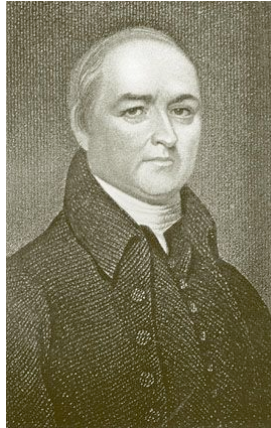


### III-01 TIMOTHY DWIGHT ON THE STATUS OF CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



Few accounts give a more accurate and discerning -- or more profoundly ambivalent -- rendering of the status of charity and philanthropy in the early republic than Timothy Dwight's *Travels in New England and New York*. Between 1796 and 1815, Dwight, then president of Yale, would spend six weeks traveling and observing the scenery, manners, morals, and institutions of the northeastern states. Dwight did not write as a disinterested observer. Keenly aware of the challenges that economic and political democracy posed to older traditions of order and deference, he wrote as a clergyman and as leader of the Federalist Party in the state of Connecticut, stressing central concerns with civic virtue and civic life.

The fundamental question Dwight struggled with was whether citizens of a republic, left to follow their own interests, could be counted on to transmit to future generations the values and the basic literacy and numeracy essential to the nation's future. The answer, based on his observations, was resoundingly in the negative: the only states where citizens were universally educated were those states -- Massachusetts and Connecticut -- which also provided for "the establishment of the public worship of God," supporting their churches out of the public revenue. In states like Rhode Island and New York, where churches were not established, there was, he believed a distinct declension in public morality.

While unbending in his use of Massachusetts and Connecticut as models of public and private virtue, Dwight did not close his eyes to the possibilities of other ways of organizing civic life. His observations of New York City took full account of the public character of key institutions and, in so doing, pointed to the importance and vitality the traditions of public philanthropy that flourished outside the Northeast. Nor did he suggest, as later supporters of civil privatism would, that public commitment in any way diminished private initiative: to the contrary, his descriptions of the rich and diverse domain of private voluntary institutions in the city support the notion that public and private commitment tend to be mutually reinforcing -- unless legally

constrained, as was the case in the South and would be the case in New York by the 1820s.

Dwight's observations are of particular importance for three reasons. First, because he was the key figure in sparking the Second Great Awakening, the Protestant evangelical movement so closely tied to the spread of voluntary associations from New England to every part of the United States. His vision of a republic threatened by ignorance and Godlessness provided the framework within which the Protestant evangelicals of the Ante-Bellum era defined their task of national redemption. Secondly, because he was the mentor of Nathaniel W. Taylor, Lyman Beecher, and Leonard Bacon, the three churchmen most responsible for discovering, expanding, and popularizing the possibilities of voluntary organizations. Third, as president for two decades of the largest (though not richest) college in the United States, Dwight, with his strong political and religious convictions and his revolutionary approach to education, profoundly influenced the young ministers, merchants, and professionals who, tied together through a national network of protestant evangelicals, would be a key element in shaping public opinion and forming public and private institutions in villages, towns, and cities, throughout the United States.

#### "THE EFFECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES AWOVED BY THE LEADERS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION"

At the end of the Revolution, people were buoyed on a tide of optimism. Having thrown off Europe's "tattr'd Gothic garment," to many, anything seemed possible: reason alone, rather than tradition, seemed a sufficient guide to building the Brave New World. But Americans discovered soon enough that freedom meant different things to different people: the efforts to discharge the states' and nation's war debt and to rebuild their economies set class against class; religious denominations that had viewed themselves as champions of liberty found themselves challenged by dissenters and freethinkers as its enemies; fierce struggles were fought over the powers and structure of new state governments; in some places, mobs closed the courts and seized public supplies of arms and ammunition.

The French Revolution intensified anxiety about public order, especially as it moved from rational constitutionalism into orgies of anti-clericalism and murderous violence. Conservatives like Dwight, already troubled by challenges to the power of the Congregational church in Connecticut, tended to identify the excesses of the French revolutionaries with the programs of Americans like Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and other opponents of religious and political establishment.

Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (New Haven: Published by Timothy Dwight, 1822) IV: 382-93.

The effects of the principles avowed by the leaders of the French Revolution, counteracted and destroyed in a great measure by their cruelties, and impiety; and by the miseries they brought on other Nations --These effects likewise lessened by the efforts of the Clergy, and of many other respectable inhabitants, but

principally by an extensive Revival of Religion --Comparison of the religious and moral character of the first settlers with that of the present inhabitants.

*Dear Sir,*

WHEN these numerous and fruitful sources of depravation have passed in review before you, it will seem wonderful, that Religion and morals have not bidden this country a final adieu. That they have not absolutely forsaken us; nay, that they extensively prevail; and that there are even more religious persons in New England than at any former period; is, however, undoubtedly true. The causes of this fact I will briefly explain.

Before I enter upon this part of my design, I ought, however, to apologize to you for so extended a discussion of the subject; particularly, for the historical detail, which I have given you concerning the causes, which have heretofore contributed to the deflections of our moral character. Among my reasons are the following. The subject is unquestionably of considerable importance in the philosophy of man. No account of it has been published by others; and those, who have been eye-witnesses of its progress, and who alone could exhibit it truly, are either gone, or will soon go, to the grave. The probability, therefore, is great, that it will never be communicated to the public by any other hand. To my own countrymen, at least, it must be interesting, and may be useful. Yet most of them are chiefly unacquainted with the particulars, which I have recited. The resistance which the inhabitants of my native country have made to this mass of evil, is honourable to their character; and from this account of their difficulties, and the example, which they have furnished, of opposing them successfully, succeeding generations may derive both instruction, and motives for future resistance.

[383] I have heretofore mentioned the efficacy of the New-England Institutions. These operating, every where, and every moment, and, although silently and insensibly, yet powerfully, operating, have with a constant accumulation of energy, greatly contributed to wear away this formidable combination of mischiefs. Habits are proverbially the only important sources of permanent good. From steady, national habits, only, can great national good in the ordinary course of things be derived. From the New-England Institutions such habits have long since sprung; and from a very early period have constituted a stable, national character. Such a character can hardly be materially changed unless by the ravaging hand of conquest, or the slow progress of time. It becomes the common nature, and

*"Si Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret."*

There is a constant reticency of the mind against all those innovations, which sensibly affect this character; an elastic tendency towards the recovery of its original position. To such habits, under GOD, New-England owes in no small measure its escape from that degeneracy, which has so miserably affected many other countries.

