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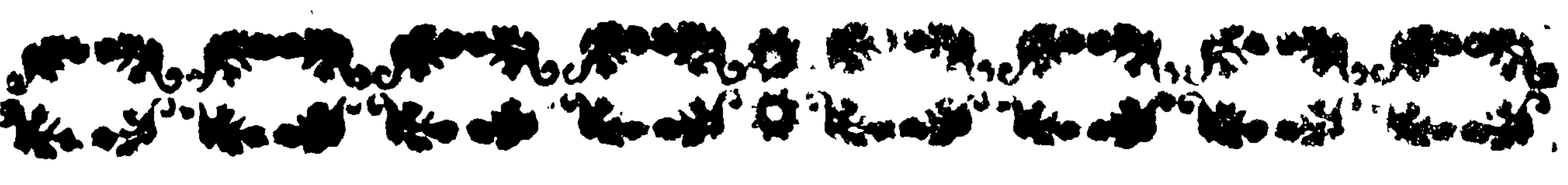
R E L I G I O U S A F F A I R S.

By the Hon. John C. Fremont

M A S S A C H U S E T T S - S T A T E

B O S T O N : Printed by DRAPER and FOLSOM, and Sold by
PHILLIP FREEMAN, in Union-Street.

M,DCC,LXXIX.



The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. James 3. 17.

TH E necessity of a well regulated government in civil States, is acknowledged by all ; and the importance and benefit of true Christianity, in order thereto, is no less certain. For the great Author of it assures us, that his disciples are the *salt* of the earth, and the *light* of the world, Mat. 5. 13, 14. That is, his religion is as necessary for the well-being of human society, as salt is to preserve from putrefaction, or as light is to direct our way, and to guard against enemies, confusion, and misery. This is evident, because 1st, The universal rule of equity, enjoined by our Lord, has the most natural and effectual tendency to promote extensive union of any means in the world : And both our friends and our enemies know, that our salvation and welfare, as a people, greatly depends thereupon. 2^d, His precepts plainly require, the yielding to all their dues, faithfulness in every station, benevolence to all, and the working ill to none. 3^d, A regard to all these things is enforced with the certain promises of his help and blessings, for time and eternity, to

those who please him ; and with as sure declarations of tribulation and wrath, distress and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. And who can help seeing, that these things are as necessary to the welfare of society, as salt and light are for our bodies ? But if so, why have such quarrels and oppressions, such deceit and cruelty, been practised for many ages under the Christian name ? The answer in general must be, because many mistakes, and corrupt principles have been covered with that lovely name ; of which the following are not the least.

1. A conceit that religion gives the subjects of it, a right of dominion over the persons and properties of others. Which is as contrary to the laws of Christ, as darkness is to light ;* and is the evil that all *contention* comes from. Prov. 13. 10. This moved such as called themselves Christians in Europe, to claim the property of infidels in America ; from the poison whereof we are not yet thoroughly purged.

2. Instead of holding fast THE FORM of sound words, which requires our supreme regard to God, and the loving of our neighbor as ourselves, men have invented A FORM of godliness, to cover *self-love* with ; under which they have been *false accusers, and fierce despisers of those that are good.* 2. Tim. 1. 13 and 3. 1---5. Under this mask, one generation after another

* Mat. 10. 11---14. Luke 10. 5---11. 1 Cor. 19. 32 ; 1 Peter 2. 12 ;

have cast the reproach of their own wickedness upon others, and have made a prey of such as have departed from their evils. *Isai.* 59. 15. And what less than this, has been done to the Baptists, for above two hundred years? It is most evident that the mad actions at Munster, in 1533, proceeded from a conceit, that the sword was then consecrated to the christian cause, so that those who had got it into their hands were to enforce their religious sentiments thereby. Which conceit never was admitted by any Baptist church that we know of, either in Britain or America; yet the ruling parties in both countries, have held that evil fast, while they have, not only reproached the Baptists with the scandals it has produced, but also have often made a prey of them for departing therefrom.

3. By these means *partiality* has been established by law, and men have been empowered to give away the money, and to judge the causes, of such as they were *interested* against.

