

Isaac Backus Quotes from *God Betrayed*
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The following are quotes from Isaac Backus inserted in the book *God Betrayed*. *God Betrayed* also has a lot of other information about Isaac Backus from other historical sources, both Christian and secular, that is not included here.

From page vii of *God Betrayed*: During and after the battle with the state, the Lord dealt with me about the need for more Christian lawyers. At the same time, I realized the dangers to a Christian in becoming a lawyer. Isaac Backus wrote, concerning lawyers and while discussing the role of lawyers in forming the Constitution of Massachusetts which at the time required supporting religious teachers by taxation:

- “This article [in the Constitution of Massachusetts] was drawn by [a] great lawyer; and men of that profession are interested in supporting religious teachers by force as really as any men in the world; for a great part of their gains come by controversies about religion; and when teachers and lawyers are in confederacy together, they will make words to mean any thing which they please.”¹

From pp. xiv-xv of *God Betrayed*: This is not the first time in America that the truth concerning the issue of separation of church and state and the history thereof was presented in contrast to the more accepted but inaccurate views. Isaac Backus² wrote:

- “And if it should be found, that nearly all the histories of this country which are much known, have been written by persons who thought themselves invested with power to act as lawgivers and judges for their neighbors, under the name of orthodoxy, or of immediate power from heaven, the inference will be strong, that our affairs have never been set in so clear light as they ought to be; and if this is not indeed the case I am greatly mistaken; of which the following account will enable the reader to judge for himself.
- “The greatest objection that I have heard against this design is, that we ought not to rake up the ashes of our good fathers, nor to rehearse those old controversies, which will tend to increase your present difficulties. But what is meant by this objection? To reveal secret, or to repeat matters that have been well settled between persons or parties, is forbidden, and its effects are very pernicious; but what is that to a history of public facts, and an examination of the principles and conduct, both of oppressors, and of the oppressed?
- “Men who are still fond of arbitrary power may make the above objection; but a learned and ingenious paedobaptist that felt the effects of such power, lately said, ‘The Presbyterians, I confess, formerly copied too nearly the Episcopalians. The genuine principles of universal and impartial liberty were very little understood by any; and all parties were too much involved in the guilt of intolerance and persecution. The dissenters in our times freely acknowledge this, and condemn the narrow principles of many of their oppressors; having no objection to transmitting down to posterity, in their true colors, the acts of oppression and intolerance of which all sects have been guilty. Not indeed, as is sometimes done, with view of encouraging such conduct in one party by the example of others; but of exposing it alike in all, and preventing it wholly, if possible, in time to come.’ This is the great design of the ensuing work; and such a work seems essentially necessary to that end.”³

From p. xix of *God Betrayed*. The tempter would always have us claim God’s promises without regarding His precepts, “which is the practice the tempter would have drawn our Saviour into.”⁴

From pp. 14-15 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus, a great Baptist pastor, author, and leader in New England, appropriately described man’s state before and after the fall in the Garden of Eden. “Before man imagined that submission to [God’s] government and acting strictly by rule was confinement and that breaking over those bounds would enlarge his knowledge and happiness, how clear were his ideas!”⁵ After his fall, because he felt evil, guilt,

¹ Isaac Backus, *A History of New England With Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians called Baptists, Volume 2* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, Previously published by Backus Historical Society, 1871), pp. 328-329.

² Isaac Backus was born in Connecticut in 1723/24, a time when those dissenting from the views of the established church were persecuted. He withdrew from the established Congregational church, became a Separate, and later a Baptist. As a Separate and later a Baptist, he was persecuted and witnessed, researched, and wrote about the persecutions going on in New England. He was a leader in the fight for religious liberty in America. For more information on Isaac Backus see, e.g., William G. McLoughlin, *Isaac Backus and the American Piestic Tradition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967); *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism, Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, Edited by William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968); Isaac Backus, *A History of New England With Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists, Volumes 1 and 2* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, Previously Published by Backus Historical Society, 1871).

Isaac Backus and others such as Roger Williams, and John Clarke led the fight against the establishment of the church in the early history of America, and to their efforts we owe the First Amendment to the United States Constitution which guarantees religious liberty.

³ Backus, Author’s Preface to *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. vii-viii.

⁴ Backus, *A History of New England ...*, Volume 2, p. 254.

⁵ Isaac Backus, “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty,” Boston 1773, an essay found in *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism, Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, Edited by William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968), p. 310.

and misery instead of good and happiness, he tried to hide from the Omniscient One. “[I]t appears that the notion of man’s gaining any dignity or liberty by refusing an entire submission to government was so delusive that instead of its advancing him to be *as Gods*, it sunk him down into a way of acting like the beasts and like the Devil.”⁶ He had no sooner revolted from the authority of Heaven than the beauty and order of his family was broken.⁷

From p. 15 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus wrote: “By divine institution a whole family and a whole nation were taken into covenant; now none are added to the church by the Lord but believers who are saved.”⁸

From p. 25 of *God Betrayed*: As Isaac Backus observed: “Yet all this [all that God had done in the Garden of Eden, the flood, the ordaining of civil government] did not remove the dreadful distemper from man’s nature, for the great Ruler of the universe directly after the flood gave this as one reason why he would not bring such another while the earth remains, namely, *For the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.*”⁹ “So that if he was to drown them as often as they deserved it, one deluge must follow another continually.”¹⁰

From p. 68 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus, the great Baptist leader in New England, elaborated upon the faith confessed by Peter:

- “This faith is the foundation of the church; against this faith the gates of hell shall not prevail; this faith hath the keys of the kingdom of heaven; what this faith shall loose or bind on earth, is bound and loosed in heaven.... Now it followeth, that whatsoever person hath received the same precious faith with Peter, as all the faithful have, 2 Pet. i. 1, that person hath a part in this gift of Christ. Whosoever doth confess, publish, manifest or make known Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, and Saviour of the world, that person opens heavens gates, looseth sin, and partakes with Peter in the use of the keys; and hereupon it followeth necessarily, that one faithful man, yea, or woman either, may loose and bind, both in heaven and earth, as all the ministers in the world.”¹¹

From p. 73 of *God Betrayed*: Baptists have always recognized the biblical teaching as to this aspect of a church—that is, that a church on earth is only a local spiritual body of believers whose head is Jesus Christ. As Isaac Backus wisely noted:

- “[A] power in councils above particular churches has no foundation in Scripture, and is an endless source of confusion among Christians.... In all earthly governments, the laws are executed in the name of the supreme authority of it, which can see but a little of what is done in its name. But the Son of God is present in every church, as well as through the world, by his universal knowledge and power; and if any of his churches leave their first love, and will not repent, he removes the candlestick out of his place. Rev. ii. 1-5.”¹²

From p. 125 of *God Betrayed*: “The religion of Jesus has suffered more from the exercise of this pretended right [to make religious establishments] 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.”¹³

From p. 142 of *God Betrayed*: As one Puritan preacher, in an attempt to remove objections of some against partaking of the Lord’s Supper because of fears of not being born again, preached in order to persuade them:

- “The children of those who are members of the visible church are, by the constitution of God, from their first coming into existence, members of his kingdom in common with their parents. So it was under the Jewish dispensation; and so it is now, [under the Christian] if there is any validity in one of the principal arguments, by which we vindicate our practice, in baptizing the infants of those who are members of Christ’s church.”¹⁴

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Backus, *A History of New England...., Volume 1*, p. 153.

⁹ Backus, “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty,” p. 310, citing Genesis 4.19; 6.13, 15; 8.21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 310-311.

¹¹ Backus, *A History of New England...., Volume 1*, p. 12 quoting John Robinson, *A Justification of Separation from the Church of England*.

¹² Backus, *A History of New England...., Volume 2*, pp. 339-340.

¹³ Backus, *A History of New England...., Volume 2*, p. 249.

¹⁴ Backus, *A History of New England...., Volume 2*, p. 171.

From p. 143 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus taught, “All establishments of worship by human laws, that ever were erected under the Christian name, were built upon calling the covenant in Gen. xvii the covenant of grace.”¹⁵

From p. 144 of *God Betrayed*: Covenant Theology, which does not recognize or correctly analyze the roles of the Old and New Covenants, is at odds with a correct interpretation of the Bible on this issue. Isaac Backus explained:

- “[The law is holy, just, and good]; it [is] spiritual; but [man] a carnal slave to sin, instead of having such high dignity and liberty as he before imagined he had.... A false imagination of *good* in the forbidden fruit, drew our first parents into rebellion against God; and such imaginations are the only source of sin in all their children. James i. 14, 15. *Good* is still their pursuit, but they have lost the knowledge of who can give it, or of what it is; but the regenerate soul knows both, and this is the precise difference between them. Psalm iv. 6, 7. Who does not know that debtors and criminals are not fit judges in their own causes? [Y]et that is the case with all reasoners against the truth and perfection of God’s written word.... And to hear many speaking evil of things they know not, but what they know naturally as brute beasts, and in those things to corrupt themselves; to see them tread down the good pastures, and foul the deep waters, and thrust others with side and shoulder, serves to confirm believers in the truth of revelation, and in the hope of a speedy deliverance from such evil beasts. Jude 10. Ezek. xxxiv. 18, 25.”¹⁶

From pp. 145-146 of *God Betrayed*: To show that God has “disannulled the national covenant which he made with Abraham,” Backus offered the following insights:

