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April 13, 2002

Dear Dr. Lederberg,

Many thanks for sending me the offprints and clippings, which I have found very instructive. As a historian of colonial America, I have no expert knowledge of epidemics, a subject that historians have too often neglected. The smallpox epidemic during the Revolutionary War was scarcely noticed before Elizabeth Fenn's study.

I have been trying to think of other examples of the public amnesia following the great flu epidemic of 1918. One occurs to me. In the years 1735-40 an epidemic, apparently of diphtheria, possibly accompanied by Scarlet fever, carried away thousands in New England, mostly of children under 20. It attracted large attention at the time, but as the flu epidemic seems to have been erased from public memory by the First World War, the "throat distemper" was lost from public memory by the great religious revival of 1741-42. There have been suggestions that the revival flourished in the wake of so many deaths among people who saw the hand of God in their misfortunes. But the revival itself overshadowed the epidemic preceding it. And later histories gave it scant attention. It is symptomatic that the only modern account of it appeared in a small monograph, printed in a limited edition of 375 copies in 1939.

I enclose a copy of the title page and some of the pages giving figures. The author extracted them from a variety of sources, colony by colony, + town by town and they can be no more than approximate. Nevertheless, if there were

anywhere near 22.5 deaths per thousand of population, the death rate must at least have equalled that of the 1918 figure of 600 per 100,000 in the United States, though it occurred over a five-year period in a much smaller population. The author's figures for total population are probably a little lower than modern estimates but not by much.

If this book interests you, I could send it to you or make a xerox copy. It is 113 pages.

Many thanks for the materials you sent. I have learned much from them.

Sincerely yours,

Edmund S. Morgan