

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS 4

In this chapter the apostle discourses concerning the abrogation of the ceremonial law, under which the Old Testament saints were, being as children under tutors; blames the Galatians for returning to it when they were freed from it; puts them in mind of their former affection to him and to his ministry; describes the false apostles, who had been the occasion of their departure from the truth, and by a beautiful allegory sets forth the difference between the legal and Gospel dispensations. And whereas in the latter part of the preceding chapter he had compared the law to a schoolmaster, under which the Jews were till Christ came; he here makes use of another simile to express the same thing by, which is that of an heir while under age being under tutors and governors, until the time fixed by the parent's will, (<R01B>Galatians 4:1,2) an accommodation of which simile is in (<R01B>Galatians 4:3), by which the Jews under the former dispensation are represented as children, and as in a state of bondage to the ceremonial law, from which there is a deliverance by Christ at the appointed time of the Father, by whom he was sent for that purpose; the act of sending is ascribed to God the Father; the person sent is described as the Son of God; the time when is called the fulness of time; and the circumstances under which he was sent were, that he was made of a woman, and made under the law, (<R01B>Galatians 4:4), the ends of his being sent were to redeem his people from it, who were under it; and that they might receive the adoption of children, the privilege and spirit of it, (<R01B>Galatians 4:5). Hence because they were the sons of God, and as a fruit and effect of the redemption of them by Christ, the Spirit of God is sent down into their hearts, to make known and witness their adoption, (<R01B>Galatians 4:6), and the benefits arising from hence are, that such are or should be no longer the servants of the law, but are children and free from it, and are heirs of God, (<R01B>Galatians 4:7), and that the grace of God might appear the more illustrious in this privilege of sonship, and the folly of the Galatians be more manifest in returning to the ceremonial law, notice is taken of what they were and did before conversion, and what they were inclined to now; that whereas whilst they were ignorant of God, they served nominal fictitious

deities, such as were not by nature gods; and yet now, though they knew God, and were known of him, seemed desirous of being in a state of servitude and bondage to the weak and beggarly elements of the ceremonial law, (^{<R008>}Galatians 4:8,9), of which instances are given in their observing days, months, times and years, (^{<R010>}Galatians 4:10), which gave the apostle a great deal of concern, fearing his labour among them was in vain, and to no purpose, (^{<R011>}Galatians 4:11), wherefore he entreats them as his brethren to imitate him, who being a Jew, yet had relinquished the observation of the ceremonial law, (^{<R012>}Galatians 4:12), and then he reminds them of their former regard unto him; how that though he preached the Gospel to them through much weakness, yet they did not despise him and reject him on account of his infirmities, but received him with all the tokens of respect imaginable, as if he had been an angel; yea, as if he had been Christ himself, (^{<R013>}Galatians 4:13,14), who then reckoned themselves happy persons on account of the Gospel he preached to them, and then had such an affection for him, that if it had been needful they would have given their eyes unto him; and yet now he was become their enemy for preaching the same truths he did then, justification by faith in Christ's righteousness and the abrogation of the law, (^{<R015>}Galatians 4:15,16), next he gives an account of the false apostles, who pretended a zealous affection for the Galatians; which was not a good one, nor with right views, (^{<R017>}Galatians 4:17), though zeal in a good cause, and which continues, is very commendable, (^{<R018>}Galatians 4:18), and such a constant and hearty attachment had the apostle to them; wherefore he calls them his little children, says he travailed in birth on their account, it being his earnest desire that Christ might appear to be formed in them, (^{<R019>}Galatians 4:19), wherefore since he was in doubt and distress about them, he was very desirous of being with them, and to alter his way of arguing with them; and from the law, and not the Gospel, show them their mistake and folly, (^{<R020>}Galatians 4:20,21), which he does in the following allegorical way, by observing that Abraham had two sons, the one by a servant maid, the other by his lawful wife; the one was after the flesh, the other by promise; which allegorically signified the two covenants of Sinai and of Sion, (^{<R022>}Galatians 4:22-24). Agar the bondmaid represented the covenant made at Mount Sinai in Arabia, under which the carnal Jews and their posterity were in a state of bondage; and Sarah the free woman, the covenant of grace under the Gospel dispensation and the Gospel church state, which is from above, free, fertile, and numerous, (^{<R025>}Galatians 4:25,26), which is confirmed, (^{<R027>}Galatians 4:27), by a passage out of (^{<2341>}Isaiah 44:1) and as these two

women were typical of the two covenants, so their respective offspring represented the two sorts of professors, legalists and evangelical Christians. True believers in Christ are like Isaac, the children of the promise; legalists are like Ishmael, men after the flesh, and of the same persecuting spirit with him: wherefore as it was then, that carnal Ishmael persecuted spiritual Isaac, so at this time the carnal Jews persecuted the real Christians, (~~408~~Galatians 4:28,29) nevertheless for the comfort of the latter, it is observed out of the Scripture that the former shall be cast out, and not be heir with them, (~~409~~Galatians 4:30), and the conclusion of the whole is, that the saints under the Gospel dispensation are not in bondage to the law, but are made free by Christ; to which freedom they are called, and in which they should stand, (~~401~~Galatians 4:31).