- “First, Abraham had no right to circumcise any stranger, until he had bought him as a servant for money. Gen. xvii. 12, 13. But God says to his children, Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men. I Cor. vii. 23. And he says to his ministers, Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts xx. 28. He also says, Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money. And this is the gospel of peace. Is. lii. 3, 7; Rom. x. 15. Thus do the apostles explain the prophets. Secondly, The children of Israel had no right to receive strangers into the church by households, until the day in which they came out of Egypt, when the Passover was instituted. And then God said, Every man’s servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. Exod. xii. 44—48. Circumcision and the Passover were as binding upon servants as children; and both ordinances pointed to the blood of Christ, which he was to shed for his people. And in reference to that, God said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. And an inspired apostle says, In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. Heb. viii. 7—13; x. 9. And can *old* and *new*, *first* and *second*, mean but one covenant? Surely no. Thirdly, *Circumcision* is the name which God gave to his covenant with Abraham. Acts vii. 8. And though Jews and Mahometans are still zealous for it, yet all Christians allow that circumcision is repealed. But after the apostolic age, men took away the name which God gave to that covenant, and added the name *Grace* to it; and they held that dominion is founded in grace. And from thence the nations have made merchandise of all the vanities of time, and of slaves and souls of men. But the plagues of Babylon will come upon all men who add to the word of God, and take away from the words of his book, if they refuse to come out of that practice. Rev. xviii. 4—13; xxii. 18, 19. And there is not a word in all the Bible for bringing any child to baptism without his own profession of faith in Christ, nor for forcing any man to support any religious minister; and all national churches are built upon these two superstitions. Fourthly, Circumcision was the shedding of human blood; and when Abraham received it, it was a seal of righteousness of the faith which he before had in Christ, in whom believers are justified by his blood. Rom. iv. 11, 23; v. 9; Gal. iii. 16; Gen. xv. 6; xvii. 24. It was a seal to him; but neither circumcision nor baptism are ever called seals to any other person in the Bible. But God says to true believers in Christ, In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. And he also says, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Eph. i. 13; iv. 30. After believing in Christ, the Holy Spirit seals the merits of his death, and the promises of his grace to the soul. And all believers from the beginning, looked through the bloody ordinances which God appointed, to the blood of Christ for justification. And after the beast arose out of the bottomless pit, God said, All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. xiii. 8. Force and cruelty is the general character of the beast; but Jesus, who is the root and offspring of David, will cause all evil beasts to cease out of the land. Ezek. xxxiv. 4, 25; Rev. xxii. 16. Fifthly, the believing Jews were suffered to go on in circumcision for a number of years past the death of Christ, and then God said to them, If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Whosoever of you are justified by the law,

¹⁵ Mr. Backus goes on to point out that “Those who have seen the nature of original sin, cannot tell how to keep up the idea of children’s being born in the covenant of grace, without some regard to grace in their parents. And in the same chapter where the unbelieving consort is said to be sanctified by the believer, a widow is required to marry only in the Lord....” [He then refers to a parable wherein to make his point the author thereof describes a church which advised a member to marry a certain woman of grace in the church rather than a woman he loves who is not of grace. Of the woman of grace, the church says:]

“As to some trifles, which a carnal man would object to, it becomes you as a spiritual man, to make no objection. It is true, she is of a mean family, and a very weak understanding; she is peevish and fretful to the highest degree; her shape is semicircular; she is what the world calls monstrous ugly; every feature is adapted to mortify carnal desires, which is much better than to have them gratified; she is the queen of sluts, and without any polite education. But she has grace, saving grace; she is regenerated; let your grace wed with hers, and a sweet bride she will be. Moreover, she is past the flower of her age, and we suppose need so requires.”

Backus goes on to say that this parable can be applied to no church on earth, but says “[H]ow mean and spiteful it is to treat the Word *Grace* [in the manner treated by Covenant Theologians]! Affixing the word to the covenant of circumcision, where God never put it, is the source of [a difficulty of a church at Stockbridge where to be sanctified by the believer, a widow is required to marry only in the Lord]. Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 238-241.

¹⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 254.

ye are fallen from grace. Gal. v.2—4. So far was the covenant of circumcision from being the covenant of grace. That bloody sign not only pointed to the death of Christ, but also to the death of all true believers in him. Therefore Paul says, I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. ... The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. Gal. ii. 19, 20; v. 22-24. Adam and Christ are the only two public heads of mankind, as to the great affairs of the soul and eternity. For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. Rom. v. 19. For parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is of infinite importance; but we can find no warrant for any to bring them to baptism without a personal profession of faith in Christ....

- “God said of Abraham, I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Gen. xviii. 19. He *will* and *They shall*, was the language of God's covenant with Abraham; but *I will*, and *They shall*, is the language of the new covenant, since the death of Christ. Heb. viii. 10; x. 9. It was the will of God that the visible church should continue in the line of Abraham's posterity, until Christ came and died for his people, and then the holy spirit was given, and believing Jews and Gentiles were united in his church. And they never were called Christians, until believing Gentiles were received into the church without circumcision....
- “[T]he holding that the children of believers are born into the covenant of grace, or that baptism can bring them into it, without their own knowledge or choice, is such a confounding of grace and works together as holds multitudes in blindness and bondage.”¹⁷

From p. 146 of *God Betrayed*: Who are the true seed of Abraham? Mr. Backus again correctly divided the Word of Truth in answering this question:

- “Circumcision was only for males, but females are equally the subjects of baptism, which proves an essential change of the covenant. And our Lord gave the gospel commission to the eleven, who were all born again; and he said to them, Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matt. xxviii. 16—20. This promise is only to his children, in the way of obedience to all his commandments. And as the covenant of circumcision gave Israel a right to buy the heathen for servants, and circumcision was only for the males, the gospel says to believers, Ye are all the *children of God* by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. iii.26—29. Abraham was an eminent type of Christ, and none are his spiritual seed but believers in Christ.”¹⁸

From p. 150 of *God Betrayed*: The church proceeded under the New Covenant, whereas the Jewish theocracy operated under the Mosaic covenant. Isaac Backus, in pointing out that Jesus did away with the Old Testament Covenant of Law, wrote:

- “When our Savior came, he fulfilled the law, both moral and ceremonial, and abolished those hereditary distinctions among mankind. But in the centuries following, deceitful philosophy took away the name which God has given to that covenant, (Acts vii.8) [the covenant of circumcision] and added the name *Grace* to it; from whence came the doctrine, that *dominion is founded in grace*. And although this latter name has been exploded by many, yet the root of it has been tenaciously held fast and taught in all colleges and superior places of learning, as far as Christianity has extended, until the present time; whereby natural affection, education, temporal interest and self-righteousness, the strongest prejudices in the world, have all conspired to bind people in that way, and to bar their minds against equal liberty and believer's baptism.”¹⁹

From p. 171 of *God Betrayed*: Men today, as did these Pharisees, prefer to trust in their own doings instead of the perfect righteousness of Christ. Isaac Backus pointed out the darling of such men:

- “[Such men] trust in their own doings, instead of the perfect righteousness of Christ, are in covenant with death and at agreement with hell. And earthly monarchy has generally been the darling of such men. [As the Pharisees went to the civil government to carry out their scheme to kill Christ, so do men today go to the civil government.] Therefore God says to them, And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved. Isaiah lvii. 9-10 ... [T]he calling any ruler, since the death of Christ, The Lord's *anointed*, and the setting up any earthly heads to the church, is a practice which came from hell, from the bottomless pit; and this is the beast who causeth God's witnesses to prophesy in mourning, and at length kills them. Rev. xi. 7; xiii. 1, 2, 12; xvii. 8.”²⁰

From p. 173 of *God Betrayed*: “The forming of the constitution and appointment of the particular orders and offices of civil government is left to human discretion, and our submission thereto is required under the name of their being

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-366, 371-372, 373.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.

¹⁹ Isaac Backus, *An Abridgement to the Church History of New England* (Boston: Harvard University, 1804; reprinted. 1935), p. 136. cited in Beller, *America in Crimson Red...*, p. 446.

²⁰ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 563.

the *ordinances of men* for the Lord's sake, *1 Pet.* ii, 13, 14. Whereas in ecclesiastical affairs we are most solemnly warned not to be *subject to ordinances after the doctrines and commandments of men*, *Col.* ii, 20, 22."²¹

From p. 178 of *God Betrayed*: Just as the early colonial dissenters such as the Baptists were under bondage to the established churches in the colonies, so are Americans, including Christians in churches which place themselves under civil government, in the twenty-first century. The eighteenth century words of Isaac Backus apply to Americans today:

- “Now how often have we been told that he is not a freeman but a slave whose person and goods are not at his own but another's disposal? And to have foreigners come and riot at our expense and in the fruit of our labors, has often represented as to be worse than death... But how is our world filled with such madness concerning spiritual tyrants! How far have pride and infidelity, covetousness and luxury, yea, deceit and cruelty, those foreigners which came from Hell, carried their influence, and spread their baneful mischiefs in our world! Yet who is willing to own that he has been deceived and enslaved by them? ... All acknowledge that these enemies are among us, and many complain aloud of the mischiefs that they do, yet even those who lift up their heads so high as to laugh at the atonement of Jesus and the powerful influences of the Spirit and slight public and private devotion are at the same time very unwilling to own that they harbor pride, infidelity, or any other of those dreadful tyrants. And nothing but the divine law ... brought home with convincing light and power, can make them truly sensible of the soul-slavery that they are in. And 'tis only the power of the Gospel that can set them *free from sin* so as to become the servants of *righteousness*, can *deliver* them from these *enemies* so as to *serve God in holiness* all their days.
- “... Therefore the divine argument to prove that those who promise liberty while they despise government are servants of corruption is this: *For of whom a MAN is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*, *2 Pet.* ii. 18, 19. He is so far from being *free* to act the *man* that he is a *bond-slave* to the worst of tyrants. And not a little of this tyranny is carried on by such an abuse of language as to call it liberty for men to yield themselves up to be so *foolish, disobedient* and *deceived* as to *serve divers lusts and pleasures*, *Tit.* iii. 3.”²²

From p. 194 of *God Betrayed*: Baptists wanted religious freedom. Some probably could foresee the ideal of a church under God, a civil government under God, with neither church nor state over the other. But few knew how to have a civil government under God without establishing a church. Why? Fifteen hundred years of history had witnessed “Christian” establishments made up of church-state or state-church unions. Therefore, one should not be too hard on those early Protestants in America who continued those unions, since, according to Isaac Backus,

