No. 23. -

The influence of the state of the world.
Psalm 117, 10. "The Lord hath made his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; shall the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

What has been the influence of it on the civil & social interests of mankind, & have nations & communities been affected by its sway?—These are questions, we are here thought it might not be inappropriate in the present occasion, to attempt an answer. We are called together, publicly to confess our offences against the Most High, to seek His direction, to say, to express our sense of the blessings which we have received from His hand; & surely it becomes us to think of the power of our religion in what it has done for us as men, as citizens, as patriots, as well as by its efficacy on the hearts & lives of individuals. He who loves his country has much to thank for, as well as the saint who cherishes in his breast the purity of its
spirit. The body politic, in its complicated movements, has felt the power of its more closed church of F... Not that I would refer to this kind of power, as the standard by which we are to estimate the most valuable of the appropriate influence of our religion. We are usually disposed to estimate the minds of an age, or its episcopal improvement or decay, from its great and conspicuous transactions, from events which meet the eye in the retrospect of history, clotted with splendors, surrounded with the light of glory. But it is not in the debates of contests of publick assemblies, in the intrigues & factions of the ambitious & the powerful, in the negotiations of ambassadors, in the conflicts of hostilities of rival nations, in the plans of the statesmen, or the march of the monarch, that you are to look for the more general effects of the spirit revealed: from the nature of the case, they cannot be found. Where temptation is strongest is most exciting, & the7037 unhindered progress of religion will not be so often heard, & the influence of its morality will most probably be felt the least. & the least. The path of glory is not that on which thrones its brightest & most eminent sage. If you would find the peculiar track of his blessings, it is not usually to the princes & the high born that you must go. From the humbler & simpler scenes of publick transactions, you must turn to humbler scenes: to the obscure inhabitant of the village, to the manufacturer at his labor, to the husbandman in his field. You will there more probably find the benignant nature of the Gospel in the conduct of every day, you will find natural charity more vivid, more kind, more decided, & the principles of good more practically understood, more deeply mingle-d with the operations of their thoughts & affection; you will find appetites more of a human, more decided, more tenderly controlled, manners more gentle, more decided. You will find the good, which is a result of the opposite, you will find minds better prepared for the necessities of the world, from a former dependence on the case of Providence, more procuring resignation to the will of the Almighty, fron
an improved knowledge of his justice & bene-
dence; & more than all, you will find de-
voion more pure & rational, & greater hopes &
riches consolations under the extremities
of age, & at the approach of death. So
true great & good effects do not appear on
the page of the historian: or, if they do ap-
pear there, it is only with transient notice &
inaugurate display. We shall, they see
look in vain for the purest & best influence
our religion in the annals of nations &c. &c.
Still, however, it must be granted, that the
triumph of it cannot be considered as complete
till it has influence in publick affairs & do-
very transactions, the conduct of nations as
well as individuals. But this will prob-
ably be its latest conquest; for the change
not it supposes cannot be raised in its pro-
gress, sensible at every step, but gradual,
in its advances, & perceptible only whenever
considerable effects have been produced. It
may cost many generations to reform the
sentiments & manners of a people: usages &
institutions repugnant to the spirit of the ges-
tet may long remain, when national habits
of the interest of powerful individuals
lead them support. But the political
lust of men will at last take its course
from their morals; the virtues of private
life will extend their influence to states of
power & authority. While integrity, virtue,
& religion are among the people in their purity
& strength, the government cannot long be
eniguated in its constitution, & corrupt its
administration; and whenever independent
nations shall be equally influenced by it;
unjustifiable plans of policy will not bu-
trarily practised & mutually provoked. That
such is the natural tendency of our religion
will not, I think, be doubted: how far it
has produced, or is likely to produce, these ef-
fects, may be a subject of enquiry.

The influence of it on the community may
be considered in 3 points of view: - as it has
raised of freed from the standard of social morality
& social happiness, as it has improved our op-
tions of national policy - as it has stabilised
the good & softened the horrors of war.
- 1. it has elevated & established the standard
of social morality, of social happiness. It has
evaded a deep & purifying influence on the
publick judgment in morals. It has communi-
cated a high, & healthy, & vigorous tone of think-
ing & feeling with regard to principles of
action. It has given a fixed & permanent
standard of duty, the excellence of utility,
or all sects & all parties, however, deep &
broad their lines of distinction, have admit-
ted, to no a tacit appeal at least, if not an open acknowledgment, is continually
made, & with great length, of perhaps insensi-
big, in a great degree, corrects & regulates
publick opinion. I do not mean that you
will find any thing like such diminished
morality even there where the genius of the
has fixed & established its sway. Under the
reign of every religion, there are doubtless ben-
men enough. But still it must be con
that in those countries, immorality & vice
have not the encouragement of general appro-
bation. they are very rarely tolerated as in-
ocent, & still more rarely applauded as
motions. If crime ventures to near its head,
for all abroad, it meets the stern gaze of