The influence of the French Revolution, which for a time threatened us with moral ruin, was to a great extent counteracted by the evils of the revolution itself; by the character of the men, who successively conducted it; and by the evils which flowed from it as consequences. I need not tell you, that the calamities of this Revolution outran

all expectation, example, and belief. When the Americans began to read, and believe, the successive massacres of Paris, a considerable number of them were startled. Blood, here, has rarely been shed, but under the solemn decision of a jury. Nay it has been rarely shed at all, except in a period of war. The ferocity of the Parisian women, those fiends in a female dress, filled the mind of the whole sex in this country with horror. The guillotine curdled the blood even of coarse, and unfeeling men; and the death of Louis XVIth awakened general detestation. The ravages of La Vendee, Nants, Toulon, and Lyons, completed the picture of woe.

[384] Nor was the impiety of France, and its violation of all other moral principles, much less impressive than the tales of its cruelty. There was a grossness of immorality, a brutal Atheism, in the speeches, and measures, of the National Legislature; a disregard of evidence, truth, and justice, in the proceedings of its Judicial tribunals; a ferocity in the conduct of its Judges and Juries; and a savageness in the behaviour of its Executive officers; which, if reported by others, would have been considered as an outrage upon credulity itself. Happily for us, they were their own historians; and the truth of their recitals could not be questioned.

Nor were the minds of my countrymen less advantageously affected by the treatment, exhibited to the successive leaders in this Revolution by those, who followed them. The hero of yesterday, was regularly murdered by the hero of to-day: and the possession of the supreme control was only a regular introduction to the guillotine. There was something amazingly solemn in seeing these Goths, and Vandals, these Alarics, Attilas, and Genseric, successively led up by the hand of Divine justice to the block, to make a feeble expiation of their crimes by their blood. About one hundred of them perished in this manner. These facts taught my countrymen that the attachment, professed by these men to the liberty of their country, was nothing but a pretence to help themselves into place and wealth: and this hypocrisy they naturally, as well as justly, transferred in the end to all their coadjutors.

At the same time the wide-spread calamities, brought upon other nations by France, particularly upon such as had enjoyed a free government, contributed to the same general effect. My countrymen saw with astonishment, as well as with regret, one republic after another blotted out from under heaven: and this by the hands of the very men, who had solemnly announced to the world, that France would make no conquests.

Finally, the termination of this convulsion established the views, which had been thus formed, beyond the possibility of any material alteration. Every wise and dispassionate man saw with conviction, [385] that Infidelity is hostile to all public and personal happiness; that without the influence of Religion, political freedom can never be long enjoyed; and that a connection with the leaders, and disciples, of this revolution would only be baleful to his own country. Even the French nation itself by quietly settling down under the military despotism of a single man, as an asylum from the tremendous oppression of their Directory, proved beyond debate, that no government of mere force is equally terrible with that of Infidel Philosophy.

Another great truth of no less importance was impressed on a contemplative mind by these events. It is this; that Infidelity naturally, and necessarily, becomes,

when possessed of the controul of national interests, a source of evils, so numerous, and so intense, as to compel mankind to prefer any state to these evils. No fact of a political nature was ever more instructive to thinking men, than the torpid submission of France to the rod of the Emperor Napoleon. Even the Infidels of this country, particularly the intelligent ones, saw in this fact and in those which preceded it, the efficacy of their own principles, and the danger, which they threatened to mankind. Alarmed by the prospect, they first ceased from their endeavours to make proselytes; then began to speak favourably of the Christian Religion, and finally insisted, that it was absolutely necessary to good government, liberty, and safety.

For a considerable time the Clergy of New-England generally, were plainly unaware of the extent, to which this degeneracy of principle and practice, prevailed. With the propagators of Infidelity and vice, they naturally had very little intercourse; and the evil proceeded for a considerable time with so much silence, and decency, as to be unobserved by men, who were either employed in their studies, or in their active business were chiefly conversant with persons of a better character. Some of them, however, from a peculiarity of circumstances, discovered the danger at an early period. These gave the alarm; and although scarcely credited at first, because the change was too great to be easily admitted in such a country as New-England, yet gradually [386] gained the ear, not only, of their brethren in the ministry, but of all the sober inhabitants. From that period, men of wisdom and piety, in considerable numbers, made vigorous efforts against this invasion of human happiness. A great multitude of judicious discourses were preached throughout the country; and not a small number published on the various branches of the Deistical controversy. These, the enemies of religion were never able to answer. The subject became at the same time generally the theme of conversation; and was handled with an efficacy, which was both extensive and powerful. Nor was personal influence less exerted, or less successful. The danger was so obvious, and so great, as to alarm all men of consideration. Even many Infidels,, terrified as they were by the events mentioned above, united heartily with others in repelling evils, which they saw daily thickening, and threatening every thing, which they held dear. Nay, in considerable numbers they openly renounced their principles, and became professed adherents to the cause of christianity.

At the same time also, a series of efforts, made by men of talents and worth in Great Britain, formed a strong mound against the tide of iniquity. Several writers, to whose labours all succeeding generations will be deeply indebted, exposed the weakness of the arguments, the base designs, and the contemptible character, of the principal agents in this system of corruption. Of those, by whom their writings were read, most were convinced and the rest put to silence.

You will easily believe, that when Infidels became thus interested to oppose their own principles, all sober men, who believed in the divine origin of the Scriptures, but had not hitherto made a public profession of Christianity, felt the subject still more deeply. These with a single voice united in strengthening the government, and religion of their country. Accordingly they conversed in favour of both with new earnestness; exhibited a more marked reverence for the constituted authorities of their country; frequented more punctually the house of God; regarded, and treated, its Ministers with enhanced respect; and appeared openly, and every where, as the determined supporters

[387] of religion. From these exertions made by a body of men, so numerous and influential, society may be said to have assumed a new aspect.

Finally, a revival of religion commencing at this season, spread gradually through a great part, not only of Connecticut, but of New-England. This revival, which is still spreading over many parts of the country, has been attended with the happiest circumstances, and followed by the best consequences. Among the many thousands, who have been solemnly affected with religious considerations, and greatly, as well as evidently reformed, very few have exhibited any appearance of enthusiasm. Almost all have, at the same time, presented to the observing eye proofs of vital christianity, which could not be rationally questioned. Perhaps there has been no extensive reformation of mankind, in which fewer instances have occurred either of hypocrisy, or delusion. In consequence of so auspicious an event, the Church of Christ has been increased by the addition of many thousands of professors ; the zeal, and the charity of christians have been materially enhanced; and the labours of Ministers have become more abundant and exemplary, more strenuous and successful.

Among the happy effects of this reformation, one particularly, ought not here to be forgotten. A large number of those who have personally shared in it, have emigrated to the new settlements; and have already begun to build churches, settle ministers, and establish the public worship of God. In this manner the state of society is there assuming, in many instances, a new aspect. In this manner succeeding generations will find themselves in these countries, born and educated in the house of God; trained up to piety; invested with invaluable privileges here and entitled to immortal happiness hereafter.

