserable people may be Relieved and Comforted. The world has according to the Computation of Some, above Seven hundred millions of people now Living in it. What an ample Field among all these, to *Do Good* upon! In a word, *The Kingdom of God* in the World, Calls for Innumerable *Services* from us. To Do SUCH THINGS is to DO GOOD. Those men DEVISE GOOD, who Shape any DEVICES to do Things of Such a Tendency; whether the Things be of a Spiritual Importance, or of a *Temporal*. You see, Sirs, the General matter, appearing as Yet, but as

a *Chaos*, which is to be wrought upon. *Oh! that the Good Spirit of God may now fall upon us, and carry on the Glorious work which lies before us!*

. . . I Won't yet propose the *Reward* of *Well-doing*, and the glorious Things which the *Mercy* and *Truth* of God will do, for them who *Devise Good*; Because I would have to do with such, as will esteem it, a *Sufficient Reward* unto it self. I will imagine that *Generous Ingenuity*, in my Readers, which will dispose them to count themselves *well-Rewarded* in the Thing itself, if God will Accept them to *Do Good* in the World. It is an *Invaluable Honour To Do Good*; It is an *Incomparable Pleasure*. A Man must Look upon himself a *Digified* and *Gratified* by GOD, when an *Opportunity to Do Good* is put into his Hands. He must Embrace it with *Rapture*, as enabling him directly to answer the Great END of his Being. He must manage it with *Rapturous Delight*, as a most *Suitable Business*, as a most *Precious Priviledge*. He must *Sing in those Wayes of the Lord*, wherein he cannot but find himself, while he is *Doing of Good*. . . . Thus ought we to be *Glad*, when any *Opportunity to Do Good*, is offered unto us. We should need no *Arguments*, to make us Entertain the Offer; but we should *Naturally* fly into the Matter, as most agreeable to the *Divine Nature* whereof we are *made Partakers*. It should *Oblige* us wonderfully! An Ingot of Gold presented unto us, not more *Obliging*! Think, *Sirs, Now I Enjoy what I am for! Now I Attain what I wish for!* . . . Certainly, To *Do Good*, is a thing that brings its own *Recompence*, in the Opinion of those, who reckon a kind *Information* of a Point wherein they may *Do Good*, worthy to be by them requited with a *Recompence* to the *Informer*. I will only Say; If any of you are *Strangers* unto such a *Disposition* as this, to Look upon an *Opportunity to Do Good*, as a thing that *Enriches* you, and to Look upon your selves as *Enriched*, and *Favored* of God, when He does employ you to *Do Good*. . . .

Tho' the Assertion fly never so much like a *Chain-Shot* among us, and Rake down all before it, I will again, and again Assert it; *That we might every One of us do more Good than we do*. And therefore, This is the *FIRST PROPOSAL*, to be made unto us; *To be Exceedingly Humbled, that we have done so Little Good in the World*. I am not *Uncharitable*, in saying; I know not that *Assembly* of Christians upon Earth which ought not be a *Eochim*, in this consideration. Oh! Tell me, what *Utopia*, I shall find it in! *Sirs, Let us begin to bring forth some Good Fruit, by Lamenting our own Great Unfruitfulness*. Verily, *Sins of Omission* must be *Confessed & Bewayled*; else we add unto the Number of them. The most *Useful Men* in the World, have gone out of it, crying to God, *Lord, Let my Sins of Omission be Forgiven to me!* Men that have made more than ordinary *Conscience* about well-*Spending* of their *Time*, have had their *Death-bed* made uneasy by this *Reflection*;

The Loss of Time now Sits heavy upon me. Be sure, All *Unregenerate* Persons, are, as our Bible has told us, *Unprofitable* Persons. . . . An *Unrenewed* Sinner, alas, he never did *One Good Work* in all his *Life!* In all his *Life*, did I Say! You must give me that word again! He is *Dead* while he *Lives*; he is *Dead in Sins*; he has never yet begun to *Live unto God*: and, as is he, so are *all the Works of his Hands*; They are *Dead Works*. Ah! Wretched *Good-for-nothing*. Wonder, Wonder at the *Patience of Heaven*, which yet forebears *Cutting-down*, such a *Cumberer of the Ground*. The best, and the first *Advice*, to be given unto such Persons, is, *Immediately to do their best, that they get out of their woeful Unregeneracy*. Let them *Immediately* Acknowledge the *Necessity* of their Turning to God, but how *Unable* they are to do it, and how *Unworthy* that God should make them *Able*. . . . The very *First-born* of all *Devices to Do Good*, is in being *Born again*, and in *Devising Means*, that a *Banished Soul* may no longer be *Expelled* from the presence of God. . . . Sirs, A True, Right, Evangelical *Prodcedure to Do Good*, must have this *Repentance* laid in the foundation of it!