Testimonies against this iniquity, have not only been given by dissenters from the established worship in this country, but also by some of the greatest men among the congregationalists; tho' little regard was paid thereto. In 1656 the town of Ipswich imposed a tax upon all the inhabitants, for a minister's settlement, for which distress was made.--- Whereupon one of their greatest rulers prov-

ed, from the first principles of government, that representatives have no right to give away any money, but only for the good of the whole community ; and that the taking of it away from one person or party, and giving it to another, was TYRANNY. * And one of their chief ministers, who had been attached thereto, till he saw the same measures meted to them again, by the tyrant Andros ; was so much enlightened thereby, as to see, that a man has a right to all his temporal enjoyments before he becomes a Christian, which he is so far from losing by embracing Christianity, because he does not happen to be of the uppermost party, that he said, “ For an uppermost party of Christians, to punish men in their temporal enjoyments, because they dissent from them in some religious opinions, or with an exclusion from the temporal enjoyments which would justly belong to them, is a ROBBERY.” † And in the year 1700, he plainly proved, that Christ has given the right of chusing all church officers, to the *brethren* in each particular church ; from whence he asserted that it would be SIMONICAL to affirm that this sacred privilege may be purchased with money. ‡ And the town of Boston, where he was minister, procured a spe-

* Mass. history, vol. 3. p. 291---309. Baptist hist. p. 310---312.

† Dr. Increase Mather's life, p. 59. ‡ His vindication of gospel order, p. 67, 68.

cial act of the assembly, to exempt them from this simony, which has been imposed upon the country ever since. If any enquire how tyranny, simony, and robbery came to be introduced, and to be practised so long, under the Christian name? The answer is plain, from the word of truth. It was by *deceitful reasonings* from the *hand-writings* which Christ *blotted out*, and *nailed to his cross*. Col. 2. 8, 14. In those writings direction was given to Israel, to seize the lands and goods of heathens, to make slaves of them; and in other respects, to make a visible distinction in their dealing betwixt their own brethren and all others. A high priest was also set up at the head of their worship, who, with his family, were to have the whole direction thereof; and at whose sentence unclean persons were to be excluded from their camp; unclean houses pulled down and removed; and who had power to turn even a king out of the temple. And who can describe all the superstition, blind-devotion and church-tyranny, that have been bro't in by deceitful reasonings from thence? Whereas the new testament plainly shews, that the church of Israel was typical of the elect among all nations. Their literal enemies types of the saints spiritual foes, - and the gain they made of them, figurative of the advantages believers receive from tribulations and persecutions. That their priesthood were

types of Christ and his saints ; and officers are never called priests in the new testament, in distinction from other believers. And in these and a great number of other instances, the comparing of type and antitype together, is very instructive and edifying ; but the invention of officers, orders, and ceremonies, in the Christian church, to answer to those of the Jews ; yea, and to exceed them, as the Christian privileges were to be the greatest, is the very way that mystery Babylon was built ; which mystery is ever to be known by these two infallible marks.

1 By not holding THE HEAD, even the ONE LAWGIVER, in whom the church is COMPLETE ; but imposing *ordinances* upon her, after the *doctrines and commandments of men*, which have a *shew*, but not the reality, of wisdom. Col. 2. 10, 19---22. James 4. 12.

2 By not allowing each believer to act *as he has been taught*, but others, *puffed up with a fleshly mind*, assume the power to judge for them in religious matters. Col. 2. 7, 16---18.

And can any religious establishment by human laws be found, without, at least, these marks of the beast, and the *number of his name*, which is the *number of a man*. In the typical state of the church, the number six, whether in weeks, months or years, was descriptive of seasons of fatigue and labour, and the seventh

of each, were resting times. So the beast can get no further than the toiling number, whether it be in units, tens, or hundreds. But those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, were seen by John, in his vision, standing upon the sea of glass, singing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb. Rev. 13. 18 and 15. 2, 3. Now as the pure word of God is compared to *glass*. 2 Cor. 3. 18. James 1. 23--25. does not this vision represent the rest and joy that believers will find, upon their getting victory over all the inventions of men, when they shall stand and act intirely upon divine truth, which is as clear as *crystal*, and enforced by divine influence, compared to *fire*? Jer. 23, 29. Rev. 4, 5, 6. And is it not strictly true to say, that the whole of the late ecclesiastical laws of this province, were commandments of men, which empowered the ruling party to judge for the rest in religious affairs, and to enforce that judgment with the sword. There has been so much of real christianity in this country, from its first plantation, as greatly to check and restrain the poisonous influence of this partiality; but the nature of it is never the better for that. So far from it, that while some are trying to cover themselves with all the good things that have been 2-

