

**11972**

**[ Backus, Isaac ], 1724-1806.**

**A Letter to a Gentleman.**

**[ Boston ], 1771. 22 pp.**

**AAS copy.**

A  
**L E T T E R**

**To a GENTLEMAN**

**I N T H E**

**Massachusetts General Assembly,**

**Concerning Taxes to support Religious  
Worship.**

*[By Thomas Backus]*

———“ I also will shew mine Opinion.”———  
ELIHU.

*[Boston]*

Printed in the Year 1771.

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HONoured SIR,

**I**T has been often observed, that Men are apt to run from one Extreme to another, and perhaps they do so as much in their treatment of Rulers, as in any of their Affairs ; for as long as they have hopes of Favours from them, their Addresses will be filled with Compliment and Flattery ; but when disappointed, it is turned to Slander and Abuse : Examples of which, at this Day, in our Nation and Land, are too conspicuous, and their Mischief too sensibly felt, to need a Proof : Therefore I shall beg Leave to depart from this modern Road, and attempt to follow the ancient Example before me, of avoiding flattering Titles on one Hand, and false Accusation on the other, and speak out plainly some of my Views of the Truth, concerning an Affair which has lately made considerable Noise in this Province. In doing of which I shall first make a few Remarks upon the chief Pleas I have heard, for civil Rulers exercising their Power to support religious Worship ; and then upon their late Treatment of the Baptists in particular.

The leading Plea that I have heard made, for Rulers exercising Authority in the Affair is, that ancient Rulers did so ; and the Church has a Promise, that Kings shall be her nursing Fathers, and Queens her nursing Mothers. It is readily granted that Rulers as well as others ought to be  
good

good Men, and to use all their Influence in a Gospel Way, to promote Religion ; but I am not convinced that they have any Warrant to use the civil Sword to *force* any to support religious Worship. I find that when the costly Furniture for Worship was to be prepared in the Wilderness, though the great Lawgiver, if he had seen fit, could have as exactly proportioned each Man's part, as to have given the Pattern of what was to be made ; yet instead of that, after letting the People know what was wanted, he says, " Who-soever is of a *willing* Heart, let *him bring an* Offering to the Lord, Gold, Silver, &c." Exod. xxxv. 5. And when the Temple was to be built in Canaan, with vast Cost indeed, David like a nursing Father led the Way, and of his *own proper Goods*, offered very largely thereto ; and then exhorted his People to do the like, which had such Effect, that with grateful Wonder he could say, " As for me, in the Uprightness of mine Heart I have *willingly* offered all these things ; and now have I seen with Joy thy People which are present here, to offer *willingly* unto thee." 1 Chron. xxix. 3, 17. And though particular Offerings of Money and other Things, were enjoined upon every Man by the Law, for the Support of Worship, yet I cannot find any Allowance, much more Commandment, for the use of any Force to collect it. As plain an Instance, and the plainest, of their Method of proceeding, that I have observed, is in 2 Chron. xxiv. 9, 10. When after a terrible Season of Declension and Corruption, the King was stirred up for a Reformation, and the Levites being negligent in the

Affair,

Affair, he caused a *Proclamation* to be made through his Kingdom, to *bring in* to the Lord the *Collection* which Moses the Servant of God laid upon Israel ; and *all the Princes, and all the People rejoiced and brought in*. They brought it themselves ; and I cannot find but one Intimation, in all their History, of the use of *Force* in such Affairs, and that will hardly be pleaded as a Precedent for us now to follow. 1 Sam. vi. 16.