. . . It is to be fear'd, That we too seldom *Enquire* after our OPPORTUNITIES TO DO GOOD. 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 these Precious *Opportunities*. We do not *Use* our *Opportunities*, many times because we do not *Know* what they are; and many times, the Reason why we do not *Know*, is because we do not *Think*. Our *Opportunities to do Good*, ly by *Unregarded*, and *Un-improved*; and so 'tis but a mean Account that can be given of them. We *Read* of a thing, which we *Deride* as often as we behold; *There is, that maketh himself Poor, and yet has great Riches*. It is a good thing too too frequently *Exemplified*, in our *Opportunities to Do Good*, which are some of our most *Valuable Riches*. Many a man seems to reckon himself destitute of those *Talents*; as if there were *Nothing* for him to do: He pretends he is not in a condition to *Do any Good*. *Alas! Poor Man; what can he do?* My Friend, *Think* again; *Think* often. *Enquire* what your *Opportunities* are. You will doubtless find them, to be more than you were *Aware* of. *Plain Men dwelling in Tents*, Persons of a very *Ordinary Character*, may in a way of bright *Piety*, prove Persons of *Extraordinary Usefulness*. . . .

This then is the Next PROPOSAL. Without abridging your selves of your *Occasional Thoughts* on the Question, often every Day, *What Good may I do?* State a *Time* now and then for more *Deliberate Thoughts* upon it. Can't you find a *Time*, (Suppose, once a Week, yea, and how agreeably, on the *Lord's Day*,) to take that Question into your Consideration; WHAT IS THERE THAT I MAY DO, FOR THE SERVICE OF THE

GLORIOUS LORD, AND FOR THE WELFARE OF THOSE, FOR WHOM I OUGHT TO BE CONCERNED. . . ?

Let us descend unto PARTICULARS. But in doing so, let it not be imagined, that I pretend unto an Enumeration of all the GOOD DEVICES, that are to be thought upon. Indeed, not a *Thousandth* part of them, need or can be now Enumerated. The *Essay*, which I am now upon, is, only to dig open the several *Springs* of *Usefulness*; which having once begun to Run, will spread into *Streams*, which no *Humane Foresight* can Comprehend. *Spring Up, O Well!* . . . Perhaps almost every *Proposal* to be now mentioned, may be like a *Stone* falling on a *Pool*; *Reader*, Keep they Mind *Calm*, and see, whether the Effect prove not so! That one *Circle* (and *Service*) will produce another, until they Extend, who can tell, how far? and they cannot be reckoned up. 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*. . . . I will say this; *O Useful Man*, Take that for they *Motto*; HABENTI DABITUR [Unto him that hath, shall be given]: And, in a Lively Use of they *Opportunities to Do Good*, see how notably, it will be accomplished! Sir, See what Accomplishment of that Word will at last Surprize you; *Tho' thy Beginning were Small, yet thy Latter End shall greatly Increase*. . . .

. . .The *Charity* we are upon, why should it not *Begin at Home*? First, Let every man *Devise* what *Good* may be done, for the Help of what is yet Amiss, IN HIS OWN HEART AND LIFE. . . . Every man upon Earth may find in himself something that wants *Mending*; and the Work of *Repentance* is to Enquire, not only, *What we have done*, but also, *What have we to do?* Frequent SELF-EXAMINATION, is the Duty and the Prudence, of all that would *Know themselves*, or would not *Lose themselves*. The Great Intention of SELF-EXAMINATION is, to find out, the Points, wherein we are to, *Amend our wayes*. . . .

You shall give me leave, to press this one more *Point of Prudence* upon you. There are not a few Persons, who have many *Hours of Liesure* in the way of their *Personal Callings*. When the *Weather* takes them off their Business, or when their *Shops* are not full of Customers, they have *Little or Nothing* to do; Now, Sirs, the PROPOSAL is, *Be not Fools*, but *Redeem this Time* to your own Advantage, to the best Advantage. To the *Man of Liesure*, as well as to the *Minister*, it is an Advice of Wisdom, *Give thyself unto Reading*. Good BOOKS of all Sorts, may Employ your *Leisure*, and Enrich you with Treasures more valuable, than those, which the way and Work of your Callings would have

purchased. Let the baneful *Thoughts of Idleness* be chased out of our Minds. But then also, Let Some Thoughts on that Subject, *What Good may I do?* come into them. When you have *Liesure* to think on that Subject, you can have no *Excuse* for not thinking on it.

