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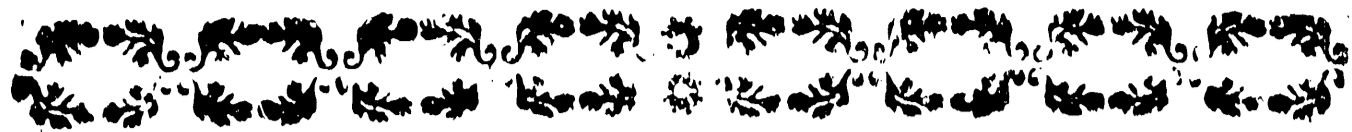
R E L I G I O U S A F F A I R S.

By Isaac Backus.

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

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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.

THE 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. 10. 32; 1 Peter 2. 12.