And if Force was not used under a Law given from infallible Authority, what shall we think of it among those who profess to renounce Infallibility ! The Gospel expressly allows of the civil Magistrate's use of the *Sword to execute Wrath*, in the Kingdoms of this World ; but though the crafty Jews, when they found that their Charge against Jesus of *Blasphemy*, would not avail with a Roman Governour, they then tried to represent him as an Enemy to *Cæsar*, yet when Pilate enquired into the Case, Jesus answered, " My Kingdom is not *of this World* ; if my Kingdom were of this World, then would my Servants fight : — But now is my Kingdom *not from hence*." And goes on to shew that his Kingdom does not receive it's Support *from* earthly Power, but *from* TRUTH. Joh. xviii. 36, 37. If so, then what is that Religion which it's Professors often say, " would soon fall if it was not supported by civil Power ?" How much more agreeable to our Lord's Words, are Mr. Locke's Sentiments, than these Men's ? He says, " The Business of Laws is not to provide for the Truth of Opinions, but for the Safety and Security of  
" the

“ the Common-wealth, and of every particular  
 “ Man’s Goods and Person ; and so it ought to  
 “ be ; for TRUTH certainly would do well  
 “ enough if she were once left to shift for herself.  
 “ She seldom has received, and I fear never will  
 “ receive, much Assistance from the Power of  
 “ great Men ; to whom she is but rarely known,  
 “ and more rarely welcome. She is not taught  
 “ by Laws, nor has she any need of *Force* to  
 “ procure her Entrance into the Minds of Men.  
 “ Errors indeed prevail by the Assistance of  
 “ foreign and borrowed Succours.—The Care of  
 “ Souls cannot belong to the civil Magistrate, be-  
 “ cause his Power consists only in outward *Force* ;  
 “ but true and saving Religion consists in the in-  
 “ ward Persuasion of the Mind, without which  
 “ nothing can be acceptable to God.” \*

But upon this I hear some say, ‘ This relates  
 ‘ to Liberty of Conscience, but we hope you don’t  
 ‘ call *Money* Conscience !’ No ; we trust we  
 know the Difference between them, and wish our  
 Neighbours did too, who so often deprive others  
 of their *just Rights* ; for as a late Writer well ob-  
 serves, “ To allow Mankind as Individuals, the  
 “ free Choice of their Religion, and yet to take  
 “ by *Force* their Estates from them to support a  
 “ Religion or Worship which they do not choose,  
 “ is a piece of *Oppression* that would make even  
 “ a moral Heathen blush ; yet many Instances of  
 “ the same have we had, and still have.” And  
 what Work do these Men make of our Lord’s  
 representing to Pilate, that he need not fear his  
 Kingdom’s

\* Letter on Toleration.

Kingdom's interfering with Cæsar's, because his Servants were not to promote it by the *Sword*, but with *Truth* ? For now they tell us, that then the Rulers were Heathens, but when they became christian, they ought to exercise Power to support Religion : Which is no better than to make our Lord say to Pilate, ' You need not fear my giving Trouble to the valiant *Romans*, for I have not ' Power to do it, and am not likely to get the ' Sword into my Hand until long after Cæsar is ' dead !'

Accordingly when Peter's pretended Successor had got the Sword into his Hand, he did much more with it than to cut off Men's *Ears*, for he cut their Souls and Bodies asunder in a hellish Manner ; and though such an use of it is much out of Credit among us, yet to use it in the very Language of *Eli's* Sons, is much pleaded for, viz. If you will not *give it me*, I will *take it by Force* !

Another Plea for such Conduct is, they say, ' These Lands were given upon Condition of ' supporting our Worship, and if you do not like ' the Condition you may go off and leave them.' — By whom were they given ? If by our Fathers, they did not intend to take our Money for nothing, (as their Children now do) for they intended to *make* us religious, as well as to support Religion : Accordingly about the Year 1646, they made a Law to punish any that should turn their backs, or go out of the place of Worship when an Infant was to be sprinkled. And in  
1651,