The *Useful Man* may now with a very good Grace, Extend and Enlarge the *Sphere* of his consideration. My next PROPOSAL now shall be; Let every Man consider the RELATION, wherein the Sovereign God has placed him, and let him *Devise what Good he may do*, that may render his *Relatives*, the Better for him. One Great way to prove our selves *Really Good*, is to be *Relatively Good*. By This, more than by anything in the World, it is, that we *Adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior*. It would be an *Excellent Wisdom* in a man, to make the *Interest* he has in the Good Opinion and Affection of *any One*, an *Advantage* to do Good Service for God upon them: He that *has a Friend* will show himself indeed *Friendly*, if he think, *Such an One Loves me, and will hearken to me; what Good shall I take advantage hence to persuade him to?*

This will take place more particularly, where the Endearing Ties of *Natural Relation* do give us an *Interest*. Let us call over our several *Relations*, and lest us have *Devices* of Something that may be called *Heroical Goodness*, in our Discharging of them. Why should we not, at least Once or Twice in a *Week*, make this *Relational Goodness*, the Subject of our *Enquiries*, and our *Purposes*? Particularly, let us begin with our *Domestick Relations*; and *Provide for those of our own House*. . . .

[Mather proceeds here to discuss the "conjugal relation" of husbands to wives and wives to husbands, of parents towards their children and children towards their parents, of masters and mistresses towards their servants, and servants towards their masters and mistresses.]

Methinks, This Excellent Zeal should be carried into our *Neighbourhood*. *Neighbours*, You stand *Related* unto One another; And you should be full of *Devices*, That all the *Neighbours* may have cause to be glad of your being in the *Neighbourhood*. We read, *The Righteous is more Excellent than his Neighbour*. But we shall scarce own him so, Except he be *more Excellent AS a Neighbour*. He must *Excell* in the Duties of *Good Neighbourhood*. Let that man be *Better* than his *Neighbour*, who Labours to be a *Better Neighbour*; to Do most *Good* unto *his Neighbour*.

And here, first; The *Poor* People that ly *Wounded*, must have *Wine* and *Oyl* poured into their *Wounds*. . . . O *Good Neighbour*, . . . see who in the *Neighbourhood* may *Deserve thy Favour*. . . . *To Visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction*. The *Orphans* and the

Widows, and so all the Children of *Affliction* in the Neighbourhood, must be *Visited*, and *Relieved* with all agreeable Kindnesses.

Neighbours, Be concerned, That the *Orphans* and *Widows* in your *Neighbourhood*, may be well provided for. *They* meet with grievous Difficulties; with unknown Temptations. While their next *Relatives* were yet Living, they were, perhaps, meanly provided for. What must they now be in their more Solitary condition? Their condition should be considered: and the Result of the consideration should be that; *I delivered the Orphan, that had no Helper, and I caused the Heart of the Widow to Sing for Joy.*

By consequence, All the Afflicted in the Neighbourhood, are to be thought upon. *Sirs*, Would it be too much for you, at least *Once in a Week*? To Think, *What Neighbour is reduced into a Pinching and Painful Poverty? Or in any degree Impoverished with heavy losses? Think, What Neighbour is Languishing with Sickness; Especially if sick with sore maladies, and of some Continuance? Think, What Neighbour is Heart-broken with sad Bereavements; Bereaved of Desireable Relatives? And Think; What Neighbour has a Soul Buffeted, and burried with violent Assaults of the Wicked one? But then Think, What shall be done for such Neighbours.*

First, You will *Pitty* them. . . . And let our *Pitty* to them, flame out in our *Prayer* for them. It were a very *Lovely Practice* for you, in the *Daily Prayer* of your *Closet* every Evening, to think, *What miserable Object have I seen today, that I may do well to mention for the Mercies of the Lord?*

But this is not all. 'Tis possible, 'tis probable, you may do well to *Visit* them; and when you *Visit* them, *Comfort* them. Carry them some *Good Word*, which may raise a *Gladness*, in an *Heart Stouping with Heaviness*.

And lastly. Give them all the *Assistences* that may answer their *Occasions*: Assist them with *Advice* to them; Assist them with *Address* to others for them. And if it be needful, Bestow your *ALMS* upon them; *Deal thy Bread to the Hungry; Bring to thy House the Poor that are cast out; when thou seest the Naked, Cover him. . . .* If you have nothing else to bestow upon the Miserable, bestow a *Tear* or two upon their Miseries. This *Little*, is better than *Nothing*.

Would it be amiss for you, to have alwayes lying by you, a List of the *Poor* in your Neighbourhood, or of those whose *Calamities* may call for the *Assistences* of the Neighbourhood? Such a *List* would often furnish you, with Matter for an *Useful Conversation*, when you are Talking with your Friends, whom you may *Provoke to Love and Good Works*.

. . . In moving for the *Devices of Good Neighbourhood*, a principal motion which I have to make is; That you Consult the *Spiritual* Interests of your Neighbourhood, as well as the *Temporal*. . . If there be any *Idle Persons* among them, I beseech you, cure them of their *Idleness*; Don't nourish 'em & Harden 'em in That; but find *Employment* for them; Find 'em *Work*; Set 'em to *Work*; Keep 'em to *Work*. Then, as much of your other Bounty to them, as you please.