- “[many things] prove that those fathers [the leaders of the Puritans in Massachusetts] were earnestly concerned to frame their constitution both in church and state by divine rule; and as all allow that nothing teaches like experience, surely they who are enabled well to improve the experience of past ages, must find it easier now to discover the mistakes of that day, than it was for them to do it then. Even in 1637, when a number of puritan ministers in England, and the famous Mr. Dod among them, wrote to the ministers here, that it was reported that they had embraced certain new opinions, such as ‘that a stinted form of prayer and set liturgy is unlawful; that the children of godly and approved Christians are not to be baptized, until their parents be set members of some particular congregation; that the parents themselves, though of approved piety, are not to be received to the Lord's Supper until they be admitted set members,’ &c., Mr. Hooker expressed his fears of troublesome work about answering of them, though they may appear easy to the present generation.”²³

From p. 197 of *God Betrayed*: The tactics of Christian and secular revisionists do not change. As Isaac Backus noted, concerning the revisionism and lies of the leaders of the established churches in the colonies:

“[I] appeal to the conscience of every reader, whether he can find three worse things on earth, in the management of controversy, than, first, to secretly take the point disputed for truth without any proof; then, secondly, blending that error with known truths, to make artful addresses to the affections and passions of the audience, to prejudice their minds, before they hear a word that the respondent has to say; and thirdly, if the respondent refuses to yield to such management, then to call in the secular arm to complete the argument?”²⁴

²¹ “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty,” Boston, 1773, an essay of Isaac Backus found in Isaac Backus, *Pamphlets on Church, State, and Calvinism: Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, Edited by William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 313.

²² Backus, “An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty,” pp. 311-312.

²³ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 37-38.

²⁴ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 150. This comment followed and preceded illustrations of how those in favor of church/state marriage, infant baptism, etc. advance their cause. On pp. 151-152, Mr. Backus illustrated how those in favor of infant baptism argued their position, pointing out the fallacies of their arguments. Their tactics have not changed, although in America, due to the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, they no longer can call upon civil government to enforce their beliefs.

From p. 218 of *God Betrayed*: The Pilgrims overcame much adversity, such as hunger, drought, and heat which caused their corn to wither, and the failure of delivery of much needed supplies from England.²⁵

From p. 219 of *God Betrayed*: They set up a ecclesiocracy in which no one could hold office who was not a member of an approved church.²⁶

From p. 221 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus taught as follows:

- “Now the word of God plainly shows, that this way of mutual compact or covenant, is the only righteous foundation for civil government. For when Israel must needs have a king like the rest of the nations, and he indulged them in that request, yet neither Saul nor David, who were anointed by his immediate direction, ever assumed the regal power over the people, but by their free consent. And though the family of David had the clearest claim to hereditary succession that any family on earth ever had, yet, when ten of the twelve tribes revolted from his grandson, because he refused to comply with what they esteemed a reasonable proposal, and he had collected an army to bring them back by force, God warned him not to do it, and he obeyed him therein. Had these plain precedents been regarded in later times, what woes and miseries would they have prevented? But the history of all ages and nations shows, that when men have got the power into their hands, they often use it to gratify their own lusts, and recur to nature, religion or the constitution (as they think it will best serve) to carry, and yet cover, their wretched designs.”²⁷

From pp. 222-223 of *God Betrayed*: Soon after the founding of Massachusetts, events there proved the folly of their false theology and the truth of accurate biblical and historical interpretation. As Isaac Backus reported, by 1660 or 1670 Puritan theologians and pastors in New England were pointing out the “general religious declension” that was already taking place as the first generation of settlers passed away.²⁸ “Mr. Willard published a discourse in the year 1700 entitled, ‘The Perils of the Times Displayed,’ in which he said:

- “That there is a form of godliness among us is manifest; but the great inquiry is, whether there be not too much of a general denying of the power of it. Whence else is it, that there be such things as these that follow, to be observed? that there is such a prevalency of so many immoralities among professors? that there is so little success of the gospel? How few thorough conversions [are] to be observed, how scarce and seldom.... It hath been a frequent observation that if one generation begins to decline, the next that follows usually grows worse, and so on, until God pours out his Spirit again upon them. The decays which we do already languish under are sad; and what tokens are on our children, that it is like to be better hereafter.... How do young professors grow weary of the strict profession of their fathers, and become strong disputants for the [those] things which their progenitors forsook a pleasant land for the avoidance of.
- “And forty years after, Mr. Prince said, ‘We have been generally growing worse and worse ever since.’ The greatest evils that [the founders of New England] came here to avoid were the mixture of worthy and unworthy communicants in the churches, and the tyranny of secular and ministerial Courts over them; but these evils were now coming in like a flood upon New England.”²⁹

The Halfway Covenant, established by the Massachusetts synod in 1662, was witness to the spiritual decline of the Puritan Congregationalist church. This resulted in a large number of church members being baptized into the church without conversion. Any person who professed belief in the doctrines of Calvinism and who lived an upright, moral life was allowed to join the parish church and sign the covenant or membership contract. Such persons were only allowed halfway into the church—they could have their children baptized but they could not take communion or vote in church affairs. This was the method practiced in the church to which Isaac Backus’ parents belonged.³⁰

From p. 224-225 of *God Betrayed*: After arriving in Massachusetts, they quickly formed churches. Mainly under the leadership of the Reverend John Cotton, they arranged ecclesiastical and state matters. “Whatever he delivered in the pulpit was soon put into an order of court, if of a civil, or set up as a practice in the church, if of an ecclesiastical concernment.”³¹ The established Congregational church differed from other churches in four main points:

“(1) The visible church was to consist of those who made an open profession of faith, and did not ‘scandalize their profession by an unchristian conversation.’

²⁵ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 28-29.

²⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 35; Williams and Underhill, pp. x-xi.

²⁷ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, APPENDIX B, p. 530.

²⁸ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 457-464. Examples of what the religious leaders were saying are given in those pages.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-268; Lumpkin, pp. 1-2; William G. McLoughlin, *Isaac Backus and the American Piestic Tradition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), pp. 5-6.

³¹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 33.

“(2) A particular visible church should preferably explicitly covenant to walk together in their Christian communion, according to the rules of the gospel.

“(3) Any particular church ought not to be larger in number than needed to meet in one place for the enjoyment of all the same numerical ordinances and celebrating of divine worship, nor fewer than may conveniently carry on church work.

“(4) Each particular church was subject to no other jurisdiction.”³²

“But this people brought two other principles with them from their native country, in which they did not differ from others; which are, that natural birth, and the doings of men, can bring children into to the Covenant of Grace; and, that it is right to enforce and support their own sentiments about religion with the magistrate’s sword.”³³ Compulsive uniformity “was planted at a General Court in Boston, May 18, 1631 when it was ordered that no one could be admitted ‘to the freedom of [the] body politic’ who was not a member of a church.”³⁴ “This test in after times had such influence, that he who ‘did not conform, was deprived of more civil privileges than a nonconformist is deprived of by the test in England.”³⁵

From p. 225-226 of *God Betrayed*: The Court continued to put its theology into force by act of law. At the General Assembly held March 3, 1636, it was held (1) that no church would form and meet without informing the magistrates and elders of the majority of the churches of their intentions and gaining their approval and (2) that no one who was a member of a church not approved by the magistrates and the majority of state-churches would be admitted to the freedom of the commonwealth.³⁶

Soon thereafter, the Court passed an act that stated that they were entreated to make “a draught of laws agreeable to the Word of God, which may be the fundamentals of this commonwealth, and to present the same to the next General Court,” and that “in the mean time the magistrates and their associates shall proceed in the courts to hear and determine all causes according to the laws now established, and where there is no law, then as near the laws of God as they can.”³⁷ This act immediately led to the persecution by banishment, disfranchisement and the forbidding of speaking certain things, removal from public office, fines, and the confiscation of arms.³⁸ Soon to that act was added that anyone convicted of defaming any court, “or the sentence or proceedings of the same, or any of the magistrates or other judges of any such court, would be punished by ‘fine, imprisonment, or disfranchisement of banishment, as the quality and measure of the offence shall deserve.”³⁹

From pp. 226-231 of *God Betrayed*: On September 6, 1638, the Assembly at Boston made 2 laws: (1) anyone excommunicated lawfully from a church would, after six months and if not restored, be presented to the Court and there fined, imprisoned, banished or further “as their contempt and obstinacy upon full hearing shall deserve;” and (2) that every inhabitant would be taxed to pay for all common charges as well as for upholding the ordinances of the churches; and, if not so doing, would be compelled thereto by assessment and distress, to be levied by the constable or other officer of the town. The first law was repealed the next fall, but the second remained.⁴⁰

On March 13, 1639, acts were passed which fined, disenfranchised if no repentance made, and/or committed certain men for certain acts or pronouncements against the established churches.⁴¹ On November 13, 1644, the General Court passed an act which provided

- “that if any person or persons, within this jurisdiction, shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof, or shall purposely depart the congregation at the ministration of the ordinance, or shall deny the ordinance of magistracy, or their lawful right and authority to make war, or to punish the outward breaches of the first table, and shall appear to the court willfully and obstinately to continue therein after due time and means of conviction, every such person or persons shall be sentenced to banishment.”⁴²

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-70.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁰ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 79-80.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

As to this law, Isaac Backus appropriately commented:

- “A like method of treating the Baptists, in Courts, from pulpits and from the press has been handed down by tradition ever since. And can we believe that men so knowing and virtuous in other respects, as men on that side have been, would have introduced and continued in a way of treating their neighbors, which is so unjust and scandalous, if they could have found better arguments to support that cause upon? I have diligently searched all the books, records and papers I could come at upon all sides, and have found a great number of instances of Baptists suffering for the above points that we own; but not one instance of the conviction of any member of a Baptist church in this country, in any Court, of the errors or evils which are inserted in this law to justify their making of it, and to render our denomination odious. Much has been said to exalt the characters of those good fathers; I have no desire of detracting from any of their virtues; but the better the men were, the worse must be the principle that could ensnare them in such bad actions.”⁴³