Publick opinion, & retreats in confusion. Dull
Daily in close of conversation are more pure
than they would be without our religion; ori-
inal excess is not so often the ordinary subject
of contemplation, hence immorality less progres-
by & less commonly communicates its contaminating influence to the national amusements.
In the most polished ages of Greece & Rome
vices were practiced without a blush, and
we should mention only with terms of abhor-
rence & indignation. Besides, it should not
be forgotten that in those countries, many
who would laugh at religion, are yet kept
within the bounds of duty or of decency. By a
sense of shame, & habit in time, frequently
vipers rise into principle. Others, who cannot be
stimulated to virtue, are compelled to
hence if decency in their vices, if thus diffuse
less widely the poison of their sentiments
& the contagion of their example. We are all
born aware how much evil our religion pre-
vents, as well as how much good it produc
The number is large of those who act upon
by from principles on which suppose to be de-
ved from the light of nature, from the de
duction of their own reason, or from the dictation of their own conscience, but not in reality have been induced from public opinion. Public opinion, when received by the majority, has clothed itself with the sanctity and fear of truth. But you are back in those ages of nations, in the period when peculiar tribes of people were required to enslave their children in perpetual sacrifices; or what was still more common, to expose the infant, and they did not even weep. Look at Roman morality in its brightest days, when suicide was thought to confer dignity on the character of him who chose it, as a refuge from fear or from pain. When it was sanctioned by the example of the hero, the human being in the disquisition of the philosophers, then examine the character and condition of those nations where the light of revelation has been, & say, has it raised the standard of social morality, & enforced the measure of social happiness? To what, but to the mild and servile & generous spirit with our religion has diffused, do we owe one of the most voluntary executions of philanthropy, our charity establishments? Inherently not only to the legal & regular provision for the poor, but to the voluntary contributions of the liberal wealthy in a thousand different ways. Our collections at religious festivals & in seasons of want & distress, our schools of charity, where the children of the unfortunate & the indigent imbibe the elements of knowledge, our prepared to become good men & good citizens; our hospitals, for the relief of age, misfortune, & disease, where the hand of beneficence is extended to relieve & to heal. It has done incalculable service to public morality by establishing broad & immutable rules of action. It does not, as men are too prone to divide duties into those of perfect & imperfect obligation, & tell us we must observe those, & may disregard those with innocence. The churches teach not the details of practice, but general principles. They estimate a crime, not by incidental consequences, nor who committed it, did not perhaps intend, & could not calculate - but by the infamy of disobedience and in blam. They consider every duty as of equal obligation in its own time & place, & every man as equally bound according to his opportunity & ability, the orders to contribute his mite of the rich man, and abundance, in proportion not as much to the success of his efforts, but to their principles of exertions.
will be their merit & reward... Such a spirit is the influence of our religion on the minds of the happy & civilized communities. The stream of justice from this fountain of life, has flowed their healing, purifying, invigorating waters through every department of society.

2. The beneficial effect of liberty has been felt in the improvement of systems of national policy, in the amendment of the principles of government & legislation. The object of bold & liberal establishments should be to advance the virtue & happiness of mankind. & those of heathen nations seem to have been, but ill adapted to this great purpose. They were in general little else than a concord of system of despoticism in the prince & slavery in the people; & therefore the heart of the sovereign was nursed in a constant suspicion of cruelty, & the portion of the subject was poverty, fear, & misery. Such were their monarchies — & the happiness of the people was scarcely better secured in their boasted republics. In them a very great part of every community was in reality slaves, & subject to the severest forms of arbitrary government. The citizens themselves were, indeed, flattered with the notion of the name of liberty; but, with the exception of those seasons of humble & sanctity for the nature of their government was peculiarly exposed, in their licentiousness as well as their liberty, they were continually exposed to those demagogues who had the inclination & ability to secure popularity. Hence it has been observed, that the history of an ancient commonwealth is little else than the history of a few illustrious individuals who were successively its masters. Nor were these those who reached this proud prominence in a situation much to be envied. Even in Athens, that city in which the memory of the modern scholar longest to linger while the thoughts of all history come crowding over his mind, it was not a talent, or virtue, or patriotism, that could always secure to them possessors honours or safety. It was there that Philocids was condemned to a prison; Aristides to exile; Socrates to death. — That the wars have been inflamed & diminished by the lenient influence of time will probably be readily admitted. Our favour, it is true, most directly interfered in political establishments, interfered...
ing, doubtless, that the external regulations of a religion designed for universal dissemination should be adapted to the circumstances of each respective country, as well knowing that the religion itself would teach equity & moderation on the part of principles, the natural equality of men in the sight of God, that equality which would level all distinctions, but one, & is real, natural, useful, & bids us look on all men as brethren, as the offspring of the same Father, the heirs of the same nature, & the same spirit, & as subjects of the same manifest government, & enjoined to practice the same duties under the same & promise of the same rewards. Thus the foundation of civil policy is laid in general humanity. Our duty to man built on the immovable basis of our duty to God. The influences of circumstances when political government may perhaps appear remote, indirect, & incidental, yet they are natural & certain: & however they have in any great degree prevailed, they have been felt & confessed. It was the first step empires of the united humanity made in policy. Constantine, we are told, first softened the severe severity of legal penalties, alleviated the hardships to our slaves were exposed, gave supreme authority to the law, & established them as a rule of conduct obligatory alike on the sovereign & the subject; & from the long influence of Christianity, it is said, the codes of succeeding civil laws excel all the systems which had gone before them & furnished a principle & basis for those which followed. Compare the effects of Christianity on political establishments with that of other religions, & you will see how much we owe it. The haremism, which at its origin spoke, by the word, still acts upon men with that destructive spirit which gave it birth, & now it was once more & has grown to its present dimensions, & is a stranger to mere despotic power. The spirit of mildness, & the Gospel breath, is uncommandable with that triumphant rage in which men are trained to cruelty. One who cannot be suspected of credulity or partiality, has observed, "that the principle of the deeply engraven on heart would be infinitely more powerful than the false honour of monarchies or the servile fear of despotic states." - The more pure our re-
reign is, the better is its influence on the body of the Church; but, hence the observation, that the Catholic religion is best adapted to arbitrary governments & the Protestant to republics. The latter has not perfected human policy, because it has not perfected human morals; but it has made magistrates moderate in the exercise of authority, & the people more conscious in their subjection to the laws. The rich & the poor meet peaceably together, knowing that the Lord is the Maker of them all.