If any *Children* in the Neighbourhood, are under no Education, don't allow 'em to continue so. Let care be taken, that they may be better Educated; and be taught to Read; and be taught their *Catechism*; and the Truths and Wayes of their only Saviour.

Once More. If any in the Neighbourhood, are taking to *Bad Courses*, Lovingly & Faithfully Admonish them. If any in the Neighbourhood are Enemies to their own Welfare, or their Families; Prudently dispense your Admonitions unto them. If there are any *Prayerless Families*, never leave off Entreating and Exhorting of them, till you have perswaded them, to Set up the *Worship* of God. . . .

That my PROPOSAL *To Do Good in the Neighbourhood, and as a Neighbour*, may be more fully formed and followed; I will conclude it, with minding you, That a World of *Self-Denial* is to be Exercised in the Execution of it. You must be armed against *Selfishness*, all *Selfish* and *Squinting* Intentions, in your generous Resolutions. You shall see how my Demands will grow upon you.

First, You must not think of making the *Good* you do, a pouring of Water into a Pump, to draw out something for your selves. . . . The thing required by our Saviour, is, *Do Good unto such as you are never like to be the Better for*.

But then, there is yet an Higher Thing to be demanded, That is; *Do Good* unto those Neighbours who have *Done Hurt* unto you. . . . Yea, if an *Injury* have been done you, improve it as a provocation to do a *Benefit* unto him who did the *Injury*. . . .

But I won't Stop here. There is yet an Higher Thing to be demanded. That is; *Do Good* unto those Neighbours, who will *Speak Ill* of you, after you have done it. . . . You will every day find, I can tell you, *Monsters of Ingratitude*. Yea, if you *distinguish* any Person, with Doing for him, something more than you have done for others, it will be well if that very Person do not at some time or other, hurt you wonderfully. Oh the *Wisdom of Divine Providence*, in ordering this Thing! Sirs, It is, that you may *Do Good* on a *Divine Principle*; *Good*, meerly for the Sake of *Good*! Lord, *Increase our Faith*!

. . . How can we leave the offices of *Good Neighbourhood*, without Interposing a PROPOSAL, To Animate and Regulate PRIVATE MEETINGS of *Religious People*, for the *Exercises of Religion*? It is very certain, That where such *Private Meetings*, under a Good Conduct, have been kept Alive, the Christians which have Composed them, have like so many *Coals of the Altar* kept one another Alive, and kept up a lively Christianity in the Neighbourhood. Such *Societies* have been tied and strong Engines, to uphold the *Power of Godliness*. The Throwing up of such *Societies*, has been accompanied with a visible *Decay of Godliness*; the Less *Love* to them, the Less *Use* of them, there has been in a Place, the Less has *Godliness* flourished there; the Less there has been of, *The Kingdom of God*.

The *Rules* Observed by Some, ASSOCIATED FAMILIES, may be offered on this occasion with some Advantage. They will tell us what *Good* may be done by such *Societies* in the Neighbourhood.

I. It is to be proposed. That about a dozen *Families*, more of less, of a Vicinity, Agree to Meet (the Men and their Wives) at each others Houses, once in a Fortnight, or a Month, at such a Time as may be Agreed upon, and Spend a convenient Quantity of Time together, in the *Exercises of Religion*. . . .

VI. Such a *Meeting* should Look upon themselves, as bound up in One *Bundle of Love*; and count themselves obliged, in very Close and Strong Bonds, to be Serviceable unto one another. If any one in the Society should fall into *Affliction*, all the rest should presently Study to Relieve and Support the Afflicted Person, in all the ways imaginable. If any one should fall into *Temptation*, the rest should Watch over him, and . . . Endeavour to Recover him. It should be like a *Law of the Medes and the Persians* to the whole Society, That they will upon all just occasions, Lovingly *Give*, and as Lovingly *Take*, mutual Admonitions of any thing that they may see *Amiss* in one another.

VII. And it is not easy to reckon up the *Good Offices*, that such a *Society* may do to many, many others, as well as to the *Members* whereof it is self composed. . . . Yea, *All the Land* may fare the better for them.

X. Unexpected *Opportunities to Do Good*, will arise unto such a *Society*: But especially, if a Practice of this importance were once taken up; that the MEN who Compose the *Society*, would now and then Spend half an Hour together by themselves, in Considering on that Question, WHAT GOOD IS THERE TO BE DONE?

. . . The Man, that shall produce, and promote such *Societies*, will do an unknown deal of Good in the *Neighbourhood*.

And so will he, that shall help forward another Sort of SOCIETIES; namely those of YOUNG MEN ASSOCIATED.