1651, as Mr. *John Clark*, Pastor of a *Baptist Church* in *Newport*, with his Friends, were at Worship in their own Way, on Lord's-day July 20th. at the House of Mr. *Witter's* in *Lynn*, they were seized, and forcibly carried to the Parish Worship, and afterward sent Prisoners to *Boston* ; where one was fined £. 20. and another £. 30. Not only for setting up another Worship ; but part of their Crime was, their not joining in the Parish Worship when they had carried them there ; and he that was fined £. 30 for refusing to pay it, was whipt 30 Lashes : And two of his Friends, for openly taking him by the Hand, and praising God for his Courage and Constancy, were fined 40s. each, or to be whipt. “ Thus, says  
 “ Mr. *Neal*, the Government of *New-England*,  
 “ for the sake of Uniformity in divine Worship,  
 “ broke in upon the natural Rights of Mankind,  
 “ punishing Men, not for disturbing of the *State*,  
 “ but for their differing Sentiments in Religion.”  
 And though Dr. *Mather* pleads, that, “ This  
 “ Separation of the *Annabaptists* (as he calls them)  
 “ was a manifest Violation of the Laws of the  
 “ Common-wealth, concerning the orderly ga-  
 “ thering of Churches ;” yet, Mr. *Neal* replies,  
 this Plea, “ Condemns all the dissenting Con-  
 “ gregations that have been gathered in *Eng-*  
 “ *land*, since the Act of Uniformity in the Year  
 “ 1662.” And, says he, “ Let the Reader judge,  
 “ who had most Reason to complain ; the *New-*  
 “ *England Churches*, who would neither suffer  
 “ the *Baptists* to live quietly in their Communion,  
 “ nor separate peaceably from it ? Or these un-  
 “ happy Persons, who were treated so unkindly  
 “ for



“ for following the light of their Consciences ?” \*  
 When the account of these Proceedings got to England, Sir Richard Saltonstall, wrote to his Friends in Boston, that he was grieved to hear of such Courses in this Wilderness, as they went to prevent ; and which tended to make Hypocrites : To which Mr. Cotton, (one of the most eminent Fathers of the Country) answers, “ We believe  
 “ there is a vast difference between Mens Inven-  
 “ tions, and God’s Institutions : We fled from  
 “ Mens Inventions, to which we else should have  
 “ been compelled ; † we compel none to Mens  
 “ Inventions.—If it did make Men Hypocrites,  
 “ yet better to be Hypocrites than profane Per-  
 “ sons. Hypocrites give God part of his due, the  
 “ outward Man, but the profane Person giveth  
 “ God neither outward nor inward Man.” ‡—  
 Thus they were in earnest to do us some good,  
 and not get away our Money for nothing ; and  
 though these Proceedings of their’s are generally  
 now condemned, and by some exclaimed against  
 at a great rate ; yet I fear the Body of the present  
 Generation imitate them more, in these two, great  
 est of all their Errors, viz. assuming a Power over  
 their Neighbours that did not belong to them, and  
 B thinking

\* Neal’s History of New-England, Vol. I. Page  
 299.—305.

† Here we see an Instance of the Force of Prejudice :  
 For I believe it will be generally allowed that the  
 Baptists call many Things in the Church of New-  
 England, “ Men’s Inventions,” with full as much  
 Propriety as Mr. Cotton calls the Rites and Ceremo-  
 nies of the Church of Old England, Men’s Inven-  
 tions. And therefore his Argument is good for nothing.

‡ Massachusetts History, Vol. III. pag. 405, 406.

thinking that Hypocrisy does some good, than they do in any of their Virtues ! And if our Fathers erred in such Compulsions then, what are those doing who bring these Errors to justify their own Compulsions now ! If it be said, that our Lands were given us by Charter, then it is well known that the Charter gives general Liberty of Conscience, and gives others no more Power to compel *us* to support *their* Worship, than it does *us* to compel *others* to support *ours*.

When we come to this, some would bear us in hand, that we have actually as much Liberty as the other Denomination ; therefore to such I will suppose a Case, that I heartily wish they may never experience : Suppose *Episcopacy* should be established in New-England, and yet should allow them a Toleration, but only upon these Terms, that they must certify, not only concerning their Church-members, but also of every Person in their Congregations, that they believe them to be *conscientiously* of their Persuasion, or else have them all taxed to support Episcopacy ; yea, and to do this by such a certain Day *every* Year, and (their Minister being one that *must* sign the Certificate) if any Difficulty should happen between the Church and him, so as to prevent its being done by the appointed Day, then to have their Church and all taxed to support other Worship (as we have had such an Instance of a Church consisting of above 50 Members) : Add to which, if the tolerating Laws should be attended with the Corruption Mr. Locke describes, viz. “ Princes speaking or writing to their Servants, in their ordinary  
“ nary