Ver. 1. *Now I say*, etc..] To illustrate what he had said of the law's being a schoolmaster to the Jews until the coming of Christ, and then ceasing as such, he proposes the case of an heir during his minority, till he come to the proper time of enjoying his estate.

that the heir, as long as he is a child; anyone that is an heir to his father's estate, or another's, whilst under age, being reckoned as a child, as he is from his infancy to his manhood,

differeth nothing from a servant: he is not his own man, nor at his own dispose; he cannot do as he pleases; he is under restraint; he is kept to school or to business, and is liable to correction and chastisement according as he behaves; nor can he have the free use of his father's estate,

though he be Lord of all, of all the servants, according to the Arabic version; or of the whole estate his father left him, of which he is Lord in right, but not in possession; he is right heir to it, though as yet it is not in his hands, nor can he do with it as he will.

Ver. 2. *But is under tutors and governors*, etc..] The word rendered “tutors”, is adopted by the Jewish Targumists and Rabbins into their language; and by the former is used ^{f70} for any ruler and governor, civil or domestic; and by the latter, for such as are guardians of infants, fatherless children, and such as are under age, as it is here used; and who were either appointed by the will of the deceased, or by the sanhedrim, of whom they say ^{f71}, *ˆnymqwm al ynnqydl apwrj wpa*, “we do not appoint a tutor or guardian for a bearded person”; that is, an adult person, one that is grown up to man's estate; but *aqwnyl apwrj wpa hyl ˆnymqwm*, “we appoint a

guardian for an infant"; and they had not used to appoint women or servants, or such as were minors themselves, or any of the common people; but men of substance, integrity, and wisdom^{f72}; a fatherless child had two tutors^{f73}; the power that guardians so appointed had, is at large described by Maimonides^{f74}. Governors were such as acted under the tutors or guardians, and were employed by them for the improvement of their estates and minds, as stewards, schoolmasters, etc.. until the time appointed of the father; by his last will and testament, which might be sooner or later, as he pleased; but if he died intestate, the time of minority, and so the duration of tutors and guardians, were according to the laws of the nation; which with the Romans was until a man was twenty five years of age; and with the Jews, for a male, was until he was thirteen years of age and one day; and for a female, until she was twelve years of age and one day, if the signs of ripeness of age appeared; but if they did not, the time was protracted until they were twenty, and even sometimes till they were thirty five years of age, before the matter was determined^{f75}.

Ver. 3. *Even so we*, etc..] Jews, for of such the apostle is only speaking, and to whom he applies the above case of heirs in minority; it was to the Jews he had spoken of the law, as being a military guard, a prison, and a schoolmaster to them; and then having addressed the Gentiles, as being the children of God, baptized into Christ, one in him, interested in him, the spiritual seed of Abraham, and heirs of all the blessings of grace and glory; he returns to the Jews, and represents their estate and condition under the law by the above simile, which he here makes an application of:

when we were children; not in age, but in knowledge of divine, spiritual, and evangelical things; which must be understood not of every individual person among them, for there were some grown men, men of great faith, light, knowledge, and experience; but of the bulk and generality of the people of the Jews, and that also in comparison of the clear understanding of the saints under the Gospel dispensation. The Jews were like children, peevish, froward, and perverse, and often stood in need of correction and chastisement; and as children are pleased with pictures, shows, sights, and gaudy amusements, so they were taken with an external pompous form of worship, and which they had, and was suited to their infant state; and which infant state of the Jewish church commenced from the time of their coming up out of Egypt, and lasted until the times of the Messiah; (see ~~<SIDE>~~Hosea 11:1,3).

Were in bondage under the elements of the world; by which are meant, not the four elements of fire, water, earth, and air; nor the angels, who by some are thought to preside over them; nor the sun and moon, according to whose revolutions the festivals of the Jews were regulated; but the several institutions of the Mosaic economy, which were to the Jews what an A B C, or an alphabet of letters, is to one that is beginning to learn; or what an accidence and grammar be to such who are learning any language, and which contain the rudiments of it; as the physical elements are the first principles of nature, and the general rules of speech and language are the rudiments thereof, so the Mosaic institutions were the elements, rudiments, or first principles of the Jewish religion, taught them by the law, as their schoolmaster, and by which they were used as children: these are called “elements”, in allusion to the first principles of nature and learning; and the elements “of the world”, because they lay in outward worldly and earthly things, as meats, drinks, divers washings, etc.. and because that hereby God instructed the world, at least a part of it, the world of the Jews: or as the word **κοσμος** may be rendered “beauty”, or “elegancy”, these were elegant elements, which in a most beautiful manner taught the people of the Jews the first principles of the doctrine of Christ: but nevertheless, whilst they were under the instructions and discipline of the law as a schoolmaster, “they were in bondage”; referring not to their bondage in Egypt, nor in the several captivities into which they were carried by their neighbours; nor to the bondage of sin and Satan, common to all men in a state of nature; but to the bondage which the law naturally gendered, led them to, induced upon them, and kept them in, through its sanctions and penalties; for, through fear of death, they were under a servile disposition, and were all their lifetime subject to bondage; they carried a yoke of bondage upon their necks, and were under a spirit of bondage unto fear; they were like children closely kept to school to learn their letters, say their lessons, and perform their tasks; and, if not, receive due correction, which kept them in continual fear and bondage.