These duely managed, have been incomparable *Nurseries* to the *Churches*, where the Faithful Pastors have countenanced them. *Young Men* are hereby *Preserved* from very many *Temptations*, Rescued from the *Paths of the Destroyer*, Confirmed in the *Right Wayes of the Lord*, and Prepared mightily, mightily for such *Religious Exercises* as will be Expected from them, when they come themselves to be *Householders*. . . .

[After an extended discussion of methods of organizing and conducting young mens' societies, Mather turned to the particular obligations of the ministry as doers of good.]

We are upon *Visiting*; You will be sure to *Visit* the *Poor* as well as the *Rich*; and often mention the Condition of the *Poor*, in your Conversation with the *Rich*. Keep, Sir, a *List* of 'em!

And think on this, he *Wind* feeds no body, yet it may turn the *Mill*, which will grind the *Corn*, that may feed the *Poor*. In Talking with the *Rich*; you may do this or the *Poor* in your *List*.

But then, in *Visiting* the *Poor*, you will take occasion to dispense your *Alms* among them. These *Alms* you will, with as much contrivance as may be, make the *Vehicles*, to Convey the *Admonitions of Piety* unto them; yea, the Methods and Machines of obtaining from

them, some Engagements to perform certain *Exercises of piety*. All Ministers are not alike furnished for *Alms*; they should all be *disposed* for them. They that have *Small Families, or Large Interests*, ought to be Shining Examples of Liberality to the Poor, and powre down their *Alms* like the Showres of Heaven upon them. . . . They will find, That the more they *do* (provided it be done with *Discretion*,) the more they *may*; the *Loaves* will multiply in the *Distribution*. Sirs, This Bounty of yours to the *Poor*, will procure a might Esteem and Success to your Ministry. . . . T'will be an ungain-sayable Demonstration, that you *Believe what you Speak*, about all the Duties of *Christianity*, and a *Faithful discharge of our Stewardship*, and a Mind weaned from the *Love of this World*; It will demonstrate your Belief of a *Future State*. It will Vindicate you from the Imputation of, *A Worldly Man*; It will Embolden you, and Fortify you, with a great Assurance, when you call upon others, *To Do Good*, and abound in the *Sacrifices* which *God is well-pleas'd* withal. . . .

You will do well to keep a Watchful Eye on the *Disorders* that may grow up and get Head, in your Neighbourhood. Among other wayes to Suppress those things, you may Form *Societies for the Suppression of Disorders*; Obtain a fit number of Prudent, Pious, well affected Men to *Associate* upon that Intention; Employ *their Discretion*, and *their Activity*, for your Assistance in your Holy Purposes. . . .

[At this point, Mather moves through the various occupations and catalogs the opportunity of each to do good.]

I will get me unto the Rich Men, --- and will Speak unto them: For they will know the wayes to Do Good, and will think, what they shall be able to say, when they come into the *Judgement of their God*. . . . I will put *Rich Men* in mind of the Opportunities to *Do Good*, with which the God, who *gives Power to Get Wealth*, has favored and obliged and enriched them. It was an Account, and a very Good one it was, that has been sometimes given of a Good man; *The Wealth of this World, he knew no Good in it, but the doing of Good with it*. Yea, those men who have had very little *Goodness* in them, yet in describing, *The manners of the Age*, in which they have perhaps themselves too deep a Share, have seen cause to Subscribe and Publish this prime Dictate of Reason; *We are never the better for any thing, barely for the Propriety Sake; but it is the Application of it, that gives every thing its value. Whoever buries his Talent, breaks a Sacred Trust, and Cozens those that Stand in need on't*. Sirs, You cannot but acknowledge, That it is the Sovereign GOD, who has bestow'd upon you, the *Riches* which distinguish you. A *Devil* himself, when he Saw a *Rich Man*,

could not but make this Acknowledgement unto the God of Heaven, *Thou hast Blessed the work of his hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land.* It is also a Thing, whereof it is to be hoped, you are not unapprehensive, That the *Riches* in your possession are some of the *Talents*, whereof you must give an Account unto the Glorious LORD, who has entrusted you therewithal: And that you will *give up your Account with Grief, and not with Joy*, if it must be found, that *All your Estates* have been laid out, only to gratify the Appetites of the *Flesh*, and *Little or Nothing* of them consecrated unto the Service of *God*, and of His Kingdom in the World. . . . What God gives us, is not given us for our selves, but *for the Lord*. . . . But the main Question is, about the *Quota Parts*; How much of a Man's Income is to be devoted to *Pious Uses*? And now, Let it not seem an *Hard Saying*, if I say unto you, That a *Tenth Part* is the least you can bring under a more *Solemn Dedication* unto the Lard; for whom indeed, after some sort, we are to lay out our *All*. A Farthing less, would make an Enlightened and Considerate Christian, Suspicious, of his coming under the Danger of a *Sacrelege*. By the *Pious Uses* for which your *Tenths* are thus challenged, I do not intend only the *Maintenance of the Evangelical Ministry*, but also the Relief of the *Miserable* whom our Merciful Saviour has made the Receivers of His Rents, and all that is to be more directly done, for the Preserving and Promoting of *Piety* in the World. . . . But let the Demand of *Liberal Things* grown upon you. A *Tenth*, I have called, *The Least*. For some, 'tis much *Too Little*. Men of great Estates. that would not *Sow for their Flesh, & reap Corruption*, May and will often go beyond to a *Decimation*