“ nary Commands, are easily understood ; speaking to their People in their Laws, are not so.” \* If these Laws should be so hard to be understood, as to cost them Hundreds, or Thousands of Pounds from Year to Year, at executive Courts, to plead for their Rights ; and in their Tryals, to have all their own Denomination taken off from the Jury, and sometimes not so much as allowed to be Witnesses, but have their Cases tried by Judges and Jurors, whose *Interest swayed* the other Way : If after all this, the Episcopalians should tell these People, that they had as great Liberty as themselves, could they help thinking, that either those Men were *blinded* by *Self-interest*, or else did not believe what they said themselves ! And if after long Struggles in this Way, a perpetual Law should be made, which cut off a Number of their Brethren from any shadow of this Liberty at all ; by Virtue of which, their Lands, which they had cleared with the peril of their Lives, because of Indian Savages, should be torn from them to support others Worship, and that at such a rate that 20 Acres, with a Building on it, and a good Orchard, which is particularly valuable in a new Place, should all be sold for 35/. and after five Journies in a Year, of above an hundred Miles, to the General Court, and long waiting there for Relief, should at last be told by a Number of its Members, \* That they had good Right to make \* that Law, and to keep these People under it as \* long as they pleased ;’ which Law the King himself could not disannul, if it was let alone a-

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nother

\* Essay on Understanding, P. III. Chap. 10. 5, 12.

another Year : And therefore they should make a Motion toward applying to his Majesty before it was too late : Upon which an anonymous Writer should artfully represent, in several News-Papers, that these People complained without the *least* Cause, and challenge them to shew any if they could. If upon this a worthy Minister, lately come among them, should, with Advice of his Brethren, publish a brief Sketch of their capital Grievances ; yet, instead of any fair Answer, should be treated with such Stuff as this :—  
 “ There is a little upstart Gentleman, lately settled  
 “ in Town,—the *Youth* discovers a most in-  
 “ sufferable *Arrigance* :—I very much *suspect*  
 “ he is one employed by the *Enemies* of America,  
 “ to *defame* and blacken the Colonies ;—to spread  
 “ the *Seeds of Discord* among the Provinces,”  
 &c. &c. And yet that the Writer of all this should have the Impudence to subscribe himself a *Catholick* Member of this same Denomination of People !

Suppose all this, and more of like Nature, should happen, could all the Men upon Earth, ever perswade them to believe, that they were allowed equal Liberty with their Oppressors ! Yet, without the least Exaggeration, this is the true State of our Case ; therefore I leave it, Sir, to your Judgment, whether this last piece of *Rodomontade*, which appears in the *Evening-Post* of January 7th. does not look much more like the Jesuitical Tricks of *Roman Catholicks*, than like a *Catholick Baptist*.

And

And though we have sufficient Evidence, that a principal Instrument of our capital Grievance, is one who has been openly honored by the late Governor, for his appearing in Opposition to those called Sons of LIBERTY ; yet we have as full Evidence, that we have suffered from the other Party, into which our Country is so unhappily divided : So that we cannot justly lay the blame of all our Troubles to either Side. And what I have seen has often reminded me of Mr. *Wright's* Remark, sixty Years ago :

‘ Tho’ Whigs and Tories be each others Foes,  
 ‘ And act in divers Circles, yet they close  
 ‘ In this great Centre, and at last do fall  
 ‘ Upon the point of wishing SELF HAD ALL.’

Therefore I have made this Attempt to turn each Side to read an ancient Law, which, though often forgotten by us, yet will be that by which we must all be acquitted or condemned, after all earthly Law-books are burnt up ; and Dr. Watts’s Comment upon it may doubtless be helpful in the Affair :

‘ Is Reason ever at a Loss ?  
 ‘ Call in Self-love to judge the Cause :  
 ‘ Let thy own fondest Passion shew  
 ‘ How we should treat our Neighbour too.’