mong us, and from thence are denying that they have oppressed any ; others are catching at those evils, to shield themselves against the truth. Many in the State of Rhode-Island, bolster themselves up in an irreligious way, by the stories they have heard of the injustice and cruelty which the Massachusetts and Connecticut did to their fathers, under a religious mask ; while that very irreligion is often resorted to, as a prevailing argument for a religious partiality in these other States. And though we have great cause of thankfulness, for the light, to distinguish things more clearly, which has lately been granted, and that our honored rulers have discovered so much of a regard to equal religious liberty ; yet, lest the same should be fully allowed, I hear that some plead, that if rulers have no right to establish any way of religious worship for its own sake, they have a right to do it for the good of civil society. The import of which plea, in my view, is just this viz. That because religion is a means of great good to human society, therefore rulers ought to improve their power to destroy the means, in order to accomplish the end !

For the whole of religion is to *fear God, and keep HIS commandments* ; with a realizing view, that HE will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil. And the teaching of his fear by the precepts of

men, is the direct way to confusion and ruin. Eccl. 12. 13, 14. Isai. 29. 13--21. God has expressly armed the magistrate with the sword, to punish such as *work ill to their neighbours*; and his faithfulness in that work, and our obedience to such authority, is enforced by those great motives. Rom. 13. 1--10. 1. Tim. 2. 2, 3. But it is evident, that the sword is excluded from the kingdom of the Redeemer, and that he gave this, as a sufficient proof, why it did not interfere with the government of civil states. John 18. 36. And it is impossible to blend church and state together, without violating our Lord's commands to both. His command to the church is, *Put away from among yourselves that wicked person*. His command to the state is, *Let both grow together until the harvest*. 1. Cor. 5. 13. Mat. 13. 30, 38--43. But it has appeared for these thousand years, that pure gospel discipline in the church, is very little, if at all known, in state establishments of religion; and that instead of letting conformists thereto, and dissenters therefrom, grow together, or enjoy equal worldly privileges, the sword has been employed to *root up*, and to *prepare war against*, all such as put not into the mouths of the established teachers, who are the means of upholding such rules as *pervert all equity*. Jer. 5. 31. Micah. 3. 5---11. It is now well known among us, that the having of temporal pro-

erty in our own power, so as not to have it taken away without our consent, is the turning point of all civil freedom. And it is evident, from the above passages, and many others, that the arming any to take it away with the sword, under a religious mask, is the greatest engine of tyranny in the world.

The celebrated Bishop of Gloucester wrote a volume, about forty years ago, wholly upon this argument, that rulers ought to keep up a religious establishment for the good of civil society. He owns that the church was originally a society, distinct from, and independent of the state : But denies her being *complete* without an alliance therewith. Which is a plain mark of the beast, as I have before proved. The motives that he says, the magistrate has, for taking the church into alliance, are to preserve the essence and purity of religion, to apply its influence for the good of the state, and to prevent the mischief it might otherwise occasion thereto. To prove that the magistrate should be concerned to preserve the purity of religion, he says, “ Observing *truth*, is
“ acting as things really are ; he who acts as
“ things really are must gain his end ; all dis-
“ appointment proceeding from acting as
“ things really *re* not.” * Very well. But does he prove that the cause of truth, will be promoted by the alliance he pleads for ? No ;

* Warburton's alliance between church and state. Third edition, p. 90—92.

he is so far from proving that point, that upon another turn of his discourse, he flatly denies it ; and, in order to prove that his scheme did not interfere with the right of private judgment, he positively asserts, that for rulers to establish any religion because it is the truth, is *unjust*, as they have no right to judge for others in such matters ; and also that it is *absurd*, to suppose such an end could be attained thereby ; as the established religion all the world over will be the magistrates ; that is, says he, “ For one place where the *true* “ religion is established, the *false* will be established in a thousand.” * And when he was told of this absurdity, he had no better way to answer it, than by saying, “ I mean a “ *legitimate* policy, that ever pursues common “ utility.” Of which it seems he did not suppose there was above one in a thousand. Neither can his scheme admit of so much as that ; for in the same page he says, “ The supreme “ magistrate is acknowledged *head* of the religion.” † And as Christ is the only head of the true church, and those rulers that are *nursing fathers* thereto, bow down to the authority he has established therein ; they who set themselves up as heads of any religion are guilty of *whoredom*, from whence no *legitimate* offspring can ever proceed. Isa. 49. 23. Rev. 18. 3.