In 1644 a law against the Baptists was passed asserting that the Anabaptists “have been the incendiaries of the commonwealths, and the infectors of persons in main matters of religion, and the troublers of churches in all places where they have been.”⁴⁴

In 1646 the General Court adopted the Act, imposing “banishment on any person denying the immortality of the soul, or the resurrection, or sin in the regenerate, or the need of repentance, or the baptism of infants, or ‘who shall purposely depart the congregation at the administration of that ordinance’ or endeavor to reduce others to any of these heresies.” Also, in 1646 an act against “contemptuous conduct toward’ preachers and nonattendance on divine service were made punishable, the former by ‘standing on a block four feet high’ having on the breast a placard with the words ‘An Open and Obstinate Contemner of God’s Holy Ordinances.’”⁴⁵

The magistrates passed a bill in March, 1646 which required “the calling a synod to settle ... ecclesiastical affairs,”⁴⁶ the synod to be convened not by command, but to motion only to the churches (This was agreed because some questioned the power of civil magistrates over the churches.). In August 1648 the synod met and “completed the Cambridge platform; the last article of which sa[id]:

- “If any church, one or more, shall grow schismatical, rending itself from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of the word; in such case the magistrate [Josh. 22.] is to put forth his coercive power, as the matter shall require.

“This principle the Baptists and others felt the cruel effects of for many years after.”⁴⁷

The Assembly passed laws against gathering churches without the consent of the assembly, and another “wherein they enacted, ‘that no minister would be called unto office, without the approbation of some of the magistrates, as well as the neighboring churches.’”⁴⁸

In 1657 laws were passed which imposed fine or whipping on those who entertained a Quaker, required citizens to report Quakers, fined those who allowed Quakers to meet on their property, and fined anyone who brought in a Quaker or notorious heretic.⁴⁹ Although these laws were repealed on June 30, 1660, they were reenacted immediately, “with slight modifications, or to give place to new laws quite as oppressive.”⁵⁰ In September, 1658, the Commissioners of the United Colonies recommended that all the New England colonies “make a law, that all Quakers formerly convicted and punished as such, shall (if they return again) be imprisoned, and forthwith banished or expelled out of the said jurisdiction, under pain of death.”⁵¹ In October 1658, the Assembly at Boston passed a law banishing “Quakers on pain of death” but no other colony passed such a law.⁵²

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁴⁵ Pfeffer, pp. 66-67, citing Cobb, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 155.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, fn. 1, p. 214.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, fn. 3, pp. 263-264.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁵² *Ibid.*, fn. 1, p. 249; pp. 254-255.

“Many [Quakers] were whipped, some were branded, and Holder, Copeland and Rouse, three single young men, had each his right ear cut off in the prison at Boston....” Three of them who were banished, on pain of death returned again to Boston, and were condemned to die. Two of them, men, were executed. One, Mary Dyre, was released and sent away. She returned and was hanged on June 1, 1660. William Leddra was hanged on March 14, 1661. Charles II ordered that such persecutions cease, and that Quakers that offended were to be sent to England to be tried. “How justly then did Mr. Williams call the use of force in such affairs, ‘*The bloody tenet!*’”⁵³

Members of the first Baptist church in Boston were imprisoned. Thomas Gould, Thomas Osborne, William Turner, Edward Drinker and John George were imprisoned for starting that Baptist church without approbation from other ministers and their rulers.... Isaac Backus recorded:

- “But when their ministers were moved to exert such force against Baptists, though they saw the chief procurers of that sentence struck dead before the time came for its execution, and many more of them about that time, yet their posterity have approved their sayings even to this day. Robert Mascall of England wrote his Congregationalist brethren in Massachusetts pointing out that they, in England, admitted those who practiced believer’s baptism to their churches as required by the Love of God, that their persecutions of the Baptists were contrary to Scripture, that they themselves had been persecuted, and now their brethren were persecuting so that ‘Whatever you can plead for yourselves against those that persecute you, those whom you persecute may plead for themselves against you,’ and ‘Whatever you can say against these poor men, your enemies say against you;’ that ‘[Y]ou cast a reproach upon us, that are Congregational in England, and furnish our adversaries with weapons against us;’ and ‘Persecution is bad in wicked men, but it is most abominable in good men, who have suffered and pleaded for liberty of conscience themselves.’”⁵⁴

The persecutions of the Baptists in Massachusetts for withdrawing from public meetings continued.

“On May 15, 1672, the Assembly ordered their law-book to be revised and reprinted.” In it, banishment was required for those who broached and maintained any damnable heresies among which were denying justification by faith alone, denial of the fourth commandment, condemnation of or opposition to infant baptism, denial of the power of the magistrate to punish breaches of the first four commandments, and endeavoring to influence others to any of the errors and heresies mentioned in the law.⁵⁵

After some Baptists organized a church in Boston, and erected a meeting house there, the General Court ordered:

- “That no persons whatever, without the consent of the freemen of the town where they live, first orderly had, and obtained, at a public meeting assembled for that end, and license of the County Court, or in defect of such consent, a license by the special order of the General Court, shall erect or make use of any house as above said; and in case any person or persons shall be convicted of transgressing this law, every such house or houses wherein such persons shall so meet more than three times, with the land whereon such house or houses stand, and all private ways leading thereto, shall be forfeited to the use of the county, and disposed of by the County Treasurer, by sale or demolishing, as the Court that gives judgment in the case shall order.”⁵⁶

However, a special act was procured to exempt Boston “from any compulsive power for the support of any religious ministers.” As a result, the Baptist church in Boston, which had begun in 1665, was able to build a meeting-house.⁵⁷ Thus Baptist churches in Boston had equal liberties with other denominations since 1693, but this liberty was denied throughout the rest of Massachusetts.⁵⁸

As a result of these repressive laws, the king of England sent a letter requiring that liberty of conscience should be allowed to all Protestants, that they be allowed to take part in the government, and not be fined, subjected to forfeiture, or other incapacities, “whereas,” he said, “liberty of conscience was made a [one] principle motive for your first transportation to these parts.”⁵⁹ Soon a synod was called which condemned Quakers and Anabaptists. The General Court agreed. The magistrates had the doors of the Baptist meeting house boarded up, fined some of

⁵³ *Ibid.*, fn. 1, p. 252; pp. 258, 262-263, 265.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 287, 298, 299, 311-313.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 321-322.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 383-384.

⁵⁷ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 418.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

⁵⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 384.

their members, forbade the Baptists to meet anywhere else, and fined some who were found to have gone to Baptist meetings. Following this came much controversy between the Baptists and the establishment.⁶⁰

The established church ignored pleas to leniency toward those with whom it disagreed. For example, they ignored the plea Sir Henry Vane wrote John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts, in 1645: “The exercise and troubles which God is pleased to lay upon these kingdoms, and the inhabitants in them teaches us patience and forbearance one with another in some measure, though there be difference in our opinions, which makes me hope that, from the experience here, it may also be derived to yourselves....”⁶¹

Because of their strong bias, the Congregationalists wrote much against the dissenters, their method being asserting the disputed point taken by them:

“for truth, without any evidence, they blended that with many known facts recorded in Scripture, and thereupon rank the opposers to that point with the old serpent the devil and Satan, and with his instruments Cain, Pharoah, Herod, and other murderers; yea, with such as sacrifice their children to devils! This history contains abundant evidence of their adding the magistrate’s sword to all these hard words, which were used in their prefaces before they came to any of the Baptists arguments.”⁶²

The atmosphere in Massachusetts, amidst the persecutions and debate of the issues, began to shift toward toleration and even freedom of conscience. Even Governor John Winthrop, who had been a leader of the Puritans from the beginning of the colony, refused on his death bed in 1649 to sign a warrant to banish a Welsh minister, “saying, ‘I have had my hand too much in such things already.’”⁶³ “The second Massachusetts charter, which was dated October 7, 1691, allowed equal liberty of conscience to all Christians, except Papists.”⁶⁴

Many of the establishment resisted the allowance of liberty of conscience contained in the 1691 charter. The ministers of the established churches construed the liberty of conscience provided for in the 1691 charter to mean “that the General Court might, by laws, encourage and protect that religion which is the general profession of the inhabitants.”⁶⁵ “For thirty-six years after ... Massachusetts received [the 1691 charter], they exerted all their power, both in their legislative and executive courts, with every art that ministers could help them to, in attempts to compel every town to receive and support such ministers as they called orthodox.” Thus, despite the new charter, on October 12, 1692, in 1695, 1715, and 1723, the Assembly in Massachusetts enacted new laws requiring that every town provide a minister to be chosen and supported by all the inhabitants of the town, gave the Assembly and General Court power to determine, upon recommendation of three approved ministers, the pastor of a church, and a law requiring the towns of Dartmouth and Tiverton to tax to support ministers. In 1693, the 1692 law was changed to allow each church to choose its own minister and exempted Boston from the requirement that all citizens be taxed to support that pastor.⁶⁶

Thus, equal religious liberty was enjoyed in Boston, but was denied in the country. Many, including Baptists and Quakers, were taxed to support paedobaptist ministers. Those who did not pay the tax were imprisoned for failing to pay the tax, and some officials were taxed for failing to assess the tax. The cattle, horses, sheep, corn, and household goods of Quakers were from time to time taken from them by violence to support the approved ministers. In 1723, Richard Partridge presented a memorial to King George requesting that inasmuch as the Massachusetts charter allowed equal liberty of conscience to all Christians except Papists, the laws contravening the charter be declared null and void, and the prisoners who refused to pay the tax be released. In 1724, the King ordered that the prisoners

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 384-404.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 151. Mr. Backus gives examples of such establishment arguments on pp. 148-150. On pp. 151-153 he thoroughly debunks the argument for infant baptism as well as arguments that the subjects of the new covenant are the same. For example, Backus points out that “God says his new covenant is not according to that he made with Israel. Heb. viii. 8-11.... By divine institution a whole family and a whole nation were then taken into covenant; now none are added to the church by the Lord but believers who shall be saved. Acts ii.41, 47....”

