

4th October 2023

Hope

**“The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for.
And the most you can do is live inside that hope.”**

Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams* (1990)

My wife and I have just had a very happy holiday visiting friends in Connecticut, the most southern state in the New England region of the Northeastern USA, as well spending time in New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. I'll be sharing more about the impact of this trip in future "Thought for the Day" pieces. But, for now, I offer this reflection.

Connecticut is named from the Connecticut river, an anglicised spelling of *Quinetuket*, from the indigenous *Mohegan-Pequot* language, meaning "long tidal river". The influence of 17th century English settlers is also evident in names like "Manchester", "Newhaven", "Cheshire", "Glastonbury", "New London", "Stratford" and "Litchfield". Yet the first settlers were Dutch, settling at the meeting of the Connecticut and Park rivers. They named half the state, "New Netherland", and I was intrigued to discover that their original settlement was called "House of Hope".

John Armstrong, an 18th century Scottish doctor and poet, wrote *The Art of Preserving Health*. In this expansive piece, he goes beyond the physical aspects of health that are the physician's natural province, and takes us into the metaphysical, the spiritual, dimension of our well-being.

*Know then, whatever cheerful and serene
Supports the mind, supports the body too:
Hence, the most vital movement mortals feel
Is hope, the balm and lifeblood of the soul.
Our greatest good, and what we least can spare,
Is hope: the last of all our evils, fear.*

Here is the integration of body, mind and spirit, the oneness of our being, wholeness, completeness, the fullness of life for which we yearn. And, Armstrong asserts, this is founded on "the balm and lifeblood of the soul" – hope. Jesus said, "Perfect love casts out fear." Armstrong adds that hope can cast out fear as "the last of all our evils".

An 18th century doctor and 17th century Dutch settlers, linking Scotland, the Netherlands and Connecticut, all working to create a "House of Hope" – a good name for any settlement we might wish to create too.

A prayer for today

Lord may my faith and trust be built on the hope your love will always offer. Amen