Mr. Locke says, “ A church is a free and

voluntary Society. No body is born a member of the church, otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children, by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates ; and every one would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands ; than which nothing can be imagined more absurd." *

Yet in reality this imagination lies at the bottom of all this controversy. By deceitful reasonings from the Jewish hand-writings, men have been brought to imagine themselves to be born members of the christian church, and therefore have had the token of membership put upon them in their infancy ; and from thence hold, that the same power which defends their lands, should support their religion. † And they have no better colour for accusing the Baptists of extreme rigidity, and of disobedience to authority, than because they cannot in conscience give their assent to these two points. As for those who say, That religion would soon fail from among us, and human learning also, if force was not used to support ministers, let them consider, that those who have a form, but deny the power of Godliness, are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the TRUTH* ; and that they *creep into houses, instead of going in uprightly*. 2. Tim. 3. 5--7. It is most certain that Christianity was found-

* On toleration p. 17.

† Baptist history, p. 483.

ed upon the TRUTH ; and that it prevailed gloriously, for three centuries, by the power of it, without the help of the sword. And that deceit and amazing ignorance followed the introduction of the sword to support ministers. And the town of Bolton have found equal religious liberty to be so friendly to human learning, that for these thirty years past they have been chiefly beholden for ministers, to distant colleges where such liberty is enjoyed, to the neglect of the mercenary sons of Cambridge, though within sight of their own doors. Many of whom by reading other men's works to country parishes, have got settled in the ministry ; after which the people have been compelled to support them from year to year, let them be ever so little edified by them. Is not this a *creeping* into houses ? And though such are apt to turn a deaf ear to all the remonstrances of scripture and reason, yet perhaps the following facts may convince them, that it is out of their power to bring their old ecclesiastical laws into our new constitution of government.

I. They have lost much of the religious influence which first introduced that scheme into this country. Governor Winthrop, a father to that cause, was a man of eminent piety and devotion, and of such self-denial, as to sell an estate in England of above six hundred pound

sterling a year, much of which he spent in promoting a religious settlement here ; where, for all his vast pains and services in the government, he had scarce a sixth part of that income for his salary. A like religious influence appeared in many other of their rulers. And were can that party now find such ministers, to enforce their laws as the famous Cotton, Hooker, Norton, Mitchel, and others were ? yet with all that help, their establishment was so weak, when it was fifty years old, that one of their greatest ministers compared it to a *small boat*, and only one Baptist society in the colony, to the ballast of a *great ship*, which would sink it. *

II. The influence of religion is now against them. The two capital points of purity and liberty that our fathers came to this country for, are, that none should be received to full communion without a credible profession of regeneration ; and that a particular church thus constituted is the highest religious judicature upon earth, to whom councils are only advisory. But thirty-nine years after Boston was settled, a number of ministers assisted in forming a church there, in open *separation* from the first church in the town, because the new invention of the half-way covenant was excluded therefrom. † And the apostacy prevailed so fast, for thirty years, as

* Baptist history p. 494, 544.

† Ibid. p. 388, 405.

to move Dr. Increase Mather then to declare, that if it should do so for thirty years more, the most conscientious people in New-England would think themselves concerned to *gather churches out of churches.* * It was then become a matter of dispute, whether any church was intitled to the protection of the laws, if she refused to be controuled in the choice of ministers, by other ministers, and the parish. And forty four years after, that question was decided in the negative, when, because the first church in Canterbury refused to receive the minister they had provided for her, a *separate* church was formed in the place, † and said minister was ordained over it; and no better encouragement was given to the first church, by the ordaining council, than only the use of their influence with the legislature of the colony, that said church *might obtain all legal religious privileges* whenever they desired it. ‡ And because they did not desire any new incorporation from the state, but only protection from injuries, their goods were spoiled, and their persons imprisoned, for fifteen years to support a minister they never chose, and had no more relief afforded to them, either by ministers, or civil officers, than the

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* Vindication of gospel order. p. 12.

† A like *separation* was made at Middleborough the same year.