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, APPENDIX B, p. 532.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 446-448, 499-505.

be released and the taxes remitted. The Massachusetts assembly passed an act in November 1724 requiring the release of the prisoners held for failing to assess the tax.⁶⁷

In 1728, the Assembly passed a law exempting poll tax for ministerial support and forbidding imprisonment of those Baptists and Quakers, who gave their names and regularly attended their church meetings, for failure to pay ministerial taxes assessed on their “estates or faculty.” In November 1729, an act was added that exempted their estates and faculties also, under the same conditions.⁶⁸

The law exempting Baptists was renewed when it expired and persecutions continued. The law exempting taxes to Baptists expired in 1747, but was renewed for ten years. Nonetheless, the establishment found ways to persecute members of Baptist churches in various towns in Massachusetts for not paying the tax—some imprisoned, and property such as cows, geese, swine, oxen, cooking utensils, implements of occupation such as carpenter’s tools and spinning wheel, etc. of some was confiscated.⁶⁹

From p. 231-232 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus said of the oppressions under this law, “[N]o tongue nor pen can fully describe all the evils that were practiced under it.”⁷⁰ Baptists, including single mothers with children, were unjustly taxed in violation of the law, property was unjustly taken from Baptists to pay established ministers, lies were disseminated about Baptists and their beliefs, and courts of law conducted grossly unfair trials and rendered obviously unjust opinions against Baptists.⁷¹

In 1786 the legislature passed a law which allowed each town to tax for the support of ministry, schools, and the poor, and other necessary charges arising within the same town. This tax resulted in collectors’ efforts to get their taxes, which caused much business in courts, and a great increase in lawyers. Some citizens arose in arms but were subdued by force of arms. Before fourteen men who were condemned for their rebellion could be hanged, the Governor and over half the legislature were voted out and the men were all pardoned.⁷²

On February 6, 1788, delegates from Massachusetts who were meeting in Boston voted to adopt the newly drafted and proposed constitution for the states. One of the greatest objections against it had been that no religious test for any government officer was required. During debate, prior to adoption, a Congregational minister, Reverend Philips Payson, of Chelsea, arose and said, “... I infer that God alone is the God of the conscience, and consequently, attempts to erect human tribunals for the consciences of men, are impious encroachments upon the prerogatives of God.”⁷³ Isaac Backus arose also and said:

- “Nothing is more evident, both in reason, and in the Holy Scriptures, than that religion is ever a matter between God and individuals; and therefore no man or men can impose any religious test, without invading the essential prerogatives of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ministers first assumed this power under the Christian name; and then Constantine approved of the practice, when he adopted the profession of Christianity as an engine of State policy. And let the history of all nations be searched, from that day to this, and it will appear that the imposing of religious tests hath been the greatest engine of tyranny in the world.... The covenant of circumcision gave the seed of Abraham a right to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, and to take their houses, vineyards, and all their estates as their own; and also to buy and hold others as servants. And as Christian privileges are much greater than those of the Hebrews were, many have imagined that they had a right to seize upon the lands of the heathen, and to destroy or enslave them as far as they could extend their power. And from thence the mystery of iniquity carried many into the practice of making merchandise of slaves and souls of men.”⁷⁴

By 1794, very few if any were collecting taxes to pay ministers,⁷⁵ but establishment remained in Massachusetts until 1833.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 501-505, n. 1 pp. 501-503.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 517-519 and appendix B, pp. 534-535.

⁶⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 94-98 and fn. 1, p. 97.

⁷⁰ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 141.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-166.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 330-331.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

From pp. 236-237 of *God Betrayed*: Immediately upon arrival, Mr. Williams, not being a man who could hide his views and principles, declared that “the magistrate might not punish a breach of the Sabbath, nor any other offence, as it was a breach of the first table.”⁷⁶

From p. 237 of *God Betrayed*: Mr. Williams remained at odds with the established church and government ministers in Massachusetts. He was accepted by the church at Salem, but that was blocked by the General Court of the Colony. Plymouth warmly received him into the ministry where he labored two years. Exercising their right under congregational governance, the church at Salem called him, over the objections of the magistrates and ministers, to be their settled teacher. At Salem he filled the place with principles of rigid separation tending to anabaptism.⁷⁷

From p. 237 of *God Betrayed*: The “grand difficulty they had with Mr. Williams was, his denying the civil magistrate’s right to govern in ecclesiastical affairs.”⁷⁸

From pp. 238-239 of *God Betrayed*: Roger Williams has been praised for his contributions in the quest for religious freedom. For example:

- Isaac Backus wrote that Rhode Island “was laid upon such principles as no other civil government had ever been, as we know of, since antichrist’s first appearance; “and ROGER WILLIAMS justly claims the honor of having been the first legislator in the world, in its latter ages, that fully and effectually provided for and established a free, full and absolute LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.”⁷⁹
- “We cannot forbear to add the oft-quoted tribute paid to Roger Williams by the historian Bancroft:—“He was the first person in modern Christendom to assert in its plenitude the doctrine of liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law; and in its defence he was the harbinger of Milton, the precursor and the superior of Jeremy Taylor. For Taylor limited his toleration to a few Christian sects; the philanthropy of Williams compassed the earth. Taylor favored partial reform, commended lenity, argued for forbearance, and entered a special plea in behalf of each tolerable sect; Williams would permit persecution of no opinion, of no religion, leaving heresy unharmed by law, and orthodoxy unprotected by the terrors of penal statutes.... If Copernicus is held in perpetual reverence, because, on his deathbed, he published to the world that the sun is the centre of our system; if the name of Kepler is preserved in the annals of human excellence for his sagacity in detecting the laws of the planetary motion; if the genius of Newton has been almost adored for dissecting a ray of light, and weighing heavenly bodies in a balance,—let there be for the name of Roger Williams, at least some humble place among those who have advanced moral science and made themselves the benefactors of mankind.”⁸⁰

Another leader instrumental in the formation of the government of the Rhode Island colony was Dr. John Clarke, a physician. Dr. John Clarke of England moved to Boston in November of 1637. He proposed to some friends “for peace sake, and to enjoy the freedom of their consciences, to remove out of that jurisdiction.”⁸¹

From p. 239 of *God Betrayed*: Perhaps Marshall and Manuel had good reason, from their point of view, for making not a single mention of Dr. Clarke in *The Light and the Glory*. Isaac Backus found it to be very extraordinary that he could find from any author or record no reflection cast upon Dr. Clarke by any one.⁸² Dr. Clarke left as spotless a character as any man [Isaac Backus] knew of, that ever acted in any public station in this country.⁸³ “The Massachusetts writers have been so watchful and careful, to publish whatever they could find, which might seem to countenance the severities, they used towards dissenters from their way, that [Mr. Backus] expected to find something of that nature against Mr. Clarke.”⁸⁴

The first government in history that was to have complete freedom of conscience and religious liberty also declared that the government was to be under the Lord Jesus Christ. Signed on March 7, 1638, the Portsmouth Compact read:

⁷⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 41; Williams and Underhill, p. ix, noting in fn. 1 that “Such is Governor Winthrop’s testimony. Knowles, p. 46.”

⁷⁷ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 44.

⁷⁸ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 53; Armitage, *The History of the Baptists*, Volume 2, pp. 627-640.

⁷⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 75-76.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76, fn. 1; Armitage, *The History of the Baptists*, Volume 2, p. 644.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71. See also, John Clarke, *Ill News from New-England or A Narrative of New-Englands Persecution* (Paris, Ark.: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., Reprint: 1st printed in 1652), pp. 22-25.

⁸² Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 349.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

- “We whose names are underwritten do swear solemnly, in the presence of Jehovah, to incorporate ourselves into a body politic, and as he shall help us, will submit our persons, lives and estates, unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and to all those most perfect and absolute laws of his, given us in his holy word of truth, to be guided and judged thereby.”⁸⁵

From p. 240 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus commented on this compact:

- This was doubtless in their view a better plan than any of the others had laid, as they were to be governed by the perfect laws of Christ. But the question is, how a civil polity could be so governed, when he never erected any such state under the gospel?”⁸⁶

Mr. Backus asked a good question. Too bad our founding fathers did not find and apply the answer.