Let *Rich Men* who are not *Rich towards God*, especially such as have no children of their own, to make the *Heirs* of their *Hoarded Riches*, consider their vile Ingratitude, which the *Forks* that come after them, will treat them, withal. Sirs, They will hardly allow you a *Tombstone*; And, wallowing in the *Wealth* which you have left, (but they complain, that you left it *no sooner* unto them they will only play upon your *Memory*, squib upon your *Husbandry*, ridicule all your *Parsimony*! How much more *Wisdom*, would it be, for you to *Do Good* while you *Live*; and at your *Death* do *That*, which may Embalm your Name to Posterity in this World, and be for your Advantage in that which you are going unto! That your *Souls* may *Dwell* in all the *Ease* and *Good* of the *Paradisian* Reflections, at the Time, when others *Inherit* what you leave unto them.

. . . I hope, we are now Ready for PROPOSALS. We shall set ourselves, *To Devise Liberal Things*.

Gentlemen, It is of old said, Res est Sacra Miser. To Relieve the Necessities of the Poor . . . this is a thing Acceptable to the Compassionate God; who has given to You, what He might have given to Them; and has given it unto You that you might have the Honour and Pleasure to Impart it unto them. . . .

. . . There is a City in the World, where every House hath a Box hanging in a Chain, on which is Written, *Think on the Poor*; and they commonly conclude no Bargain, but more or less is put into the Box. The *Deacons* have the Key, and once a Quarter go round the City, and take out the Money. When that City was like to have been lost, One who was not the best man in the World, yet could say, *That he was of Opinion, God would preserve that City from being Destroy'd, if it were only for the Great Charity they Express to the Poor.* Tis the Richest City of the Richest Country, for its Bigness, that ever was in the World. A City that it is thought, spends yearly in Charitable Uses, more than all the Revenues which the whole Fine Country of the Grand Duke of *Tuscany* brings in to the Arbitrary Master of it. . . .

Charity to the Souls of Men, is undoubtedly the Highest and the Noblest Charity, and of the greatest Consequence. To Furnish the Poor with Catechisms, and Bibles, is to do an unknown Deal of Good unto them . . . He that Supports the Office of the Evangelical Ministry, Supports a Good Work. . . .

To take a *Poor Child*, especially an *Orphan*, Left in *Poverty*, and bestow an *Education* upon it, especially if it be a *Liberal Education*, is an admirable, & a complicated *Charity*; yea, it may draw on a long Train of *Good*, and interest you in all the *Good* that shall be done by those whom you have Educated.

Hence also what is done for *Schools*, and for *Colledges*, and for *Hospitals*, is done for a *General Good*. The *Endowing* of these, or the *Maintaining* of them, is, *At once to Do Good unto many.*

. . . I will conclude with a Saying, you must *come forth* to any *Publick Service* whereof you may be capable, when you are call'd unto it. *Honest Jeans* has a Pungent Passage; *The World applauds the Politick Retiredness of those that bury their Parts and Gifts, in an obscure Privacy, tho' both from God and Man, they have a fair call to Public Employment; But the terrible censure of these men by Christ at the last Day, will Discover them to be the arrantest Fools, that ever were upon the Face of the Earth.* That Fault of not Employing ones Parts for

the Publick, One calls, *A Great Sacrilege in the Temple of the God of Nature*. It was a Sad Age, wherein *Tacitus* tells, *Inertia fuit Sapientia*.

[At this point, Mather goes through the list of officeholders -- church elders, deacons, representatives, selectmen, grand jurymen, constables, thithing men, military commanders, commanders at sea, and lawyers -- to detail their opportunities to do good.]