3. That spirit of violence, the impulse of which nations are hurried on to waste their strength & their happiness in war, has felt the influence of our religion. War is generally the result of blood-thirsty ambition & of despairs in power; where the influence of Christianity, & of humane & reasonable principles, prevails. Through it would bristle from the earth, the demon of destruction, who keeps the flood gates of destruction on mankind. But in this, as in many other cases, the operation of religion must be gradual, & we have to lament that the heavenly voice is more than eighteen centuries has proclaimed "peace on earth, good will to men," has been often drowned in the tumults of a maddeary world. Yet, though
those whom the violence of battle had spared.
But between these nations, these aggressions of
the horrors of war are softened or excluded, hos-
tility ceases with resistance; unnecessary violence
is systematically avoided; s the voice of indignant
humanity is raised. If the furies of scorn pointed
at the general, who, when victory has command
his bloody saber, should not treat the wounder
with tenderness; his ferocity with generosity. But
this habit of feeling, dictated by many of modern
theorists, can be traced no higher than to the establish-
ment of influence of the principles of the gospel.
Not let it be objected that it has been the cause
of despair & dissolution. If that the channel of war
has been eagerly imitated in defense of what men
have called religious truth. That our religion has
been the cause of persecution & war, with all their turn
of forms & creeds, if true at all, is true strictly
speaking only under great limitations. The principles
of it were not the original authors of persecution,
for Pagans persecuted Pagans long before the time of
S. P. among the Romans, those who did not profess
the doctrines of Caesar were unselectingly
herself almost to extermination; & on graph the most
ship of different deities produced the most pugnacious con-
tests among their respective adorers. The Roman emper-
ors persecuted it, as long before the states belonged
any disposition to persecute each other. Of the
weary oft have been called religious, s of whose
religion has been supposed to be the origin, the
real motives have usually been personal oppo-
litical, s the hope only the substance to disguise
the views of interest or ambition. A pretended
real for the interests of Ity has been made to allow
the most malignant designs. Even the Christians,
their origin less in concern by the honour of religion
than in the service & ambition of the Roman peri-
tics. These observations are made to show, that the
fruit of violence mvt nullities mass has arisen not
from any defect in revelation, but from the nature
of weakness of man, not from the genuine
influence of our religion, but from its abuse, from
tone liberty & real, but from obedience, right
& proportion. The true effects of Ity are of quite
a different kind. He would selfish has inflicted
the horrors of war - s it is pleasing to indulge
the hope that the time will come when the angry
mass of men will no longer bundle into agita-
ty, when as the heathen addresses it, "other shall
not lift up sword against nation, neither shall
they learn war any more." other nation shall not
nation, bringing with them not the instruments
of conflict & the organs of destruction, but the ties
of peace & the comforts Democrats of life - "when they
shall traverse the ocean, not to transport the soldier
Other who act the eternal Source of good, we thank thee for all the benign effects of our holy religion. We desire to think with gratefulness of its influence on the condition of men, both private & public. We thank thee that it has corrected & elevated the moral sentiments of the world; that it has raised & improved our civil & political relations, & that it has softened the bournes of contention & checked the spirit of disorder & animosity. We pray that its purifying & healing effects may be more deeply fixed & more widely extended, & that we may labour in our several stations to promote the salutary influence of these benefits, & that the Gospel may spread from all the states & commonwealths, & that all men may experience the salutary influence of our God. Let the living accompany us throughout life. Grant us all the blessings we now need in the approaching season. Give us peace & health & plenty, & preserve us in our journey free from danger & distress. We offer our prayer So.
At Abbott's Salem, East day April 1, 1819 - afternoon.