On the same day the Portsmouth Compact was signed, “[n]ineteen men incorporated into a body politic, and chose Mr. Coddington to be their judge or chief magistrate.”⁸⁷

From p. 240 of *God Betrayed*: Soon, a civil government was formed which invested power in the freemen, none of whom were to be “accounted delinquents for doctrine,” “provided it be not directly repugnant to or laws established.”⁸⁸ In August of 1638, the people of Providence approved the first public document establishing government without interference in religious matters, the Providence Compact:

- “We whose names are here underwritten being desirous to inhabit in the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves in active or passive obedience to all such orders or agreement as shall be made for public good to the body in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated together into a township, and such others whom they shall admit into the same, *only in civil things*.”⁸⁹

From pp. 240-241 of *God Betrayed*: Rhode Island was ruled according to the original covenant, “til on January 2, 1639, an assembly of the freemen said:

- “By the consent of the body it is agreed that such who shall be chosen to the place of Eldership, they are to assist the Judge in the execution of the justice and judgment, for the regulating and ordering of all offences and offenders, and for the drawing up and determining of all such rules and laws as shall be according to God, which may conduce to the good and welfare of the commonweal; and to them is committed by the body the whole care and charge of all the affairs thereof; and that the Judge together with the Elders, shall rule and govern according to the general rules [rule] of the word of God, when they have no particular rule from God’s word, by the body prescribed as a direction unto them in the case. And further, it is agreed and consented unto, that the Judge and [with the] Elders shall be accountable unto the body once every quarter of the year, (when as the body shall be assembled) of all such cases, actions or [and] rules which have passed through their hands, by they to be scanned and weighed by the word of Christ; and if by the body or any of them, the Lord shall be pleased to dispense light to the contrary of what by the Judge or [and] Elders hath been determined formerly, that then and there it shall be repealed as the act of the body; and if it be otherwise, that then it shall stand, (till further light concerning it) for the present, to be according to God, and the tender care of indulging [indulgent] fathers.”⁹⁰

From p. 241 of *God Betrayed*: Mr. Williams stepped down as pastor of the church after only a few months because his baptism was not administered by an apostle, but the church continued.⁹¹ Isaac Backus commented on the requirement of apostolic succession for baptism at length, stating, “And if we review the text (II Tim. ii. 2-Ed.) that is now so much harped upon, we shall find that the apostolic succession is in the line of ‘faithful men;’ and no others are truly in it, though false brethren have sometimes crept in unawares.”⁹²

From p. 242 of *God Betrayed*: The knowledge which was being disseminated through the power of the press was affecting the religious leaders as well as the general population in America. People were now able to read the Bible and other works and thereby make decisions as to the accuracy of what others were asserting. “Many books [were]

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 427. On p. 427 is the exact copy from Rhode Island records. In the margin are citations to Exodus 34.3, 4; II Chronicles 11.3, and II Kings 11, 17.

⁸⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 78.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72; Asher, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Williams and Underhill, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

⁸⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 74; cited in Beller, *America in Crimson Red*, p. 13; Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, Volume 2, p. 643.

⁹⁰ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 427-428.

⁹¹ Williams and Underhill, p. xxvii; Isaac Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 89.

⁹² Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 91.

coming out of England in the year 1645, some in defence of anabaptism and other errors, and for liberty of conscience, as a shelter for a general toleration of all opinions, &c....”⁹³

From p. 242 of *God Betrayed*: John Cotton’s reply, *The Bloody Tenent washed, and made white in the Blood of the Lamb*, was printed in London in 1649. Mr. Williams reply entitled *The Bloody Tenent yet more Bloody*, was published in 1652.⁹⁴

From p. 242 of *God Betrayed*: The first Baptist church in Newport was formed under the ministry of Dr. John Clarke. According to some who suppose that the church was founded by Clarke and his company upon their arrival in Rhode Island, it could have been established as early as 1638.⁹⁵

From p. 243-244 of *God Betrayed*: Dr. Clarke was “fined twenty pounds or to be well whipped;” Mr. Crandal was fined five pounds, only for being with the others; and Mr. Holmes was held in prison, where sentence of a fine of thirty pounds or to be well whipped was entered.⁹⁶ ... Mr. Holmes was beaten mercilessly. His infractions were denying infant baptism, proclaiming that the church was not according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, receiving the sacrament while excommunicated by the church, and other spiritual infractions.⁹⁷ Mr. Holmes refused to pay his fine, prepared for the whipping by “communicat[ing] with [his] God, commit[ting] himself to him, and beg[ging] strength from him.”⁹⁸ Holmes was confined over two months before his whipping. He related the experience of being whipped for the Lord as follows, in part:

- “And as the man began to lay the strokes upon my back, I said to the people, though my flesh should fail, and my spirit should fail, yet my God would not fail. So it please the Lord to come in, and so to fill my heart and tongue as a vessel full, and with an audible voice I broke forth praying unto the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge; and telling the people, that now I found he did not fail me, and therefore now I should trust him forever who failed me not; for in truth, as the strokes fell upon me, I had such a spiritual manifestation of God’s presence as the like thereof I never had nor felt, nor can with fleshly tongue express; and the outward pain was so removed from me, that indeed I am not able to declare it to you, it was so easy to me, that I could well bear it, yea, and in a manner felt it not although it was grievous as the spectators said, the man striking with all his strength (yea spitting in [on] his hand three times as many affirmed) with a three-corded whip, giving me therewith thirty strokes. When he had loosed me from the post, having joyfulness in my heart, and cheerfulness in my countenance, as the spectators observed, I told the magistrates, You have struck me as with roses; and said moreover, Although the Lord hath made it easy to me, yet I pray God it may not be laid to your charge.”⁹⁹

Mr. Holmes “could take no rest but as he lay upon his knees and elbows, not being able to suffer any part of his body to touch the bed whereupon he lay.”¹⁰⁰

From p. 244 of *God Betrayed*: Of course, the Puritans were fully persuaded of the righteousness of persecution. Here are two examples of their reasoning. Sir Richard Saltonstall wrote to Messrs. Cotton and Wilson of Boston condemning them for this tyranny in Boston, for “compelling any in matters of worship to do that whereof they are not fully persuaded” thus making “them sin, for so the apostle (Rom. 14 and 23) tells us, and many are made hypocrites thereby,” etc.¹⁰¹ Mr. Cotton replied in part:

- “If it do make men hypocrites, yet better be hypocrites than profane persons. Hypocrites give God part of his due, the outward man, but the profane person giveth God neither outward nor inward man. We believe there is a vast difference between men’s inventions and God’s institutions; we fled from men’s inventions, to which we else should have been compelled; we compel none to men’s inventions. If our ways

⁹³ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 145, quoting Hubbard, [413-415].

⁹⁴ For an excellent summary of some of the more important arguments presented by both sides see Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 134-145.

⁹⁵ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 125-26 and fn. 1, p. 125; see also, Beller, *America in Crimson Red*, pp. 31-33 (Mr. Beller argues that the Baptist church in Newport, meeting in the wilderness in 1637 with Dr. John Clarke as pastor, was the first Baptist church to meet in America. Mr. Beller considers the writings of Isaac Backus, John Callender, and John Winthrop on this subject.)

⁹⁶ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 180, 187; Asher, p. 60.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, fn. 1, p. 189.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 192; Clarke, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, fn. 1, p. 193. (This from a manuscript of Governor Joseph Jencks).

¹⁰¹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 198-199.

(rigid ways as you call them) have laid us low in the hearts of God's people, yea, and of the saints (as you style them) we do not believe it is any part of their saintship."¹⁰²

A second example occurred when some protested being taxed to support the state-church with which they did not agree. The main point of the answer received was as follows:

- "What we demand of you is equal and right; what you demand of us is evil and sinful; and hence we have the golden rule upon our side, while you are receding and departing from it; for if we were in an error, and out of the right way, as we see and *know* that you are in several respects, and you see and *know* it is of us, as *we do* of you, we think the golden rule would oblige you to tell us of our error, and not let us alone to go on peaceably in it, that is without proper means to recover and reclaim us; whether by the laws of God, or the good and wholesome laws of the land, as we now treat you."¹⁰³

From p. 246 of *God Betrayed*: This charter was in effect until the constitution, which was adopted in November, 1842, became operative the first Tuesday of May, 1843. In addition to other matters, the charter cleared up land disputes with Massachusetts and some of the other colonies, provided for the organization of the government, and provided for freedom of conscience.¹⁰⁴

From p. 247 of *God Betrayed*: Of Mr. Clarke, Isaac Backus wrote: He "left as spotless a character as any man I know of."¹⁰⁵ "The testimony which Backus proceeds to give of the purity of [Mr. Clarke's] character and to his good name, even among his enemies, has been fully corroborated by later writers."¹⁰⁶

From p. 248 of *God Betrayed*: All that was happening was not for naught. Isaac Backus wrote, "It is readily granted that the sentiments of Mr. Williams and Mr. Clarke, about religious liberty, have had a great spread since that day, so that men of a contrary mind cannot carry their oppressive schemes so far now as they did then,"¹⁰⁷

From p. 250 of *God Betrayed*: Mr. Backus was saved in 1741. On August 24, 1741, Mr. Backus, in his own words, speaking of himself, realized

- "that he had done his utmost to make himself better, without obtaining any such thing; but that he was a guilty sinner in the hands of a holy God, who had a right to do with him as seemed good in God's sight; which he then yielded to and all his objections against it were silenced. And soon upon this a way of relief was opened to his soul, which he never had any true idea of before, wherein truth and justice shine with luster, in the bestowment of free mercy and salvation upon objects who have nothing in themselves but badness. And while this divine glory engaged all his attention, his burthen of guilt and evil dispositions was gone, and such ideas and inclinations were implanted in his heart as were never there before, but which have never been rooted out since, though often overclouded."¹⁰⁸

From p. 251 of *God Betrayed*: Various struggles arose. In 1742 and 1743 laws were passed forbidding itinerant preachers from preaching without permission of the parish minister with penalty of imprisonment, excluding settled ministers who preached in any other parish without consent of the parish minister from any benefit of the laws for their support, removing from Connecticut any minister from any other colony who preached in Connecticut, and giving the legislature authority to license dissenting churches which complied with the British Toleration Act of 1689.¹⁰⁹

From p. 251 of *God Betrayed*: The county associations began to act. The New Haven Consociation in 1742 expelled pastors of established churches for preaching to a group of Separates and Baptists against the wishes of the established minister. In Canterbury, Windham County the majority of the church, New Lights, voted for a certain man to be pastor, but the Old Lights who were the majority in the parish voted for another. By law, both the church

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹⁰⁴ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 277-280.

¹⁰⁵ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, p. 348.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, fn. 1, pp. 348-349.

¹⁰⁷ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 202-203.

¹⁰⁸ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 107.