With all these facts before them, the people of New-England can scarcely fail to say with St. Paul, "Having thus obtained help of God, we continue unto this day." When I look back upon these events,

Quaeque ipse miserrima vidi,  
Et quorum pars fui:

[388] for I have lived through the whole of this period, and have been an eye and ear-witness of almost all the things, which I have recited, so far as they have taken place in this country ; when I look back upon these events; when I consider their magnitude, their portentous efficacy at times on the morals and religion of my native country; when I reflect on the dangers which threatened, and the evils which distressed us; when I remember how the wisest men were perplexed, and the firmest trembled; I cannot willingly avoid saying, and I hope my countrymen will say with me, "Had not the Lord been on our side, when men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick, and the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

It is strange, but after a minute and extensive investigation I believe it to be true, that the Christian Church in New-England has at no time since its settlement included so great a number of members as at the present time.<sup>298</sup> The proportional number was for a long period after the colonization of Plymouth much greater; the absolute number

I am satisfied was never so great. Churches, which are expensive and handsome, are now zealously built throughout all parts of the country, and carefully repaired; Ministers also are settled in the same universal manner; and with stipends, which though often less in their real value, are yet nominally much more considerable. Public worship is also numerously attended in most places, and with a good degree of solemnity and decorum.

At the same time the disposition of the inhabitants has appeared with much advantage in the liberality with which they have contributed to several charitable objects. Missions have been continually, and extensively, supported in the numerous infant settlements, so widely spread over the interior country. Eleven societies for the promotion of this benevolent purpose have been for sometime established in New-England: seven in Massachusetts; [389]; one in Vermont; one in New-Hampshire; one in Rhode Island; and one in Connecticut: each of the four last including the whole State, in which it exists. The exertions of these societies have been in the highest degree laudable, honourably supported, and in my opinion followed by the best consequences. In the year 1810, several young gentlemen, educated for the Ministry in the Theological Seminary at Andover, offered themselves to the General Association of Massachusetts, as Missionaries, to be employed under the direction of that body in foreign countries. The General Association, after deliberating on the subject, constituted a Board of Commissioners for foreign Missions: five of the members from Massachusetts, and four from Connecticut. In 1811, the same body chose five for Massachusetts; and the General Association of Connecticut also chose four. This Board of Commissioners may now be considered as a permanent body to consist of nine members, to be chosen annually by these two Associations. It may however, be augmented hereafter by members chosen from other communities.<sup>299</sup>

By these Commissioners five missionaries have been already sent to Hindoostan, and the Birman Empire. To defray the expense, several Charitable Societies have been formed in New-England, by whom considerable collections have been made. Mrs. Norris, relict of the Hon. John Norris, of Salem in Massachusetts, left in trust to the Board of Commissioners by will, the sum of \$30,000, for the purpose of supporting Foreign Missions.

A Bible Society has also been formed at Boston, and another in Connecticut, which holds its meetings at Hartford. By both, Bibles in considerable numbers are annually distributed.<sup>300</sup> The [390] spirit of doing good in these and other charitable methods, has been regularly increasing here during the last twenty-five years.

The present state of our moral and religious character cannot, perhaps, be more advantageously illustrated, than by a comparison of it with that of our ancestors. The religion of former times was more zealous, rigid, scrupulous, and uniform. At the same time it was less catholic, gentle, indulgent in lawful cases, graceful and amiable. The strictness, the energy, the commanding character, of their religion, we have in a great measure lost. Where they stood firmly against the blast, we bend, to escape its force. Where they watched, we are asleep. Where they fought manfully, we are employed in parleying. Where they triumphed, we are satisfied with a drawn battle.<sup>301</sup> On the other hand we have in some respects advantageously relaxed from their austerity and rigour. We live more kindly, and evangelically, with Christians of other denominations. Our religious controversies are less violent; and [391] we regard fewer things as

fundamental grounds of difference. On the other band, they educated their families more virtuously; regulated society with greater skill; executed laws with more exactness; and settled the affairs of men on a more solid foundation. They chiefly exhibited the magnanimous, we the gentler, virtues. Ours are more amiable, but less firm. Theirs were rough, and uninviting, but more to be relied on. In justice to these excellent men, it ought to be added, that to them we are indebted for almost every thing in our character, which merits commendation. In some respects we have polished, but upon the whole, instead of improving, we have impaired their system. . . .

#### "ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD IN CONNECTICUT"

In the *Travels*, Dwight outlined the system of church establishment that he hoped would provide a model for the nation. Although he and his Federalist associates were not only unable to extend establishment outside of New England, but also ultimately failed in their efforts to maintain the system in Connecticut and Massachusetts, the concerns on which he touched -- strict observance of the Sabbath (Sabbatarianism), moral reform, and temperance -- became major elements in the evangelicals' social and political program throughout the country for the next half-century.

Although the French Revolution provided Dwight with a pretext for holding forth Connecticut's system of public support for churches as a model for the nation, his real target were the arguments against the union of church and state raised by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in their successful efforts to disestablish the Anglican church in Virginia. In the second essay, Dwight defends Connecticut's system and, using Scripture, answers the Virginians' arguments point by point.

These essays reveal Dwight's deep ambivalence about voluntarism. On the one hand, he doubts that the small towns and villages in which most Americans lived would be willing or able to support churches and schools. On the other hand, by asserting that "miracles have ceased" and that mankind, not God, was responsible for carrying out God's purposes in the world, he mounted an argument about the centrality of human moral agency that highlighted the importance of voluntary action. Though Dwight himself was an energetic creator of voluntary organizations and proponent of private philanthropy, he never abandoned his position in favor of state action. However Dwight's followers took this position on moral agency as the cornerstone of their own efforts to develop and extend the possibilities of voluntarism.

Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (New Haven: Published by Timothy Dwight, 1822), IV: 279-82.

Establishment of the public worship of GOD in Connecticut.

*Dear Sir,*

THE religion of the Congregationalists, the great body of the people in New-England, differs little in its doctrines from that of most protestant countries. In its forms, and discipline, it strongly resembles those of Scotland, Holland, and Protestant

Switzerland; and still more that of those English dissenters, who are denominated Independents and Congregationalists. In several particulars it differs from them all. These I will attempt to explain in an account of the Religious System, which prevails in Connecticut.

The State of Connecticut is universally divided into parishes each containing one or more Congregations, or, in the language of the laws, Ecclesiastical Societies. These Societies are corporate bodies for various purposes.

In those parishes which contain but one, the Society is constituted of all legal voters, who hold, generally, the scheme of religion adopted by the Society.

Each Society is to meet once a year, to transact its legal business. To render such meeting legal, notice must be given to the inhabitants, at least five days before, the meeting, by the Society is standing Committee; or, for the want of such Committee, by the Clerk. This meeting is empowered to choose a Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and standing Committee, possessing the same authority in Society affairs, as the corresponding Town-officers possess in town affairs.

