

18921

Backus, Isaac, 1724-1806.

Godliness Excludes Slavery.

Boston, Edes, [ 1785 ]. 14 pp.

AAS copy.

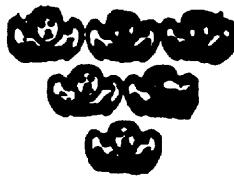
# G O D L I N E S S

E X C L U D E S

## S L A V E R Y.

By Isaac Backus.

---



---

*Ye are bought with a Price, be not ye the servants  
of men.*

I COR. vii. 23.

---

B O S T O N :

Printed by BENJAMIN EDDES and SON, N<sup>o</sup>. 42: Cornhill.

---

To Mr. JOHN CLEAVELAND, of Ipswich.

---

DEAR SIR,

**F**ORTY trying years have rolled over us, since we came out from the tyranny which the world had long exercised over the church of CHRIST. And though by reason of our distant stations, we have had no late interviews together, yet I have ever esteemed you as a true preacher of the gospel; and the noble stand you made, above twenty years ago, against the torrent of corruption in doctrine then coming in upon our country, with the special blessings of grace soon after granted under your ministry, greatly increased my regards for you. How affecting then must it be, to see you ascribe that to human inventions and satanical delusion, which I fully believe is from the truth and spirit of GOD! which is exactly the case, in your late piece upon infant baptism. Therefore permit an old friend to add a few remarks, to what Mr. *Foster*, has pertinently wrote upon this subject.

Your capital argument is, "That the visible church under the gospel is the same visible body continued from Abraham." p. x. I agree with you, that the invisible church is the same; but the visible church cannot be so.

1st. BECAUSE an interest in the covenant of grace never gave any person a right to circumcision or baptism, without a positive institution. Abel, Enoch, Noah, and many others were in the covenant of grace,  
and

had yet had no right to either of those ordinances, because GOD gave them no command therefor. Neither had Lot any right to circumcision, though Abraham's nephew, and a gracious man; and favours were shown to his posterity for his sake, four hundred years afterwards. Deut. ii. 9. 19. Yea, Abram himself was called forth to view the stars that he could not number, upon which it was said, *So shall thy seed be: And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness*, above twenty years before he had any warrant to circumcise any person upon earth. And from thence Paul proved that circumcision was out of date, after the death of CHRIST. Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3, 11.

2d. YOUR argument cannot stand, because since the death of CHRIST the distinction between the church and the world is not *carnal* but *spiritual*. I agree with y<sup>e</sup> u, that before the distinction was between the circumcision and uncircumcision: but since "He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the *flesh*; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the *heart* in the *spirit*, and not in the *letter*, whose praise is not of men, but of GOD." All are naturally wedded to the law and their own lusts, until they are made *dead* thereto, and *alive* to GOD, by a work of his *spirit* in their hearts; so as to serve him in *newness of spirit*, and not in the *oldness of the letter*: which great change is publickly represented in the administration of *baptism*. Rom. ii. 28, 29. vi. 4. vii. 3—6.

3d. YOUR argument cannot stand, because the church of CHRIST is neither a tyrant nor a slave, but a free woman. *He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh*, said

GOD

GOD to Abraham. Gen. xvii. 13. And for four hundred years, no person might be admitted into that church, but such. And *the day* whereon GOD gave them a warrant to admit *strangers by households*, was THE DAY which he fixes upon, to describe the difference between the *old covenant* which was ready to *vanish away*, and his *new covenant* that constitutes the Christian church. Exod. xii. 48. Heb. viii. 8—13. This new covenant was made with Israel and Judah, with believers of that church: but the covenant was *new*, and *not according* to the covenant made with their fathers; especially in this, that many who were expressly taken into the first covenant did *not know GOD*, Deut. xxix. 4—13. but, according to his institution, none are in the second but such as *all know him, from the least unto the greatest*. And those who were in Abraham's covenant and did not know him, were expressly excluded from baptism, by the first administrator thereof. Mat. iii. 9, 10. The first son of Abraham that was circumcised was the son of the bond-woman, an allegory of the Jewish church, which was in bondage with her children, when CHRIST came and constituted a free church out of her believing members; among whom the Gentiles were grafted in and *stood by faith*. Gal. iv. 22—25. Rom. xi. 6. 20. This is the line which GOD has drawn, between the church and the world. According to the *letter* Abraham was the head of the Hebrew church, into which none could be admitted, but by being born in his house, or bought with his money: but according to the *spirit*, CHRIST is the only head of his church, wherein none have any true right, but such as are purchased by his blood, and renewed by his grace; to whom he says, *Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men.*

HE has abolished the hereditary distinctions among mankind, which were made by that old covenant, and fixed upon ADAM and CHRIST as the two public heads of the world and of the church. We all bear the *image* of our *earthly* head, until the *quicken- ing Spirit* creates in us the *image* of the *heavenly*. Eph. ii. 17—19. 1st. Cor. xv. 45, 47. And all worship that is not governed and supported wholly in the *name of CHRIST*, is *will-worship*. Col. ii. 10, 23. iii. 17. GOD calls the covenant he made with Abraham in Gen. xvii, *The covenant of circumcision*. Acts vii. 8. But deceitful men took away that name, and called it the covenant of grace; from whence came the doctrine, that dominion is founded in grace, and for many ages things were so managed that natural affection, education, temporal interest, and self-righteousness, the strongest prejudices in the world, all conspired to bind people in that way, and to bar their minds against equal liberty, and believers baptism. And from thence only can we account for the following things.

THE first Baptist church in America, was constituted at Providence in 1639, the second at Newport in 1644; in which year a law was made at Boston, to banish any person who should dispute against infant baptism. Three years after Mr. Cotton owned that some did so, who yet did “not deny magistrates, nor predestination, nor original sin: nor maintain free-will in conversion, nor apostacy from grace; but only denied the lawful use of baptism of children, because it wanteth a word both of commandment and example from scripture.” He also owned that a main principle of purity and reformation is this, “That no duty of God’s worship, nor any ordinance of religion, is to be administered in the church, but such as hath a just warrant from the word of GOD.” But said he, “By  
urging

urging this argument against the baptism of children, Satan transformeth himself into an angel of light." \*

A Synod met at Cambridge the next year, who in their platform declared it to be the duty of magistrates to put forth their *coercive power against schismatics*; and by such power, three Baptist ministers were imprisoned at Boston, and one of them was cruelly scourged in 1651. For this a letter of reproof was sent from London; in answer to which Mr. Cotton said, "Do you think the LORD hath crowned the State with so many victories, that they should suffer so many miscreants to pluck the crown of sovereignty from CHRIST'S head!—Thus CHRIST, by easing England of the yoke of a kingdom, shall forfeit his own kingdom among the people of England." † Mr. Dunster, president of Harvard-College, was put upon such a search into these matters, as brought him, in 1653, openly to preach against infant baptism; and when Mr. Mitchel, Minister of Cambridge, went to talk with him, scruples were raised in his mind about that practice; but he soon concluded that they came from the EVIL ONE, and said,

"IT made me fearful to go needlessly to Mr. Dunster; for methought I found a *venom* and *poison*, in his insinuations and discourses against pedobaptism.—I *resolved* also, on Mr. Hooker's principle, that I would have an argument able to remove a mountain, before I would recede from, or appear against, a truth or practice received among the faithful." And in a dispute, appointed by authority in Boston, April 14 and 15, 1668, he took those words of Moses, *The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken*  
unto

---

\* Cotton on baptism. 1647. p. 3.

† Hutchinson's History, vol. 3. p. 405;