¹⁰⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 319-320.

and parish had to concur, but the Windham Consociation declared that the minority of Old Lights in the church were the true church and ordained their choice.¹¹⁰

From p. 252 of *God Betrayed*: This Separate movement had enduring consequences. One writer appropriately noted:

- “[T]he Separatist movement is not appreciated as it deserves. We have too nearly forgotten our obligations to those men who dared to break away from the corrupt and worldly churches of the Standing Order, though they were armed with all the power of the State, of which they were a part, and to establish other churches in which vital godliness was the condition of membership. It was a transition movement, it is true, and of necessity only temporary, but its results were enduring. Many of the Baptist churches in New England spring from it directly, and through them, indirectly, almost all the rest; and other evangelical churches are largely indebted to it for their vitality and efficiency.—ED.”¹¹¹

From pp. 253-255 of *God Betrayed*: Backus struggled with the issue of baptism, studied Scripture, rejected infant baptism, and was baptized by dipping on August 22, 1751.¹¹² He set out to refute the anti-pedobaptist position by first turning to the Bible, and then to the claims of Baptist scholars in England that infant baptism was a corruption brought into the Christian church in the 2nd or 3rd century. What he found surprised him.

Next, Backus examined the Covenant Theology which lay at the heart of New England Puritanism. The relevance of this theology to Backus was mainly its affect on the church-state issue.¹¹³

- First, “[T]he Jewish church was clearly a national church, a theocracy in which Moses and Aaron ruled together, and thus the Puritans were able to utilize the covenant theology to justify their ecclesiastical laws and their system of territorial parishes and religious taxes. Second, the covenant theology provided the Puritans with justifications for the Halfway Covenant, thus polluting the purity of the mystical body of Christ. And in the third place the covenant theology, by emphasizing that grace ran ‘through the loins of godly parents,’ that the baptized children of visible saints were somehow more likely than others to obtain salvation, thereby established a kind of hereditary spiritual aristocracy; it also undermined the sovereignty of God by implying that God was bound by this covenant to save certain persons rather than others. [Etc.]”¹¹⁴

The Puritans supported the unity of the Abrahamic Covenant in Romans 11.17.

- “Here, the apostle Paul spoke of the Christian covenant as being grafted on to the Jewish covenant as a branch is grafted on to an olive tree, from whence the Puritans ‘argued the right of professors now to baptize their children, because the Jews circumcised theirs.’ This Backus rejected as misinterpretation. ‘The Jews were broken off thro’ unbelief, and the Gentiles were grafted in, and stand only by faith.’ Faith was essential to baptism. What Puritans stressed as organic continuity, Backus and the Baptists stressed as a complete break.”¹¹⁵

Backus concluded that the Separates must explicitly reject the Covenant Theology, the whole conception of the corporate Christian state which the Puritans had so painstakingly constructed in the wilderness of New England. Backus decided against infant baptism and was baptized. “[H]e rejected the Covenant Theology of the Puritans by arguing as the Baptists had long done that the Bible contained two covenants, the old Covenant of Works made with the Jews, and the Covenant of Grace made with those who believe in Christ....” “[T]he Puritans had confused the gospel of grace with the doctrine of works and transformed the gospel church of visible saints into a national church with a birthright membership.”¹¹⁶ “Backus and the Baptists stressed the discontinuity, the antithetical nature of the two, the complete and distinct break between the past and the present dispensations. That Americans were ready to grasp this new outlook after 1740 and to pursue it to its logical conclusions marks the real break with the Old World, the medieval mind and the Puritan ethos....”¹¹⁷

At first the Separatists and Baptists desired to meet together. This proved untenable.

- “[They] were bound together by the closest ties. The [Baptists] left the [Separate Congregational churches] with no ill feeling but with heartiest love, and this love continued, on both sides, after their separation. Their members had been converted together in the Great Awakening;

¹¹⁰ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 68-74; McLoughlin, p. 26.

¹¹¹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, fn. 1, p. 64.

¹¹² Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 108-111.

¹¹³ McLoughlin, pp. 61-63.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-76.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

together they had come out from the Standing Order; together they had suffered and were still suffering for the truth; they had the same enemies and oppressors; they felt the force of the same unjust and cruel laws; their plundered goods were sold at the same auctions, and their bodies confined in the same prisons; they had many kindred views and feelings, by which they sympathized most closely, and in which there were no others to sympathize with them. Moreover, they mutually desired inter-communion. Council after council and conference after conference recommended it, and there seemed to be no voice against it. And yet it failed. Practical difficulties arose.... The truth could not be escaped that Baptist churches, by renouncing infant baptism and sprinkling, and then practically recognizing them again as a proper declaration of discipleship and initiation to membership in the visible church, placed themselves in a position of direct inconsistency. One by one, reluctantly, but at last universally, they abandoned the untenable ground.—ED.”¹¹⁸

By 1754, “the alliance between the two groups within Separatism was practically at an end, and the Baptist members left to form new churches or join existing ones.”¹¹⁹

A Baptist church was instituted in Middleborough, Massachusetts by a number of brethren led by Mr. Backus from the Titicut Separatist church who were convinced communion should be limited to believers baptized upon a profession of their own faith. On July 23, 1756, Mr. Backus was installed as their pastor.

- “He ... published a discourse from Gal. iv. 31, to shew that Abraham’s first son that was circumcised was the son of the bond-woman, an emblem of the national church of the Jews; in distinction from regenerate souls, the spiritual seed of Abraham, of whom the Christian church was constituted; into which neither natural birth, nor the doings of others, can rightly bring any one soul, without its own consent. Upon these principles was the first Baptist church in Plymouth county then founded[.]”¹²⁰

The revival died out almost as fast as it had appeared. Conversions became rare. People turned their attention to politics and controversy. The Separate churches and groups either died, or found their way into the Baptist camp. The Baptists denomination experienced an unprecedented growth. In 1740 no more than six Calvinistic Baptist churches existed in New England; but by 1800 there were more than 325 Baptist churches, most of them Calvinistic.¹²¹

The Warren Association, an association of Baptist churches, was formed in 1770. The main goal was to obtain religious liberty. This marked an important movement in the history of New England. An advertisement to all Baptists in New England was published requesting them to bring in exact accounts of their cases of persecution to the first annual meeting on September 11, 1770. The establishment feared the association and countered by dealing deceitfully with it and spreading lies about the association.¹²²

Isaac Backus was the key member of the grievance committee of the Warren Association in September, 1771. “[He soon] became the principal spokesman for the Baptists in their efforts to disestablish the Puritan churches. As such he did more than any other man to formulate and publicize the evangelical position on Church and State which was ultimately to prevail throughout America.”¹²³

“An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty Against the Oppression of the Present Day” was the most important of the 37 tracts which Backus published during his lifetime and was central to the whole movement for separation of Church and State in America. “It remains the best exposition of the 18th century pietistic concept of separation.”¹²⁴ In that tract, Backus argued, among other things:

- “Basic to the Baptist position was the belief that all direct connections between the state and institutionalized religion must be broken in order that America might become a truly Christian country. Backus, like Jefferson and Madison, believed that ‘Truth is great and will prevail’—but by ‘Truth’ he meant the revealed doctrines of grace. His fundamental assumption was that ‘God has appointed two different kinds of government in the world which are different in their nature and ought never to be confounded together; one of which is called civil, the other ecclesiastical government.’ The two had been ‘confounded together’ by the Emperor Constantine and the Papacy and had ultimately been brought to New England by the Puritans ‘who had not taken up the cross so as to separate from the national church before they came away.’ A ‘Brief view of how civil and ecclesiastical affairs are blended together among us [in 1773] to the depriving of many of God’s people of that

¹¹⁸ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, fn. 1, p. 115; on pp. 116-119 Backus gives further arguments.

¹¹⁹ Lumpkin, p. 18.

¹²⁰ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 117-118.

¹²¹ Lumpkin, p. 20.

¹²² Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 154-156; see also, pp. 408-409 concerning formation of the Warren Association.

¹²³ McLoughlin, *The American Pietistic Tradition*, p. 109.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123. The entire contents of the tract are in *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism, Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, Edited by William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 303-343.

liberty of conscience which he [God] has given us' utilized also the long-forgotten arguments of Roger Williams to defend the doctrines of separation."¹²⁵

From pp. 255-257 of *God Betrayed*: Amidst persecutions of Baptists for failing to pay ministerial taxes, the association met on September 1773 and voted to refrain from giving any more certificates for tax exemption to pay the established minister. Backus listed the reasons why they would no longer obey "a law requiring annual certificates to the other denomination." "Jefferson in his preamble to the Religious Liberty Act of Virginia and Madison in his famous Remonstrance of 1785 utilized essentially deistic arguments based upon reason and natural law. Backus's arguments were pure pietism[:]"¹²⁶

- [To get a certificate] "implies an acknowledgement that religious rulers had a right to set one sect over another, which they did not have." 2. Civil rulers have no right to impose religious taxes. 3. Such practice emboldens the "actors to assume God's prerogative." 4. For the church, which is presented as a chaste virgin to Christ, to place her trust and love upon others for temporal support is playing the harlot. 5. "[B]y the law of Christ every man is not only allowed but also required to judge for himself concerning the circumstantial as well as the essentials of religion, and to act according to the full persuasion of his own mind." The practice tends to envy, hypocrisy, and confusion, and the ruin of civil society.¹²⁷

"*An Appeal to the Public* was pietistic America's declaration of spiritual independence. Like Jefferson's Declaration three years later, it contained a legal brief against a long train of abuses, a theoretical defense of principle, and a moral argument for civil disobedience."¹²⁸ No answer was ever given to "An Appeal to the Public" which was published in Boston. The collection of taxes for support of the established religion continued with confiscation of property and imprisonments occurring.¹²⁹

Attempts to gain religious freedom continued. The Warren Association sent Isaac Backus to the Continental Congress in 1774 where he met with an Association of other Baptist churches from several adjacent colonies which had elected a large committee to assist. They presented their appeal for religious liberty. John Adams and Samuel Adams, neither of whom was a friend to separation of church and state, falsely asserted that Massachusetts had only a "very slender" establishment, hardly to be called an establishment, that the General Court was clear of blame and always there to hear complaints and grant reasonable help.¹³⁰ While Mr. Backus was gone, the lie was spread that he had gone to Philadelphia to break the union of the colonies.