When thus met, the Society is also empowered to levy taxes, and choose Collectors, by a major vote of the numbers present.

Persons, unpossessed of real estate rated at nine dollars annual income, or personal estate rated at one hundred and thirty-four dollars, or exempted (on account of dissenting) from the payment of taxes for the support of the usual worship, and of the Minister, [396] and for the building and repairing of the churches, in which such worship is celebrated, cannot vote, or act, in society meetings. The latter class however, are disqualified only so far, as these particular subjects are concerned.

Persons, refusing to serve in the business of the Society, are subjected to fines in the same manner as those who refuse to serve in the business of the town: and the fines are to be paid to the Treasurer of the Society. Unqualified persons are also fined for voting, acting, or intermeddling, in Society meetings.

All persons, at any time within twelve months after arriving at the age of twenty-one years, or within the same period after becoming widows, or after settling anew in any parish, have liberty to enrol themselves in any Society by lodging their names for this purpose with the Clerk. In the case of non-enrolment, a son belongs to the same Society to which his father was attached; a widow to, that of her husband; and new settlers to that, which is lowest in the list.

All persons, joined to a Society, continue members, unless they remove, or obtain leave of the General Assembly, or of the Society, to separate themselves. Persons however, who soberly dissent from the worship, celebrated by the Ecclesiastical Societies in this State, shall upon lodging a certificate of their dissent with the Clerk of the Society be exempted from all Society taxes, so long as they shall ordinarily attend on the worship of the church, or congregation, to which they shall join themselves.\*

[397] Any Society by a major vote may call, and settle, a Minister, and provide for his support. A Minister, so settled, is styled in law the Minister of the Society ; and is entitled to all the privileges of this office. The persons, qualified to vote for these purposes, are those, who have a freehold estate in the same Society, rated at nine dollars annually ; or are rated at one hundred and thirty-four dollars in the common list; or are of full age, and in full communion with the church in said Society. All the members of the Society, and their successors, are, as in other corporations, bound by the votes of the majority.

The salaries of the Ministers are to be paid according to the real value of the salary voted. For this purpose a tax is annually granted by the vote of the majority, and proportioned on the list in the same manner, as public taxes. Negligent collectors are to have distress taken out against them by the Society's Committee ; and the deficiency, which is occasioned by their negligence, levied, and collected, out of their estates. If the Committee neglect their duty, they are to be fined, and to pay the deficiency out of their own estates. If the Society omit to choose a collector, a select-man, or justice of the peace, is to appoint one.

If the Society do not agree with the Minister for his salary, nor support him, the General Assembly will order him a sufficient maintenance to be paid by the Society. If a Society be without a Minister for a year, or years, the General Assembly will appoint a sum, to be paid by such Society, and to be disposed of for the use of the Ministry in such Society.

[398] It is incumbent upon the Society's Committee to see, that these duties are performed; and that the tax is speedily collected, and paid ; viz. within two months after the salary shall have become due.

All funds, estates, and donations, given for the support of the ministry, are under the care, and management, of the Committee; who are accountable, and are empowered to make all proper contracts, and to use all proper and necessary measures to accomplish the purpose of the trust.

No nonresident proprietors of lands, lying in parishes, containing more than one Society, are to pay the tax on such lands to the Society, which is lower in the list; if that Society supports its minister by tax, according to law.

Such Societies, as are unable to maintain a Minister, may yet, having obtained leave of the General Assembly, perform similar duties, and enjoy similar privileges, so far as to obtain the preaching of the Gospel and accomplish other necessary purposes. In parishes, containing more than one Society, each is constituted by the enrolment of the names of its members with its clerk.

In parishes containing more than one society, each is constituted by the enrollment of the names of its members with its clerk.

A considerable number of the towns in the State contain, each, but one Society. Such towns are invested with all the preceding powers, and privileges. In all such cases the functions of the officers of the Society are performed by those, who hold the

corresponding Town offices. Thus the select-men perform the duties of a Society Committee.

All churches, and congregations, which form themselves into bodies for the maintenance and support of the public worship of God, have the same powers, and privileges, for building and repairing churches, and for every other ecclesiastical purpose, as the Societies, constituted by law.

Whenever a Society shall by a lawful vote declare it necessary to build a church; the place on which it shall stand, is to be fixed by the Court of Common Pleas: and, if a Society, or any part of it, proceed to build, before they make application to said Court, they are to be fined one hundred and thirty four dollars.

[399] If, after the place is fixed, the Society neglect to build the church, this Court is to notify the negligence to the General Assembly ; who will order a sufficient tax to be laid on the Society, and direct the money to be laid out for this purpose.

After Societies are formed, churches erected, and Ministers settled, the law for the further support of public worship, and for securing the quiet enjoyment of the Sabbath, require all persons to attend the private duties of religion; and on public worship, if there be an such worship, on which they can conveniently, and may conscientiously attend. As there are churches every where in the State, not more than five or six miles as under, inconvenience can rarely be pleaded in ordinary circumstances. The law also forbids all secular business and diversion ; travelling, except for necessary or charitable purposes; assembling in companies; going to taverns, and receiving those who go setting up warnings, or notifications ; and serving civil processes on the Sabbath. It also forbids all interruptions, or disturbances, of public worship; and all rude behaviour during its celebration. The penalties, on which these offences are forbidden, are included between half a dollar, and thirty-four dollars.

Grand-Jurors, Constables, and Tithing-men, are to inspect the, public behaviour of all persons on the Sabbath, and due presentment make of all profanations and breaches of the Sabbath.

Parents and guardians are to correct their children for such offences, on penalty of half a dollar.

Assistants, or Justices of the Peace, are to apprehend offenders upon sight, or knowledge; to examine, and, if need be, to command any person to seize, arrest, and secure, any travellers on the Sabbath; and to hold them, till judgment be had in the case.

Constables, Sheriffs, and Grand-Jurors, are to apprehend without warrant, and to carry before a Justice of the Peace, all offenders against this law.

Persons refusing to obey the commands of these officers, or neglecting to afford them their utmost assistance to apprehend, and secure, any offenders against this law, are subjected to the same [400] penalties, as when refusing to assist Sheriffs, and Constables, in the ordinary execution of their offices.

Sheriffs, Constables, and indifferent persons, are empowered, on warrant, to pursue, and apprehend, offenders against this law, any where within the limits of the authority of the magistrate, granting the warrant. No appeal lies from the sentence for breaches of this act.

I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

IV: 283-291

LETTER V.

Vindication of the Establishment of the Public Worship of God by law.