REFORMING SOCIETIES, or *Societies for the Suppression of Disorders*, have begun to grown somewhat into Fashion; and it is one of the best *Omens*, that the World has upon it. *Behold, how great a Matter a little of this Heavenly Fire many Kindle!* Five or Six Gentlemen in *London*, began with an Heroic Resolution, & Association, to Encounter the Torrent of Wickedness, which was carrying all before it in the Nation. More were soon added unto them; and tho' they met with great Opposition, from *Wicked Spirits*, and these *Incarinate* as well as *Invisible*, and some in *High Places* too, yet they proceeded with a most honorable and invincible Courage. Their *Success*, if not proportionable to their *Courage*, yet was far from *Contemptible*. In the *Punishments* inflicted on them who transgressed the *Laws of Good Morality*, there were soon offered many Thousands of *Sacrifices*, unto the Holiness of GOD. Hundreds of *Houses* which were the *Chambers* of Hell, and the *Scandals* of Earth, were soon Extinguished. There was a Remarkable Check soon given to raging *Profanity*; and the *Lord's Day* was not openly and horribly Profaned as formerly. And among other *Essays to Do Good*, they Scattered Thousands of *Good Books*, that had a Tendency to Reform the Evil Manners of the People. It was not long before this Excellent Example was followed in other parts of the *British Empire*. Vertuous men of diverse Qualities and Perswasions, became Members of the *Societies*: Persons High and Low, Con and Non-con, United; the Union became Formidable to the Kingdom of Darkness. The Report of the *Societies* flew over the Seas; the Pattern was follow'd in other Country's; Men of Wisdom in Remote Parts of *Europe* have made their joyful Remark upon them, *That they cause Unspeakable Good, & annunciate a more illustrious State of the Church of God, which is to be Expected in the Conversion of Jews and Gentiles*. *America* too, begins to be Irradiated with them!

. . . That a Fit Number in a Neighborhood, whose Hearts God has touched with a *Zeal to Do Good*, would Combine into a *Society*, to meet, when & where they shall agree; and Consider that Case, *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 they would obtain if they can, the Presence of the Minister with them; and every time they meet, have a Prayer wherein the Glorious Lord shall be call'd upon to Bless the Design, Direct and Prosper it. That they would also have a Justice of [the] Peace, if it may be, to be a Member of the Society. That they once in half a Year Choose two Stewards, to dispatch the Business and Messages of the Society, and manage the Votes in it; who shall Nominate unto the Society their Successors, when their Term is Expired. That they would have a Faithful Treasurer, in whose Hands their Stock of Charity may be deposited: and the Clerk, to keep a convenient Record of Transactions and Purposes. And, finally, That they do with as Modest and Silent a Conduct as may be, carry on all their Undertakings. . . .

I will finish the PROPOSAL, by Reciting the POINTS OF CONSIDERATION which the SOCIETIES may have Read unto them from time to time at their Meetings, with a dues Pause upon each of them, for any one to offer what he please upon it.

I. Is there any REMARKABLE DISORDER in the Place that requires our Endeavour for the Suppression of it? And in what Good, Fair, likely way, may we Endeavour it?

II. Is there any PARTICULAR PERSON, whose Disorderly Behaviours may be so Scandalous & Notorious, that we may do well to send unto the said Person our Charitable Admonitions? Or, Are there any Contending Persons, whom we should Admonish, to Quench their Contentions?

III. Is there any Special Service to the Interests of Religion, which we may conveniently desire our MINISTERS, to take notice of?

IV. Is there any thing, which we may do well to Mention and Recommend to the JUSTICES, for the further Promoting of Good Order?

V. Is there and Sort of OFFICERS among us, to such a Degree unmindful of their Duty, that we may do well to Mind them of it?

VI. Can any further Methods be devised, that Ignorance and Wickedness may be more chased from our People in general? And HOUSEHOLD PIETY in Particular, may flourish among them?

VII. Does there appear any Instance of OPPRESSION or FRAUDULENCE, in the Dealings of any Sort of People, that we may call our Essayes, to get it Rectified?

VIII. Is there any matter to be humbly moved unto the LEGISLATIVE POWER to be Enacted into a LAW for Publick Benefit?

IX. Do we know of any Person languishing under Sad and Sore AFFLICTION; And is there any thing that we may do, for the Succour of such an Afflicted Neighbour?

X. Has any Person any PROPOSAL to make, for our own further Advantage and Assistance, that we ourselves may be in a Probably and Regular Capacity, to Pursue the INTENTIONS before us?

. . . And yet, when such SOCIETIES have done all the Good they can and nothing but Good, and walk on in a more unspotted *Brightness* than that of the *Moon in Heaven*, let them look to be Maligned, and Libell'd; As, *A Set of Scoundrels, who are Maintain'd by Lying, Serve God for Unrighteous Gain, and Ferret Whores for Subsistence; and are not more Unanimous against Immorality in their Informations, than for it in their Practice: Avoid no Sins in themselves, and will suffer none in any Body else.* I suppose, they that Publish their Censures on the *Manners of the Age* will express this Malignity, because the *have* done so. *Sirs, Add to your Faith, Courage, and be Arm'd for such Trials of it!*

We do not Propose, That our *Essays to Do Good*, should ever come to an End. But we will now put an End unto this, of Tending PROPOSALS for it. It shall Conclude with a *Catalogus Desideratorum*, or a mention of some Obvious, and General *Services* for the Kingdom of God among Mankind, whereto 'twere to be desired, that Religious and Ingenious men might be Awakened.