‡ Fish's examiner examined. p. 76.

priest and levite gave to the man that fell among thieves. Conscientious people in other places waited a year, after Canterbury church was thus stripped of all legal privileges, and then began to gather churches out of churches in imitation of the first churches of this country. And though their ministers have often been reproached with the name of *lay-teachers*, yet we can prove, that their ordinations were derived, in a direct line of succession, from the baptist minister that Dr. Mather helped to ordain in Boston in 1718 *. And now, within these ten years, it has plainly appeared, by their own publications, that the ministers who are most earnest to keep up their ecclesiastical laws, are against requiring a profession of regeneration in order for full communion ; and that they hold, that when a minister is settled in any parish, the court must compel them to support him, until he, or other ministers, consent to his dismission, even though the church should convict him of scandalous immoralities. † Which has cooled the zeal of multitudes for those laws, and sundry of their most capable ministers now appear against them. Six years ago one of them said to Connecticut legislature, “ The affairs of the state, are the proper province of

* This is mentioned to silence their cavils, and not because our authority depends upon a local line of succession.

† Baptist hist. p. 109, 110. See Bolton case.

civil rulers ; as to the church of Cl
content to let it stand upon its own
gospel foundation, regulated by its own
and guarded and enforced by its own functi-
ons. On this foundation she has stood, in her
best days ; on this foundation she can yet stand,
and must stand and live forever. And though
she may appear weak and feeble, and ready
to fall ; yet the interposition of worldly pow-
er to establish her, and civil policy to defend
her, will only jostle her foundations, and sink
her the lower." * Which sentiments he con-
firms by the writings of Dr. Watts and others.

III Sensible experience is against these
laws. Under our first charter earnest attempts
were made to establish the government of the
church over the world ; and under the second,
to establish the power of the world over the
church. But the effects of both have been so
pernicious, that many cannot bear to hear of
them ; and have made bitter complaints a-
gainst me for publishing some of them to the
world. But if it be a crime in me to *publish*
them, what must it be in those who *committed*
them ! And will any now plead for a practice
either under the name of religion, or of doing
good to human society, that will not bear the
light ! Canterbury, Plainfield, and Ashfield,
after using violent methods to support their

* Election sermon at Hartford, May 13, 1773, by Mr. Wetmore,
of Stratford, p. 21.

, have been constrained to dismiss them, and to come down to a friendly way of treating their neighbours, whom they had injured thereby ; and, in sundry instances, to confess their faults to them. And among the many hundred instances of making distrels for ministers support in our day, I have not heard of one, but what has caused some conviction of the impolicy, if not of the impiety, of that practice. Therefore,

IV. If it is continued among us, it must be *by naked violence*. It has heretofore been covered with *good words and fair speeches*, but we now know, that it is founded in *partiality*, and *caused divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine of Christ*. * And he commands us all, to *mark and avoid* such teachers, as we would escape his curse. Rom. 16. 17, 18. Gal. 1. 9. 2 John, 10. 11. Those who blend church and state together, usually violate Christ's commands to both. His command to the church is, *Put away from among yourselves that wicked person*. His command to the State, is, *Let both grow together until the harvest*. 1 Cor. 5. 13. Mat. 13. 30. 38-41. But pure gospel discipline has been very little known in state-establishments of religion ; where conformists and dissenters, have been so far from being allowed to grow together, in the enjoyment of equal ci-

vil privileges, that the sword has often been employed to *root up*, and to *prepare war against* those who *put not into the mouths* of the established teachers ; while such teachers have been the means of upholding rulers, in *perverting all equity* ; and so of bringing ruin, instead of good to the state. Jer. 5. 31. Micah 4. 5---12. The Episcopalians covered their pleas for having bishops established in America, with many plausible pretences ; but their wisdom failed them. For in the midst of those pleas they have owned, that a bill for that purpose had almost got through the parliament when Queen Ann died, which was defeated thereby. And that though their party have been watching ever since, they never could find such another favourable opportunity, 'till now in 1767.* And those who are versed in the history of the nation know, that the liberties thereof were in eminent danger when the said Queen died, which never were in so great danger since, till the scheme was invented to tax America ; upon which, it seems, Bishops were to have been sent over. To prevent which Dr. Chauncy plainly denied that any state had a right to make religious establishments. And though they tried to defend that right, yet, in reply to it, he said, “ The religion of Jesus, has suffered more from the exercise of this

* Chandler's appeal, p. 50 -- 54.

