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

**A Letter to a Gentleman.**

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

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L E T T E R

To a GENTLEMAN

I N T H E

Massachusetts General Assembly,

Concerning Taxes to support Religious  
Worship.

*[By] Joseph Backus*

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

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*[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  
" dom 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