If this Law of Equity may but now have its proper Influence, both with Regard to what we have already suffered, and with Regard to our future Liberty ; then if any of our People should  
 interrupt

interrupt the civil Peace of their Neighbours, or of the Province, let them be complained of and welcome, and punished too according to the demerit of their Crimes : But until that is done, all the Smoke of News-Papers can never make us insensible of what we feel.

If an Answer to the Cambridge piece, wrote by one of our Brethren, who has experienced much of these Things, had arrived in Town seasonably, it would have prevented the Occasion that has been taken to abuse a Stranger ; which, as it confirms what I have wrote, and will serve farther to open the Truth : It is inserted here, and is as follows :

*To the PRINTER,*

**P**LEASE to insert the following in your Paper, in Answer to a piece in your Paper of Nov. 12. 1770. wherein the Writer tries to clear the Massachusetts-Bay from having oppressed the Baptists in the least Degree, and says, “ If any one have “ suffered, let him appear.”

To which I answer : At South-Hadley a Baptist Church was gathered some years ago, who took Advice of one of the best Lawyers in the County, and carried in their Certificate, yet they were rated to the Pædobaptist Minister, and their Goods strained away : The Case was carried to Court, and they were cast, and had the Charges of two Courts to pay, and then they gave the Town about twenty Dollars to let them be free for the future ; and so with a *great Sum* obtained they their Freedom, who were truly *free born*.

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In the District of Montague is another Baptist Church, who carried in their Certificate by direction of a Lawyer, yet the Assessors put them into the Minister's rate : The Constable made Distress upon one of the Committee who signed the Certificate.—When they came to Court, they were cast, because (said the Judge) he witnessed for himself, when yet there were two more to witness with him. They appealed to the Superior Court, and have attended two, and the Case is hung up to the third, and all this time they are left in the Hands of their Adversaries, who treat them in a most barbarous Manner, driving away their Cattle and selling them at an Out-cry, for their Minister's rate. At Shutesbury, one Daniel Fisk, notwithstanding his Certificate, was seized by two Constables at once, held under Keepers some Time ; and though the Assessors met and released him, yet no Recompence was made for his loss of Time and Charge. At Colerain, Hezekiah Smith, and John Call, Members of the Church in Ashfield, were both seized in the dead of Winter to be carried to Goal ; but after they had put them to a great deal of Trouble and loss of Time, they let them go.—At Chesterfield, one William White, also a Member of the Baptist Church in Ashfield, yet is put into the Minister's rate ; and when he petitioned in a Town-Meeting to be released, they refused, and the Minister told the Constable if he would not pay to strain upon him. All these Accounts I had from the Persons own Mouths.

This Writer makes mention of Ashfield, and says, “ What their Circumstances are I know not,  
“ few

“ few are acquainted with them ; it would be of  
 “ public Service to have an authentick Account  
 “ given.” Which I will endeavour to do, being  
 fully acquainted with the Affair from the very  
 first.—In 1761, a Baptist Church was here settled,  
 and I was ordained their Pastor, when there was  
 but nineteen Families in the Town, and twelve of  
 them were Baptists : Afterward other People came  
 into the Town, and in 1763, settled another Mi-  
 nister, and forced me and my People to pay our  
 equal part of his Settlement, saying, ‘The General  
 Court had ordered us to settle a Minister in the  
 Town, and that a Baptist Minister did not answer  
 the Law.’ When they had got him settled, then  
 we must build their Meeting-House, and pay his  
 Salary until that was done. So we were forced  
 to sell off part of our Lands under Price, to get  
 Money to pay the Tax on the rest ; and some  
 they sold at Vendue for a mere trifle. Being no  
 longer able to bear this cruel Oppression, in 1768;  
 we laid the Matter before the General Court, and  
 cried to them as to the Fathers of our Country  
 for help ; and they ordered us to notify the Town  
 and Proprietors Clerks of our Petition, and that  
 they should suspend the Collection of Taxes from  
 us until the Court sit again : Yet a few Days after  
 our Petitioner came away, they passed an Act im-  
 powering the Pædobaptists to raise Money for  
 their Minister and Meeting-House, and assess all  
 the Lands, be they in whose Hands they would ;  
 and if any did not pay to sell the Land for the  
 Money. By Virtue of that Act they sold last  
 April about 400 Acres of our Lands at an Out-  
 cry. I paid all their Demands but about 22/- yet  
 they