*Dear Sir,*

In the preceding letter I have given you, if I mistake not, a complete account of what has often, though improperly, called *the Ecclesiastical Establishment of Connecticut*. This phrase, as applied to other countries, has usually, if not always, denoted *the establishment of a National, of State church; or the establishment of exclusive privileges in the possession of one class of christians*. To Connecticut, therefore, it can have no proper application; because in this State all classes of Christians are placed on the same level. Formerly the case was different. A religious establishment existed in the Colony of Connecticut, antecedently to the Revolution; and gave exclusive privileges to the Congregationalists; the class of people, by whom it was originally settled. . . .

There are two classes of men, who contend against the interference of the Legislature for the support of public worship, those *who consider it as inexpedient*; and those, *who regard it as unlawful*.

On this subject it would be easy to fill a volume. It cannot be supposed. that I can here discuss it at length; not that, if this were in my power, you would with patience read the discussion. But it has been so often a theme of contention, and complaint, on [403] this as well as on the other side of the Atlantic, and particularly in the states south of New-England, as to render it proper to examine the subject with some degree of minuteness, even here. To the former of these classes, then, I address the following observations.

The Legislature of every state is the proper superintendent of all its prudential concerns. It has not only a right, but is obliged by an authority, which it can neither oppose, nor question, to pursue every lawful, and expedient, measure for the promotion of the public welfare. To this great purpose Religion in every country is not only useful, but indispensable. But Religion cannot exist, and has never existed, for any length of time, without public worship. As every man ought, therefore, willingly to contribute to the support of whatever increases his own prosperity; he is by immoveable consequence obliged to support the religion, which by increasing the common prosperity, increases of course his own.

Should an advocate for the doctrine, which I oppose, demand proof, that Religion is indispensable to the welfare of a free country: this is my answer. Morality, as every sober man, who knows any thing of the subject, discerns with a glance, is merely a branch of Religion: and where there is no religion, there is no morality. Moral obligation has its sole ground in the character, and government of God. But, where God is not worshipped, his character will soon be disregarded; and the obligation, founded on it, unfelt, and forgotten. No duty, therefore, to individuals, or to the public, will be realized, or performed. Justice, kindness, and truth, the great hinges on which free Society hangs, will be unpractised, because there will be no motives to the practice, of sufficient force to resist the passions of man. Oaths of office, and of testimony, alike, without the sanctions of religion are merely solemn farces. Without the sense of accountableness to God, without the realizing belief of a future retribution, they are employed only to insult the Creator, deprave the juror, and cheat his fellow men. This sense nothing but Religion can inspire or preserve. With the loss of Religion therefore, the ultimate [404] foundation of confidence is blown up; and the security of life, liberty, and property buried in the ruins.

In aid of these observations I allege, that no free government has ever existed for any time without the support of Religion. Athens, Sparta, and Rome, stood and fell with their religion; false, and gross as it was; because it contained some of those great truths, and solemn sanctions, without which man can possess no conscience, exercise no virtue, and find no safety. To their religion, Britain, Switzerland, and the United Netherlands, have owed most of their happiness, and their permanency. . . .

In the history of the Globe there is recorded but one attempt, seriously made to establish a free Government without religion. From this attempt has sprung new proof, that such a government, stripped of this aid, cannot exist. The government, thus projected, was itself never established; but was a mere abortion; exhibiting doubtful signs of life at its birth, and possessing this dubious existence only as an ephemeron. During its diurnal life it was the greatest scourge, particularly to those for whom it was formed, and generally to the rest of mankind, which the world has ever seen. Instead of being a free, just, and beneficent system of administration, it was more despotic than a Persian Caliphate; more wasteful of life, and all its blessings, than an inundation of Goths, and Vandals. Those who lived under it, and either originated, or executed, its measures, were the authors of more crimes than any collection of men, since the termination of that gigantic wickedness, from which nothing but an universal Deluge could cleanse this polluted world.

These evils, my antagonist is further to be informed, were the result of the only experiment, ever made, of erecting a government without Religion. They are the only specimen of the genuine efficacy of Infidelity and Atheism, on the mind, and on the happiness, of man, during the only opportunity, which they have enjoyed, of possessing an unlimited controul over human affairs. [405] Until the remembrance of this experiment shall have been lost, it can never be made again.

Finally, he is to be informed, that it is wiser, more humane, and more effectual, to prevent crimes than to punish them. He is to be told, what he cannot deny, that Religion is the only great preventive of crimes; and contributes more, in a far more desirable manner, to the peace, and good order, of Society than the Judge and the

sheriff, the goal and the gibbet, united. He is to be reminded, that mankind, with all the influence of Religion, added to that of civil government, are still imperfectly governed; are less orderly, peaceful, and friendly to each other, than humanity must wish; and that, therefore, he who would willingly lessen this influence is a fool; he who would destroy it, a madman.

I am well aware that, in spite of this any other reasoning; in spite of demonstration itself: there are men, who may, and in all probability will, say, that however good and useful the public worship of God may be, they do not wish to avail themselves of its benefits; and owe, therefore, no contributions to its support. To these men I reply, that he, who has no children, or who does not wish to send their children to school; and he who does not use the roads, and bridges, of his country, because he is either necessitated, or inclined, to stay at home; may on exactly the same ground claim an exemption from supporting schools, roads, and bridges. To such an objector it is a sufficient answer, that these things enter into all the happiness which he enjoys; and that without them he, and his countrymen, would be hermits, and savages. Without Religion, man becomes in a short time a beast of prey; and wastes the happiness of his fellow-men with as little remorse, as the wolf, or the tiger; and to a degree which leaves their ravages out of remembrance. Even if this were not the melancholy fact; the list of individual enjoyments is as much more valuable in a community, where Religion prevails, than where it does not, as the safety, peace, and pleasure of civilized society are more desirable than the exposure, discord, and misery, [406] produced by the furious and malignant passions of uncultivated man.

Those who consider the Legislature in supporting the public worship of God as doing that which is unlawful, found this doctrine upon what they conceive to be Revelation. In support of it they allege such things as the following; that Christ has declared his kingdom not to be of this world; that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; and that he said to the Apostles, Freely ye have received; freely give:" together with things of the like nature.

Every man, who soberly alleges scruples of conscience in any case, has a claim to be answered with seriousness, and delicacy. To this class of objectors, therefore, I answer, When Christ declared his kingdom not to be of this world, he had not even the remotest reference to the subject in hand. He merely replied to the accusation, which the Jews brought against him to Pilate, viz. that he claimed to be a king, and was therefore a rebel against the government of Caesar."

It is however admitted in the fullest sense, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world; that as Christ declared, it is within man; and that, as St. Paul declares, it consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." But I ask, what reference has this to the point in debate? For myself I confess, I am unable to see the application of it so far, as to find anything to be answered. In the interference of the Magistrate to support the public worship of God, there is not even a reference to this doctrine, either friendly or hostile. Nor can I conceive how man can intermeddle with the subject at all, unless by declaring himself to be the author of Regeneration, or to be able, and disposed, to resist the real author; the Holy Ghost. When the public support of the worship of God shall be shown to be unfavourable to the existence of regeneration, or to the disposition produced by it, and thus to oppose the spiritual kingdom of Christ; it

will then be a proper time to cite this text as an argument against such an interference of the Legislature. But should their interference be favourable to this great purpose, as, if we argue from [407] all human experience, it must be; he who, understanding the subject, would hinder it; must renounce every pretension to the character of a Christian.