pretended right, than from all other causes put together ; and it is with me, past all doubt, that it will never be restored to its primitive purity, simplicity, and glory, until religious establishments are so brought down as to BE NO MORE" * These are the words of the minister, who has written the most, for these 40 years, to uphold the establishment we complain of, of any man upon earth. And when I mentioned his first denial of that right last fall, a writer appeared in the Boston Gazette of November 2, and charged me with *ignorance*, for calling their ecclesiastical laws, an establishment ; and with *impudence* and *abuse*, for writing against them. And on Dec. 28, he said, " In our laws, which relate to the settlement and support of ministers, I am not able to find any thing that has the appearance of establishment. All the various denominations of Protestants are treated *alike*--all Protestants are, therefore, in the view of our laws, † **EQUALLY** orthodox." Now as our legislature have constantly called those laws an establishment, for these eighty-seven years, they are involved with me, in this charge of ignorance ; and as the party they were made for, refused to own the truth in that respect, it seems that our honored Representatives thought it high time to discard *such learning*, and to appoint

* Chauncy's reply to Chandler's defence, 1770, p. 144, 145.

† A more glowing falsehood could not be uttered than this.

a minister to preach to them, who was in *truth* a friend to the liberty others made a *false* pretence of. True wisdom is, therefore, so far from favouring those laws, that the *folly of fools* has been now made use of to uphold them. Prov. 14. 8. And can they stand upon such a bottom ! Men have three things to be concerned for, namely, soul, body, and estate. The two latter belong to the magistrate's jurisdiction, the other does not. There is a learned profession suited to each of these interests ; yet every man and every woman have long been allowed that liberty, about physicians and lawyers, that has been denied them about soul-guides. And can my dear countrymen any longer suffer officers to do that out of their province, which they dare not do in it !

As no man can have a right to judge for others in soul-affairs, so they never could convey such a right to their representatives ; therefore, all the taxes, to support religious worship, and judgments in such cases, that have been among us, were a taxing of us where we were not represented, and imposing judges upon us who were interested against us. Which measures God has again meted to this country in a most terrible manner. Self-love, under the specious name of government, and a concern for the public good, has moved,

and now moves, the Britons, to act towards us like incarnate devils. And self-love in this country, by sinking our public credit, has exposed us to greater danger, than all their fleets and armies could do. The sword, directed by wise counsels, has been the grand means of our defence against those invaders; and infidels must see, that an invincible power has turned the scale in those matters, one way and the other, from time to time, entirely out of the-reach of human foresight. And how strong is the argument from hence, for faithfulness in all rulers, to the trust reposed in them; and faithfulness in their constituents, to support them therein? yea, and for faithfulness also in ministers and people, towards each other, as they will answer therefor to the Judge of all. It was before proved, that the use of the sword, against such as work ill to their neighbours, is expressly warranted by the new-testament. And the time when it is to be laid aside is plainly marked out in the prophecies; namely, when the *knowledge of God* shall have such extensive influence, that there shall be *none to hurt or destroy*, or even to *make us afraid*, Isaiah 11. 9. Micah 4. 1---4. In the mean time, the Redeemer has excluded the sword from his kingdom, which he gives as the reason why it does not interfere with the government of *worldly* states. John

18. 36. And how can any be true ministers of his kingdom, who cannot be content with all the support that his laws and influence will give them ! Although the comfortable support of religious ministers, is most expressly required, both in the old and new testament ; yet the use of force to collect it, and against those who have testified against that practice, has produced such effects in all ages, as none have been willing to own. But the Judge cannot be deceived by their deceitful coverings ; and tells us all what will become of those who *allow* of such deeds, against plain light to the contrary. Mat. 23. 29---33. Luke 11. 46---52.

Rulers, ministers and people, have now a fair opportunity given them, to turn from and quit themselves of those evils ; and I cannot but hope they will improve it. Eight years ago self-love, under a religious pretence, had such influence in our legislature, that we had no way left, to save our friends in Ashfield from being robbed of their lands, but by an appeal to Britain. And if that evil should be ingrafted into our new plan of government, we should have no constitutional remedy against it left upon earth : For the Congress refuse to be judges of such matters. We know that Tories had then the chief management of those deceitful and cruel proceed-

ings against us ; and also that the king and council, did not give relief in that case, from a regard to equal religious liberty, (which they deny at home) but for other ends. Therefore we have joined as heartily, in the general defence of our country, as any denomination therein ; and I have a better opinion of my countrymen, than to think the majority of them will now agree, to deny us liberty of conscience.

*Middleborough,
August 13, 1779.*

ISAAC BACKUS,
Agent for the Baptists in this State.