they sold ten Acres of the best of my Home-lot, which I got prized at about £. 30 Lawful Money. One of my Brethren paid all but \* 15/. yet they sold 20 Acres of his Home-lot, in which was a good Orchard, a Dwelling-House, and our Burying-Place, which is prized at above £. 100 ; and the rest much after the same Manner, and not one Penny returned to us. Since which, some of them have broke into our Fields, breaking down our Fences, measuring off our Lands, tore up sixteen Apple-trees, and abused some who stood in their Way. We have been at the cost of six Journies to Boston, to try to get that Act altered by the General Court, but cannot obtain it.

This Writer says, “ There never was a Time  
 “ since this Country was settled, when Magistrates,  
 “ Ministers and People were more universally a-  
 “ verse to religious Oppression, than at this day.”  
 To which I say, The aforesaid Accounts shew the minds of Assessors, Constables, and executive Courts in this County ; and a Number of the House of Representatives told me in College-Hall in Cambridge, last Summer, ‘ That they had a  
 ‘ Right to make that Act by which my Land is  
 ‘ sold, and to keep me and my Brethren under it  
 ‘ as long as they saw fit.’ As to Ministers, I asked the Minister of this Town to let me be free from his Rate, he refused, saying, ‘ He would  
 ‘ have his Money ;’ and since has said in a public

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- \* If any enquire why these People did not pay all their Rates, seeing they paid a part ? the answer is, because the Assessors there, and in other places (contrary) to Law and Equity) put their Civil and Ecclesiastical Rates into one ; and they never refused to pay their Civil Tax.

lic Meeting, ‘ We must always pay his Salary as long as we live in the Town, and if we did not like to pay we must go out of Town.’ The Minister of Chesterfield told the Constable, ‘ If William White would not pay, to strain upon him.’ The Man that bought my Land told me, ‘ He was glad he bought it, and wanted another Vendue that he might buy the rest.’ And is it not strange that there is so much *Oppression*, and every Body averts to it!—This Writer says, “ All possible care has been taken, to prevent our suffering.” If so, I think it is high Time to seek help of the higher Powers; for if the Authority here cannot stop our suffering, I hope our gracious Sovereign can: What then have I now done in sending to him? Is there not a Cause? I hope that Writer, when he has read these Accounts, will be able to guess whence the Newspaper Complaints arose. The People of this Province call themselves *Sons of LIBERTY*, but they treat me like *Sons of VIOLENCE*.

I do not write in contempt of Authority, whom I desire always to honor; but because I am called upon to answer for myself. Had that Writer but wrote his Name, I might have sent him a private Letter; but now I know no way to answer his Request, but in the Prints.—I shall only add, that we were very loth to send home, but we see nothing but Ruin for us if we did not.—“ Because of *Oppression*, this Land mourneth;” and the Cries of the Oppressed I believe have entred into the Ears of the Lord of Hosts, who is higher than the highest, and *does regard*.

Ashfield, Dec.

EBENEZER SMITH.

5. 1770.

N. B.

*N. B.* If you want to see the Case of Ashfield-Baptists drawn to the life, read Low's Preface to his Almanack for 1771, from the 1st to the 20th Line. Mr. Low's Words refer'd to are these,  
 " My dear Countrymen, the last time I made my  
 " public Appearance before you in this Character,  
 " I entertained a pleasing Expectation, that by  
 " the return of this Year, the unhappy Difficulties  
 " subsisting in the Nation would have been re-  
 " moved, a redress of Grievances obtained, and  
 " we instated in the full Possession of these Rights  
 " and Privileges, which as Britons we have de-  
 " rived from our Nativity ; and on which the  
 " signal Happiness and peculiar Glory of the  
 " Common-wealth depends. But how often are  
 " our greatest Expectations disappointed, our rai-  
 " sed Hopes dashed, and our flattering Dreams  
 " vanished ? Our Grievances, instead of being in  
 " the least redressed, are rather augmented, and  
 " the causes of Complaint increased. We have been  
 " stigmatized as rebellious and seditious,—abused  
 " by the most flagrant Misrepresentations,—sus-  
 " tained the most intolerable Hardships, and en-  
 " dured the most provoking Insults.—Treated  
 " like Criminals condemned for the most atrocious  
 " Offences, the Ears of the Mighty have been  
 " deafned to the repeated Cries, Remonstrances  
 " and Petitions, of as loyal and obedient a People  
 " as any in his Majesty's Dominions."

