

A LETTER TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IN AMERICA
Queering the Epistle to the Galatians (*here*
Gal. 4:21 – 5:1)
An adaptation of Paul's letter by **Rev. Stephen Parelli**

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Overview: In matters of personal belief and practice, which America are we? - the John Cotton America which enslaves us to the moral prerogatives of the state or the Roger Williams America which deems each of us a free moral agent before God?

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Writing_Queering_4_21_through_5_1_of_the_
Epistle_to_the_Galatians_by_Rev_Steve_Parelli.html

Galatians 4:21 - 5:1 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Chapter 4

21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law?

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman.

23 One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise.

24 Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in

Queering 4:21 - 5:1 of the Epistle to the Galatians

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Chapter 4

21 Tell me, you in America who desire to legislate religion - to write the precepts of your personal faith into our civil laws - do you not hear the story of your Puritan forbearers?

22 For history tells us Boston had two sons, the one, John Cotton, tied to the old European mindset of a church-state paradigm, and the other, Roger Williams, born of the spirit of liberty, in which the church is free from the dictates of the state and the state of the dictates of the church.

23 Now, the former was born out of the Reformation (in Europe) which was still slave to the idea of church-state/ state-church governments; the latter was born of the Enlightenment by which the promise of liberty and equality for all was nurtured in the thoughts and writings of men and women.

24 Now these two figures - Cotton and Williams - are a fair representation of what is happening today in America with marriage equality. Cotton is from the old

fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery.

25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

26 But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother.

27 For it is written,

"Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married."

28 Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac.

29 But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

world and is fathering children who become nothing more than slaves, surrendering their liberties to a state-church/church-state society.

25 Cotton represents governments which make laws and rule according to the beliefs and values of the dominant religion which every citizen - the religious, the non-religious, and those of different beliefs - must obey; which makes slaves of everyone, even of the citizens who willingly hold to the dominate values.

26 But Williams represents that government which corresponds to something which is higher - the idea that all human beings answer to God according to the dictates of their own hearts without the interference of any human institution, be it civil, religious, private, public, local or national. A society is free when, at every level and in all of its dealings, it protects and guarantees each one's liberty in matters of conscience before God.

27 And that's why it can be said of Williams:

"Rejoice, Rhode Island, you who bore no children in Boston, for now it is your turn to burst into singing. Shout "His truth is marching on" you whose birth pains for religious liberty in Boston brought forth only still-born babies. For the children of Rhode Island are - throughout the world today - more numerous than the children of 17th century Puritan Boston. The desolate, unsought-after town of Providence, where, among the exiled of Massachusetts, religious liberty was born, is by far greater today than the highly-esteemed Beacon Hill of yesteryear with all its shinning Puritan lights."

28 Now you, my dear American reader, are the children of religious liberty - the promise of equality, freedom and individual dignity in matters of religious belief and practice, like Roger Williams was.

29 But just like then, John Cotton (whose belief-system was mandated by New England law and forced upon all its citizens) persecuted Roger Williams (whose belief-system guaranteed that others could believe and act differently than him or Cotton), so it is now with the repeal of marriage equality in some states, that the religious right persecute the children of the spirit of Roger Williams.

30 But what does history teach us? Though some colonies had officially recognized an establishment of

30 But what does the scripture say? "Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman."

31 So then, friends, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman.

Chapter 5

1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

religion, the newly formed United States would not. The children of the free Rhode Island would not share the inheritance of the children of the religiously non-free Virginia and New England in the formation of the United States of America. The likes of Virginia and New England had to yield to the likes of Rhode Island so that the first amendment was adopted.

31 So then, friends, we are children, not of John Cotton and the Reformation and New England which failed to give us religious liberty, but of Roger Williams the father of religious liberty.

Chapter 5

1 It is this kind of freedom for which Christ has set us free. A freedom that respects all men and women equally as recipients of liberty of conscience, whatever their creed, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, sex, nationality, education, philosophy of life and whatever else are the accidental differences shared together by our one essence as human beings. Stand fast in this kind of liberty, therefore, and do not put yourselves ever again under a legal system that makes you mere slaves to a view of God which is not your own and which the state, or any institution, would mandate against your will, without your free consent.