A CATALOG OF DESIRABLES, waiting for the *Zeal of Good Men* to Prosecute them. . .

I. The Propagation of the Holy and Glorious *Religion* of CHRIST; a Religion which *Emancipates* Mankind from the worst of Slaveries and Miseries, and wonderfully *Ennobles* it. . . .

II. 'Tis Lamentable to See the *Ignorance* and *Wickedness*, yet remaining, even in many parts of the *British Dominions*. . . . There are pretended *Shepherds*, in the World, that

will never be able to Answer before the Son of God, for their Laying so little to Heart, the *Deplorable* Circumstances, of so many People, whom they might, if they were not Scandalously Negligent, bring to be more Acquainted with the only Saviour. And there might be more done, that some of the *American* Colonies, may no longer be such *Cimmerian* ones?

III. Why is no more done, for the Poor *Greeks*, and *Armenians*, and *Muscovites*, and other Christians, who have little *Preaching*, and no *Printing* among them? If we sent *Bibles*, and *Psalms*, and other *Books of Piety* among them, in their own Languages, they would be *Noble* Presents, and, God knows, how *Useful* ones!

IV. Poor *Sailours*, and Poor *Souldiers*, call for our Pity. They meet with *Great and Sore Troubles*. Their *Manners* are too commonly such, as discover no very Good Effects of their *Troubles*. What shall be done to make them a *better sort of men*? There must, besides more *Books of Piety* distributed among them, other methods be tho't upon. . . .

V. The *Trades-mans Library* needs to be more Enriched. We have seen, *Husbandry Spiritualized*; and, *Shepherdy Spiritualized*; and *Navigation Spiritualized*; We have seen, the *Weaver* also accommodated, with agreeable Meditations. To spread the *Nets of Salvation* for men, in the ways of their *Personal Callings*, and convey Good Thoughts unto them, in the *Terms* and *Steps*, of their Daily Business, is a Real Service to the Interests of Piety. . . .

VI. *Universities* that shall have more *Collegia Pietatis* in them. . . . Oh! that there were more of them! *Seminaries* in which the Scholars may have a most Polite Education; but not be sent forth with Recommendations for the Evangelical Ministry, till it be upon a strict Examination found, that their Souls are fired with the *Fear* of God, and the *Love* of Christ, and a *Zeal* to Do Good. . . . Let the *Charity-Schools* also, *Increase and Multiply*; *Charity-Schools*, which may provide Subjects for the Great Saviour, Blessings for the next Generation; *Charity-Schools* not perverted unto the ill purposes of introducing a *Defective Christianity*.

VII. Those things, that so far as we *understand by the Books* of the Sacred Prophecies, are to be, *The Works of our Day*; 'Tis *Wisdom* to Observe and Pursue. When the Time was arrived, that the *Antichrist* must Enter his Last *Half-Time*, One Poor Monk proves a main Instrument of Ravishing *Half* his Empire from him. Thus to fall in with the Designs of the

Divine Providence, is the way to be wonderfully Prospered and Honoured. One Small Man, thus *Nicking the Time* for it, may do wonders!

. . .O Doer of Good, Expect a Conflict with *Wicked Spirits in High Places*, to Clog all the Good thou dost propose to do; and Expect that Restless Endeavours of Theirs, to overwhelm thee with *Vile Ideas* in the Minds, and *Calumnies* in the Mouthes, of many People concerning thee, will be some of their *Devices* to Defeat all thy *Proposals*. *Be not Ignorant of the Satanick Devices!*

Yea, and if the *Devil* were Asleep, there is Malignity Enough, in the Hearts of *Wicked Men* themselves, to render a man that will *Do Good*, very Distasteful and Uneasy to them. They are the Off-spring of him, who *Slew his Brother, because his Works were Righteous*; and they will Malign a man, because he is Useful to other men. . . . *Wicked men, will Curse a man, because he is a Blessing*. Oh! Base and Black Disposition!

. . .And I will conclude with a TESTIMONY that I shall abide by. Tis this; Were a Man able to Write in *Seven Languages*: could he converse daily with the Sweets of all the *Liberal Sciences*, that more Polite men ordinarily pretend unto; did he entertain himself with all Ancient & Modern *Histories*; and could he Feast continually on the *Curiosities* which all sorts of Learning may bring unto him; None of all this would afford the Ravishing Satisfaction, much less would any grosser Delights of the *Senses* do it; which he might find, in relieving the Distresses of a Poor, Mean, *Miserable Neighbour*; and which he might much more find, in doing any *Extensive Service* for the Kingdom of our Great SAVIOUR in the World; or any thing to redress the Miseries under which Mankind is generally Languishing.

Source: Cotton Mather, Bonifacius: An Essay . . . To Do Good (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1967).

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