A Friend to his Country desires Liberty here to add, That since America in general do not ask it as a Favour, but claim it as their essential Right, to *give* their Money, and not have it *forced* from

them without their *Consent*, either by themselves or their Representatives ; and hundreds of Complaints and Remonstrances have been sent to England against being deprived of this Right : And they look upon themselves intolerably abused, because these Complaints are not heard and regarded. Must it not be very astonishing that any of the same Men, should at the same Time shew worse Treatment to their Fellow-subjects here, than what they complain of from the higher Powers ! I say, worse ; for what they complain of, is having their Money *forced* away to support civil Government, where the Magistrate is armed with the *Sword* as the *Minister of God, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.—For this cause pay you Tribute.* Their Complaints therefore, are only against the undue use of Force in civil Matters where Force properly belongs ; yet they use it towards their Neighbours, in ecclesiastical Affairs, where Force has no Right at all. For as Mr. Locke, in his Letter upon Toleration, observes,

“ To give Laws, to receive Obedience, and compel with the Sword, belong to none but the civil Magistrate ; and upon this ground I affirm, that the Magistrate’s Power extends not to the establishing any Articles of Faith, or forms of Worship by force of Laws : For Laws are of no Force without Penalties.—The care of Souls cannot belong to the civil Magistrate, because his Power consists only in outward Force : But true and saving Religion consists in the inward Persuasion of the Mind ; without which nothing can be acceptable to God.” And a late Writer says, “ That Mankind have a right to be free

free in the Choice of Religion, is a Truth cannot be denied, and is a Privilege dearer to a sober Christian, than any civil Privilege ever ; and no Authority on Earth have any right to take it away ; nor can, without being guilty of assuming that Power over others, which God never gave them : And to allow Men as Individuals the free Choice of their Religion, and yet to take by *Force* their Estates from them to support a Religion or Worship which they do not chuse, is a piece of Oppression that would make even a moral Heathen blush ; yet many such Instances have we had, and still have !”

I think if these things do not cause some remorse in those who have thus oppressed their Brethren, they must be more stupid than those who had been cruel to Joseph ; for when they met with like Treatment they said, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother !* yea, more stupid than a Heathen King, who, though what he met with was by the hands of Men, yet said, *As I have done, so God hath requited me.* Judg. i. 7.

For if it be Oppression to take away from a People the right of *giving* their Money, either by themselves or their Representatives, to support civil Government, where Force belongs (as I believe it is) what must it be to deprive them of a right that never can be conveyed to any Representative ! For unless a Man could constitute another to answer for him at the Bar of God, it is impossible for him to convey to another a right to compel him or others to attend, or support any Worship contrary to their Consciences. What

What then shall we think of those Men who often accuse their Neighbours of *Covetousness*, only because they plead with Moses, for Liberty to carry their Substance with them, to help support the Worship they believe to be right, while these Accusers act the part of Pharaoh, who when he could no longer hold their Persons, yet said, *Let your Flocks, and your Herds be stayed !*

Thus, honoured Sir, you have laid before you, and left to your Consideration, a plain Representation of the true State of these Affairs, by one who has some near Apprehensions of the Account we must all presently give of our Conduct, before the great Tribunal ; and who desires ever to approve himself a true Friend to his Country, and in his Station a loyal Subject to all lawful Authority, and ready to serve his Generation by the will of God.

A Countryman.

March 14. 1771.