"But Christ," it is said, "has promised, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church;" and, as he himself has engaged to support it, the aid of the civil magistrate can neither be necessary, nor proper. This promise I believe without a doubt; but the inference I shall take the liberty to question. The promise is this, and nothing but this: that there shall be throughout the ages of time a Church of Christ in the world. It contains not, therefore, the least encouragement, that for any length of time the kingdom of Christ will exist in any given country. In perfect accordance with this promise, Great-Britain may be the seat of Christianity; and New-England, a forest of savages, or a reviling house of Infidels. But the first and great concern of the people of New-England is to secure the blessings of this kingdom to themselves, and to their posterity. To this object, I assert in contradiction to the above mentioned reference, that the aid of the magistrate is both proper and necessary. Miracles have ceased. The extraordinary, and immediately perceptible, agency of Christ in this business cannot, therefore, be expected; and will not be employed. Whatever is to be done, except the work of sanctification, which man cannot do, is to be done by man as the instrument of his Maker. Man is to *plant, and water*; and then, and then only, is warranted either to hope, or to pray, that *God will give the increase*.

Men are to build churches; to qualify themselves to become Ministers of the Gospel; to preach the Gospel; to settle Ministers; to support them, when they are settled; to secure to them that support, that they may be enabled to fulfil the duty of *providing for their own households*, and thus be safe from the charge of having *denied the faith, and being worse than infidels*. Of this safety there is no other possible foundation but a contract. Every contract, which is not immoral, or of which the fulfilment is not impossible, the Legislature of every country, especially of every christian country, is not only authorized, but, so far as it is able, [408] bound, to enforce. In this manner, and in this only, will they and their children be furnished with Ministers, qualified to teach them divine knowledge, and to impress on their hearts the duties of the Gospel. In this manner only, will they secure themselves and their children from being left to the guidance of ignorant men, who, instead of being qualified to teach, are neither able, nor willing, to learn.

In this manner will they shut out of the desk, men, to whom common sense instinctively cries, *Physician heal thyself*. These men, who in all countries have been the disturbers of ecclesiastical peace, and good order, will in this manner, and in this only, be silenced. For no body of decent men will vote a decent, fixed salary, to a person of this character.

But it is said, that *the Apostles received freely*, and were commanded *freely to give*. The Apostles were on a miraculous mission, and endued with miraculous powers, were *to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead, to cast out devils, and to preach*, as they went, *saying, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand."* The supernatural powers, by which these miracles were to be wrought, and which they had received freely from the bounty of Christ, they were commanded to exercise freely for the benefit of those, by whom

they should be welcomed into their cities, and houses. Is this the commission under which Ministers now act? If it is; let them obey its call, as did the Apostles. Particularly, *let them provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in their purses; nor scrip; nor two coats, nor shoes, nor yet staves.* According to this very commission, *they are forbidden to preach the Gospel to any, who will not furnish them with these things.* Against those, who do not perform this duty, *they are directed to shake off the dust of their feet: and it is declared, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgement, than for them.*

The ninth chapter of 1st Corinthians has settled this point forever. Here *Christ has ordained, that they, who preach the Gospel, shall live of the Gospel.* To cut off all debate, so far as debate can be cut off, St. Paul has sanctioned the ordinance, that *they, who preach the Gospel, shall live of the Gospel,* by an appeal to the [409] law of Moses; the express injunction of Christ; and the authority of his own inspiration.

But *why,* it will be asked, *may not this living be furnished by a voluntary contribution?* There are undoubtedly cases, in which it may. In large towns congregations may be ordinarily gathered, sufficiently numerous, and sufficiently liberal, to build one or more churches, and to support one or more Ministers. In smaller towns this would ordinarily be impossible; and I suppose the objector himself will admit, that it is at least as necessary for the inhabitants of smaller towns to have Ministers, as for those of cities; especially as they constitute the mass of people in all countries. In such towns the whole burden of supporting Ministers by contribution would fall upon a few individuals. But these could not sustain this burden, and Ministers, of course, could not live. In such towns, therefore, there will upon this plan be no Ministers; I mean, none such, as the Gospel requires: *Workmen, who need not to be ashamed; who rightly divide the Word of truth; who give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine; who meditate upon these things, and give themselves wholly to them; so that their profiting may appear unto all."*

Besides, *St. Paul, I Cor. xvi. has determined, that a tax is the right and proper manner of doing all this.* In the second verse, *he commands the Corinthians to lay by them somewhat,* as a contribution to the relief of their fellow christians; every man as Godhead prospered them. Between contributions for their fellow christians, and contributions for ministers, there is no moral difference. The contribution of a sum, in proportion to the prosperity God has given men, is a tax: for a tax is nothing but a regular and proportional contribution. This proportion cannot be established but by authority, for, except by authority, men cannot be required to render an account of their circumstances. Nor can any proportion approach so near to equity, as that, which is formed under the direction of the Legislature. Here, then, the rule of St. Paul, the rule established by God, is as exactly pursued, as it can be by human wisdom: and, if it was a right rule in one ecclesiastical case, it is a rule equally right in every other.

[410] If we look to facts ; we shall find the same doctrine supported with illustrious evidence. In the year 1793, I was a member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. There were then, if I do not misremember, four hundred and twelve congregations, belonging to this Church, within the United States, South of New-England; and two hundred and nine congregations in the State of Connecticut alone. To supply these Presbyterian congregations, there were two hundred and four

ministers. In Connecticut there were in the year 1790, 237,946 inhabitants, and in the states South of New-England, 2,920,478. In the year 1798 there were, belonging to the Presbyterian Church two hundred and forty-two ministers ; of whom thirty-three were without any charge; or, in the language of New-England, were not settled ministers. Two hundred and nine Ministers, therefore, supplied so far as they were supplied at all, the whole number of Presbyterian congregations South of New-England. The number of congregations at that time cannot be ascertained : as the returns were in this respect imperfect. These ministers supplied two hundred and ninety congregations : eighty-one being what are called pluralities: and there were one hundred and forty-two vacancies returned. Five Presbyteries made no returns of the vacancies within their bounds. If we suppose the vacancies in these Presbyteries to be eighteen, the number will be one hundred and sixty. This number will make the whole four hundred and thirty. With this numerous train of vacancies, there were thirty ministers still, who were unsettled. It follows irresistibly, either that the congregations were so small, as to be unable to support ministers, or so indifferent to religion, as to be unwilling.