All the time these happenings were going on, the issues were being debated in the newspapers. The Warren Association continued to publish to the public instances of persecution as well as to actively seek religious liberty from the government. The Warren Association presented a memorial on July 19, 1775 requesting religious liberty and pointing out the inconsistency of rebelling against England for taxing without representation while doing the same thing in the colonies. Ultimately, nothing came of this. In 1777, Mr. Backus prepared an address which was supported by a large number from various denominations urging religious liberty to the Assembly which had been empowered to frame a new Constitution which was accomplished in 1780. The Third Article of the new constitution "excluded all subordination of one religious sect to another," but imprisonment, and confiscation of property from men who refused to acknowledge such subordination continued.¹³¹

In 1778 Mr. Backus wrote "Government and Liberty Described and Ecclesiastical Tyranny Exposed." He quoted Charles Chauncy:

- "We are in principle against all civil establishments in religion. It does not appear to us that God has entrusted the State with a right to make religious establishments.... We claim no right to desire the interposition of the State to establish that mode of worship, [church] government, or discipline we apprehend is most agreeable to the mind of Christ. We desire no other liberty than to be left unrestrained in the exercise of our principles in so far as we are good members of society." This, said Backus, was all that Baptists asked.¹³²

¹²⁵ McLoughlin, *The American Pietistic Tradition*, pp. 123-124.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹²⁷ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 178, citing "An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty."

¹²⁸ McLoughlin, *The American Pietistic Tradition*, p. 127.

¹²⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 178-182.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-202, and fn. 1, p. 201.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204, 219-220, 225-229, 228-229.

¹³² McLoughlin, *The American Pietistic Tradition*, p. 140. The entire tract is reproduced in *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism, Pamphlets, 1754-1789*, Edited by William G. McLoughlin pp. 345-365.

From pp. 258 of *God Betrayed*: The Warren Association, on September 13, 1780, published a remonstrance, authored by Mr. Backus, against Article Three of that proposed constitution stating, among other things, that the provision therein requiring the majority of each parish “the exclusive right of covenanting for the rest with religious teachers,” thereby granting a power no man has a right to; and further stating that “the Legislature, by this Article, are empowered to compel both civil and religious societies to make what they shall judge to be *suitable provision* for religious teachers in all cases where such provision shall not be made voluntarily.”¹³³

From pp. 258-259 of *God Betrayed*: However, the case was overturned two years later on appeal of the favorable trial court decision in the case of *Cutter v. Frost*. *Cutter* also held that only incorporated religious societies were entitled to legal recognition. Since most, if not all, of the Baptist churches in Massachusetts were unincorporated, they were not qualified for exemption.¹³⁴ A lawyer advised Mr. Backus and the grievance committee to file the certificates, pay their taxes, and sue if the parish treasurer refused to turn the money over to their own pastor. The committee voted to follow this advice, Mr. Backus casting the lone negative vote. This was a reversal of the 1773 stand against giving of the certificates. “The spirit of the times did not call for martyrdom and fanaticism. The other members of the committee were more interested in improving the status and respectability of their denomination.”¹³⁵

As a result, three cases were brought in three different courts and the Baptists prevailed at trial court and on appeal. In other cases over the years, much time and expense was expended to get tax money earmarked for Baptist ministers. One case required fourteen lawsuits before the town treasurer yielded the taxes. In some towns, when it was shown the Baptists would sue, the “Standing Order” ceased to argue the matter.¹³⁶

Mr. Backus, being disappointed with his twelve-year battle against certificates, turned his zeal to other outlets—to fighting the threat to Baptist doctrines.

As new Baptist churches continued to be constituted, and the number of Baptists continued to increase, the persecution continued in Connecticut. In 1784 Connecticut made a new law continuing the support of established ministers by taxation. However, another act exempted all persons from that tax who filed a certificate to the effect that they regularly attended and supported worship services in any type of gospel ministry. Mr. Backus said of this act, “[I]s not this a mark of the beast? ... Blood hath ever followed the support of worship by the sword of the magistrate.... And how can any man keep himself unspotted from the world, if he forces the world to support his worship?”¹³⁷

Then, in May of 1791, Connecticut passed an addition to the ineffectual law of 1784 which held that “no certificate could be legal, until it was approbated by two justices of the peace, or only by one, if there was no more in the town where the dissenter lived,” and that such certificate was ineffective as to taxes granted before the certificate was lodged.¹³⁸

From pp. 286 of *God Betrayed*: A general committee of Baptist churches from Virginia presented an address to President Washington, dated August 8, 1789, expressing concern that “liberty of conscience was not sufficiently secured,” perhaps because “on account of the usage we received in Virginia, under the regal government, when mobs, bonds, fines and prisons, were [their] frequent repast.”¹³⁹ President Washington assured them that he would not have signed the Constitution if he had had the slightest apprehension that it “might endanger the religious rights of any ecclesiastical society.”¹⁴⁰

Some Baptists and others did not see the need for a religious freedom amendment. Indeed, the First Amendment may not have been necessary to guarantee separation of church and state. Isaac Backus was elected as a delegate to

¹³³ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, fn. 2, pp. 229-230.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161; see Backus’ reaction to the decision in the *Balkcom* case in McLoughlin, *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism*, “A Door Opened for Christian Liberty,” pp. 428-438.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

¹³⁷ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, pp. 320-321.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

¹³⁹ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 2, p. 340.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the Massachusetts convention of January, 1788, which considered the issue of ratification of the new Constitution. He spoke at the convention.

- “On February 4, [Backus] spoke of ‘the great advantage of having religious tests and hereditary nobility excluded from our government.’ These two items in the Constitution seemed to him a guarantee against any establishment of religion and against the formation of any aristocracy. ‘Some serious minds discover a concern lest, if all religious tests should be excluded, the congress would hereafter establish Popery, or some other tyrannical way of worship. But it is most certain that no such way of worship can be established without any religious test.’ He said ‘Popery,’ but he probably feared, as many Baptists did, that some form of Calvinism of the Presbyterian or Consociational variety was more likely. His interpretation of this article helps to explain why the Baptists [of Massachusetts] made no effort to fight for an amendment on freedom of religion along with the others which the convention sent to Congress.”¹⁴¹

From pp. 289 of *God Betrayed*: Early in the colonial period, the first government in history which provided for religious liberty and separation of church and state was formed as a result of the conflict of the two currents which flowed in opposite directions.

- “A large number of people fled out of the old world into this wilderness for religious liberty; but had not been here long before some put in high claims for power, under the name of orthodoxy; to whom others made fierce opposition professedly from the light within; and their clashings were so great that several lives were lost in the fray. This made a terrible noise on the other side of the water. But as self-defence is a natural principle, each party wrote volume after volume to clear themselves from blame; and they both conspired to cast a great part of it upon one singular man [Roger Williams], whom they called a weathercock and a windmill. Now let the curious find out if they can, first how men of university learning, or of divine inspiration, came to write great volumes against a windmill and a weathercock? secondly, how such a strange creature came to be an overmatch for them all, and to carry his point against the arts of priestcraft, the intrigues of court, the flights of enthusiasm and the power of factions, so as after he had pulled down ruin upon himself and his friends, yet to be able, in the midst of heathen savages, to erect the best form of civil government that the world had seen in sixteen hundred years? thirdly, how he and his ruined friends came to lie under those reproaches for a hundred years, and yet that their plan should then be adopted by thirteen colonies, to whom these despised people could afford senators of principal note, as well as commanders by sea and land? The excellency of this scene above those which many are bewitched with, consists in its being founded upon facts and not fictions; being not the creature of distempered brains, but of an unerring Providence.”¹⁴²

From pp. 351 of *God Betrayed*: “If Christ Jesus have left such power with the civil rulers of the world, [kingdoms and counties, or] for the establishing, governing, and reforming his church, what is become of his care and love, wisdom and faithfulness, since in all ages since he left the earth, for the general [beyond all exception] he hath left her destitute of such qualified princes and governors, and in the course of his providence furnished her with such, whom he knew would be [and all men find] as fit as wolves to protect and feed his sheep and people!”¹⁴³

From pp. 428-429 of *God Betrayed*: Isaac Backus wisely observed:

- “When God took the nation of Israel to be his church, he was an husband unto them. Jer. xxxi. 32. And Moses said unto him, If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here, that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. Exod. xxxiii. 15, 16. But Balaam, for an earthly reward, taught Balak how to destroy that separation. And it was done by the Midianites, among whom Balaam dwelt, who enticed Israel into adultery and idolatry; and those Midianites were of the posterity of Abraham. Numb. xxv. 6; xxxi. 8, 16; Gen. xxv. 4. And how many children of believers are now guilty of this iniquity! for covetousness is idolatry. Col. iii. 5. And many make a god of their belly. Phil. iii. 19. And idolatry is also adultery in the sight of God, who said of the church of Israel, Their mother hath played the harlot; she that conceived them hath done shamefully; for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Hosea ii. 5. All lawful things, but they were sought in an unlawful way. So one apostle says of many teachers and professors, An heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children; who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass, speaking with man’s voice, forbade the madness of the prophet. II Peter ii. 14, 15, 16. Another says, Woe unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. Jude 11. And Christ says by a third, I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Rev. ii. 14. Now, since covetousness and luxury are idolatry in the sight of God, and idolatry is also adultery, how many are there in the world who entice Christians into these evils, in order to grasp the honors and profits of religion to themselves! Yea, and who go out from the ways of God to gratify their love of the world! I John ii. 15, 19. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. Jude 19. Mystery Babylon is the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. Rev. xvii. 5.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ McLoughlin, pp. 198-199.

¹⁴² Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, pp. 408-409.

¹⁴³ Backus, *A History of New England...*, Volume 1, fn. 1, p. 158, quoting Roger Williams, *Bloody Tenent*.

¹⁴⁴ Backus, *A History of New England*, Volume 2, pp. 367-68, 377.