The number of vacancies in Connecticut, at that time, I am unable precisely to ascertain. Twenty may perhaps be assumed as the probable number. There were then, at that time within the State, one hundred and eighty-nine ministers.

In the year 1800, there were in Connecticut 251,002 inhabitants; and in the States South of New England, 4,033,775. The whole account according to this estimate will stand thus.

There were in 1798

	Congregations	Ministers	Vacancies	Pluralities	Ministers not settled	Inhabitats
In CT	209	189	20	0	5	251,002
In the States Sout of New England	430	242	160	81	33	4,033,776

[411] In Connecticut, then, a sixteenth of the number of inhabitants form two hundred and nine congregations, and support one hundred and eighty-nine ministers. Of these congregations, twenty were vacant ; and five of the ministers were unsettled. In the States South of New-England, sixteen times the number of inhabitants formed four hundred and thirty congregations, of which eighty-one were pluralities, and one hundred and sixty were vacant, or without ministers. The ministers supported and settled, were two hundred and nine. If these states contained congregations, and were supplied with ministers in the same proportion as Connecticut; the whole number of congregations would be 3,344; and the whole number of ministers, settled and supported would be 3,024. In this estimate we have a fair specimen of the natural consequence of establishing, or neglecting to establish, the public worship of God by the law of the land. In Connecticut every inhabitant, who is not precluded by disease, or inclination, may bear the gospel, and celebrate the public worship of God, every Sabbath. In the states specified it is not improbable, that a number of people, several

times as great as the census of Connecticut, have scarcely heard a sermon, or a prayer in their lives.

The only objection, which I can foresee against this estimate, is, that although the number of Presbyterian congregations in Connecticut is much greater in proportion, than that in the states specified, yet this difference is, to a great extent, lessened by the superiour proportion of congregations, formed by other classes of christians in those states. The number of Episcopal congregations in Connecticut, including twenty-six pluralities is sixty-one: the number of Baptist congregations sixty-seven; making in the aggregate one hundred and twenty-eight. It is doubted whether a correct estimate of the congregations, formed by these and other [412] classes of christians, in the two fields of inquiry, would be materially different from that, which has been already given. This estimate, however, cannot be made: there being no data, from which it may be derived. I have chosen the Presbyterian congregations as the subject of inquiry, because the numbers were attainable from returns in my possession.

An examination of the religious state of Massachusetts would have given a result, not essentially different. In a happy conformity to this estimate, and the scheme here supported, has been the prevalence of religion in these two states. It is doubted whether there is a collection of ministers in the world, whose labours have been more prosperous, or under whose preaching a greater proportion of those, who heard them, have become the subjects of real piety. I know of no country, in which revivals of religion have been so frequent, or in proportion to the number of inhabitants so extensive, as in these two States. God, therefore, may be considered as having thus far manifested his own approbation of the system. If at the same time we advert to the peace ; the good order; the regular distribution of justice; the universal existence of schools ; the universal enjoyment of the education which they communicate; and the extension of superiour educdction; it will be difficult for a sober man not to perceive, that the smiles of beaven have regularly accompanied this system from its commencement to the present time. I need not, however, have gone any farther for the illustration of this subject than to a comparison of the states of Rhode-Island and Connecticut. The former of these, independtly of Providence, Newport, and two or three other small towns, is in all these important particulars, a mere contrast to the latter. Yet these states were planted by Colonies from the same nation; lie in the same climate; and are separated merely a meridional line. A sober man, who knows them both, can hardly hesitate, whatever may have been his original opinion concerning this subject, to believe, that a Legislature is bound to establish the public worship of God.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

Dwight, *Travels* III, 64-7.

". . .State of Rhode Island -- . . .State of Religion and Learning -- Common Schools"

. . .No single or regular scheme of colonization, beyond, what has been already mentioned, was pursued. No common object united the immigrants; and no common character could be traced through the mass. Of the number, who finally filled up its

extent, were Calvinistic, Arminian, Sabbatarian, and Separate Baptists; constituting, together, the largest class of inhabitants; Pres-byterians, Episcopalians, Moravians, Quakers, and Jews. Of most of these classes a considerable number are Nihilists. In such casual collections of mankind it is an almost necessary consequence of their junction in society, that their peculiar religious opinions are held with less and less tenacity; that concessions are gradually, and insensibly, made by each to each; that each class respects its own doctrines less, and becomes more and more indifferent to those of others; and that all religious doctrines, imperceptibly perhaps, but really lose their influence, until the community becomes dispossessed of that beneficent efficacy, which is ever to be expected from the Gospel, wherever it is cordially believed by an undivided body of men.

The inhabitants of this State, in opposition to the rest of their New-England brethren, have uniformly refused to support the public worship of God by law, or in other words to make a legal provision for the support of ministers and churches. A contract between a minister and his Congregation for his maintenance they have placed on the same footing, as contracts made at the gaming-table. Hence, except in their large towns, a minister liberally educated cannot often be found. Hence the places of such ministers are filled by plain, ignorant individuals. Ordinarily, these are farmers and mechanics, who push themselves into the desk for two reasons; to avoid labour, and to display their gifts or in other words from sloth, and spiritual pride. In the desk, almost all such men vociferate in a manner, which in every other place would be thought grossly indecent; distort doctrines and precepts; dishonour ordinances; pervert the meaning of the Scriptures; and murder arguments, and language. They are destitute of dignity, propriety, and candour; coarse, and clownish, in their manners; uncouth in their elocution; and in their discourses clumsy, and ridiculous. Next to a wicked ministry, the greatest evil, which can befall the church is a weak Ministry.

The churches in Providence and Newport I have already described. A large and handsome one has been lately erected at Providence. Those, which I have seen in the country towns, appear like badly built, and decayed barns.

To remedy the evil, which has been here specified, the sober and intelligent Baptists of this state founded Providence College; or, as it is now called, *Brown University*. The design was honourable both to their heads, and their hearts. A considerable number of young men, of this persuasion, have been educated [66] and have been destined to the ministry. But, although the number of Baptists in most of the States in the Union is considerable, and in the whole, great; the places are not numerous, to which such ministers can look for a living. In the cities and large towns, several of them find a sufficient maintenance. Elsewhere, as they are generally obliged to look only to voluntary contributions, they must receive an imperfect support. Few of them therefore, as I believe, enter the ministry. This evil is radical; and, while men continue such as they have hitherto been, can never be remedied, but by the interposition of Government. Of such interposition in Rhode-Island there is, however, very little hope.

Schools usually go parallel with ministers, and churches. Here, certainly, they move in the same course. Exclusive of a few attempts, which have lately been made to establish academies, (of which, I believe one, two, or three, have succeeded,) and some

efforts, which are made in the principal towns, schools in this State can hardly be said to exist. The gentlemen, with whom I conversed on this subject, expressed their mortification, and their reprobation of the conduct of the State, in strong terms: but they seemed to be hopeless concerning a reformation. Without churches men will be vicious of course; without schools they will be ignorant; and ignorance and vice are sufficiently melancholy characteristics of the people, in whom they are united.

It is not impossible, perhaps not unprobable, that the energy awakened in this State by the diffusion of manufactures, may be productive of some beneficial consequences both to learning and religion. The wealth of the inhabitants is visibly increasing with rapidity; and will probably continue to increase through an indefinite period. Wealth, wherever it is spread, generates of course the desire of character; and this passion regularly stimulates mankind to the use of those means, by which it may be gratified. The first step towards giving character to children is to give them at least a decent education; and this step is always taken, whenever wealth begins to be diffused. The next is not uncommonly the building of churches; and the next, the settlement and support of ministers: such, I mean, as are qualified to discharge the duties of the sacred office. Should this be the course of events in Rhode-Island it is hardly possible, that the character of the inhabitants at large should not be essentially meliorated.

The manners of the body of the people differ materially from those of Massachusetts, and Connecticut; as you will easily determine from the observations already made. The vices of ignorant people are always low, vulgar, and almost always predominant. Horse-racing has for a long period been a favourite pursuit. This gross amusement turns polished men into clowns, and clowns into brutes.

The Sabbath with a great part of this people, is merely a day of visiting, and sport. Many of the inhabitants have customarily devoted it to labour. A considerable number of persons in the trading towns, Providence excepted, have been deeply engaged in the slave trade. Some of the Missionary societies have in their proceedings considered Rhode-Island as missionary ground.

Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (New Haven: Published by Timothy Dwight, 1822), IV: 337-8.

Manners and Morals of the people of New England. . .

-- The poor supported and educated -- Public and private charities.

[337] Our laws provide effectually for the comfortable maintenance of all the poor; who are inhabitants; and, so long as they are with us, of poor strangers, in what country soever they are born; and, when they are sick, supply them with physicians, nurses, and medicines.

The children of the poor are furnished with education and apprenticeships at the public expense. There is not a country on earth where the provision for the wants, and sufferings of the poor is so effectual, as in New-England. The number of these people is, I acknowledge, very small; and our contributions to their relief are of course small,

compared with those in England. At the same time they are abundantly sufficient for their comfortable support. The facts, that the object itself is so limited; that it is distributed into so many hands; that these have no interest in stinting the public charity, except what is involved in the nature [338] of things; that they are responsible for all their conduct; and that their accounts are regularly laid before the respective town meetings; or in the instances, where this is not done, may at any time be called before the public eye, secure a just application of the public bounty, in a degree, which I think it must be impossible to reach in England.

The private charities of New-England are certainly liberal, inferiour, I acknowledge, to those in Great Britain, but superiour to those of every other country. Our ancestors brought with them not a small portion of the liberal British spirit. The Missionary Societies, established here, are a strong proof of the position. In this excellence of character the inhabitants of the Eastern Coast of Massachusetts stand at the head of their countrymen. But the same spirit spreads honourably through our country.

A poor debtor, confined in prison, may, upon surrendering his property above the value of five pounds, always be discharged, unless the creditor will be at the expense of the maintenance allowed him by law; and this is so considerable, that scarcely an instance of such a nature occurs. Indeed public opinion is so hostile to the inhumanity, that few men have sufficient hardihood to look it in the face. There is, perhaps, no country in the world where public opinion has equal influence. When one man injures another in such a manner, as that the injury, elsewhere, would create a duel; the injurious person is, ordinarily, sufficiently punished by the general discountenance. The knowledge of this more effectually prevents injuries here, than duelling has ever done elsewhere.

yours, &c.

I am, Sir,

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<sup>298</sup> 1816.

<sup>299</sup> This body has been since incorporated by the Legislature of Massachusetts.

<sup>300</sup> Since the text was written, ten other Bible Societies have been established in New-England. Six in Massachusetts, one in New-Hampshire, one in Rhode-Island, and two in Vermont.

There are now (1815) sixty-three in the United States.

Beside these, there are several female Associations of the same nature; two in the State of New-York; one at Boston, one in New-Jersey, three in Pennsylvania, and one in Virginia; and probably others of which I have not been informed.

There are also numerous associations of both sexes, formed to aid missions, and for a variety of other charitable purposes. The rapidity, with which these benevolent institutions increase, may be understood from these facts. When the text was written, in the summer of 1809, there were three Bible Societies in the United States; there are now sixty-three. N. B. Eight more have been added to the number since this note was written.

A great number of Auxiliary Societies have been formed to promote Foreign Missions; and their contributions have been very liberal. Domestic Missions have, at the same time, rapidly increased. With all these exertions the increase of religion, in many parts of the United States, has gone hand in hand; and although we are yet very far behind the wishes of every good man, there is much, very much, which will make the heart of a good man rejoice.

\*It ought to be stated that the labours of the American Bible Society had but just commenced at the time of the decease of the author. That Society as appears by their fourth Annual Report, published May 1820, has two hundred and seven auxiliaries. The number of Bibles and Testaments issued the last year exceeded 41,000. The amount of the receipts by the Treasurer was \$41, 361 97.--*Pub.*

+A moral society for the State of Connecticut, supported by a considerable number of auxiliary societies, has been established since the text was written. Several societies under the same title have been formed in Massachusetts, Vermont and I believe New-Hampshire. The object of these societies is to oppose vice, especially Sabbath-breaking, gaming, profaneness, and intemperance. Their success has already proved the wisdom of their institution.

\*Since the death of the author, a new Constitution has been adopted by the people of Connecticut. As some important alterations have been made, in particular in the provision for the support of the public worship of God, the article relative to religion is subjoined.-*Pub.*

"It being the duty of all men to worship the Supreme Being, the Great Creator and Preserver of the Universe, and their right to render that worship in the mode most consistent with the dictates of their consciences; no person shall by law be compelled to join or support, nor be classed with, or associated to, any congregation, church, or religious association. But every person now belonging to such congregation, church, or religious association, shall remain a member thereof until he shall have separated himself therefrom in the manner hereinafter provided. And each and every society, or denomination of Christians in this State, shall have and enjoy the same and equal power, rights, and privileges; and shall have power and authority to support and maintain the ministers or teachers of their respective denominations, and to build and repair houses for public worship, by tax on the members of any such society only, to be laid by a major vote of the legal voters assembled at any society meeting, warned and held according to law, or in any other manner.

If any person should choose to separate himself from the society or denomination of christians to which he may belong, and shall leave a written notice thereof with the clerk of such society, he shall thereupon be no longer liable for any future expenses which maybe incurred by such society."

**Source:**

Timothy Dwight. 1821. *Travels in New England and New York*. New Haven, CT: Printed by S. Converse.