Ver. 4. *But when the fulness of time was come*, etc..] The time agreed and fixed upon between God and his Son from all eternity, in the council and covenant of peace, when the Son of God should assume human nature; which time was diligently searched into by the prophets, was revealed unto them, and predicted by them; as more generally that it should be before the civil government ceased from Judah, and before the destruction of the second temple; and more particularly by Daniel in his prophecy of the

“seventy weeks”, towards and about the close of which there was a general expectation among the Jews of the Messiah's coming; and was the fulness of time here referred to, and what is sometimes called the dispensation of the fulness of time, the end of the Mosaic dispensation and Jewish church state, the last days of that state, and the end of the Jewish world, as to their ecclesiastical and civil polity. The Jews themselves own that the time of the Messiah's coming is fixed, and that at that time he shall come, whether they are worthy or not, for so it is asserted in their Talmud^{f76};

“says R. Jochanan, the son of David does not come, but in an age which is all worthy, or all wicked; in a generation which is all worthy, as it is written, (^{<281D>}Isaiah 60:21) in a generation that is all wicked, as it is written, (^{<281B>}Isaiah 66:5) and it is written, “for my name's sake will I do it”; says R. Alexander, R. Joshua ben Levi objects what is written, (^{<281D>}Isaiah 60:22) “in its time”; and it is written, “I will hasten it”; if they are worthy I will hasten it, if they are not worthy it shall be **ht [b**, “in its time”.”

And accordingly a more modern writer of theirs says^{f77},

“our redemption upon all accounts shall be, **hnmzb**, “in its time”, whether worthy or, wicked; but if worthy its time will be hastened;”

it must be owned they do not always say so: this phrase, “the fulness of time”, is an Hebraism, and is the same with **ymy tal m**, in (^{<281D>}Ezekiel 5:2) which the Septuagint render **την πληρωσιν των ημερων**, “the fulness of days”, and we, “when the days were fulfilled”, when the time was up; and the same sense it has here, and it is also the same with **d [wm**, “the appointed time”, (^{<281B>}Habakkuk 2:3) and answers to **προφεςμια του πατρος**, “the time appointed of the Father”, (^{<281D>}Galatians 4:2).

God sent forth his Son; God not absolutely and essentially, but personally and relatively considered, is here meant, namely, God the Father, as appears from the relation the person sent stands in to him, “his Son”; not by creation, as angels, Adam, and all men are the sons of God; nor by adoption, as saints are; or by office, as magistrates be; or on account of his incarnation or resurrection from the dead, for he was the Son of God before either; but by divine generation, being the only begotten of the Father, of his divine nature and essence, equal to him, and one with him: and who was “sent” by him, not out of disrespect to him, but love to us;

nor without his consent or against his will, he readily and heartily agreeing to it; nor does it imply any local motion or change of place, but only designs the assumption of human nature; nor does it suppose any superiority and inferiority, for though Christ, as man, and in his office capacity, as Mediator, is inferior to the Father, yet not as to his divine nature, or as the Son of God; but it suggests, that he existed before he was sent, and that as a person, and as a distinct person from the Father, otherwise he could not with any propriety be said to be sent by him; and also that there was an entire harmony and agreement between them in this matter, the Father agreed to send his Son, and the Son agreed to be sent; and that as to his taking upon him the office of Mediator, and his assumption of human nature in order to obtain eternal redemption: all this was not of himself, but done in concert with his Father, from whom as Mediator he had his mission and commission;

made of a woman; “made”, not created as Adam was; nor begotten by man, as men in common are; nor is he said to be born, though he truly was, but “made”; which word the Holy Ghost chooses, to express the mighty power of God, in his mysterious incarnation, wonderful conception, and birth; though some copies read, “born of a woman”; and so the Arabic and Ethiopic version: “of a woman”; whose seed he was from the beginning said to be; of a woman, without a man; of a woman, a virgin, as was foretold; and not only made and formed in her, but of her, of her flesh and blood, of which he took part; and which denotes the low estate and great humiliation of Christ, and shows that as sin came into the world by the woman, the Saviour from sin came also the same way:

made under the law; under the civil and judicial law as a Jew, to which he was subject, paying tribute to the collectors of it; and which was necessary; that it might appear he sprung from that nation, to whom he was promised; and that he came before the civil government of that people was at an end; and to teach us subjection to the civil magistrate: and as a son of Abraham he was made under the ceremonial law, was circumcised the eighth day, kept the several feasts of tabernacles, passover, etc.. and which was proper, since he was the principal end of it, in whom it centres, and for whose sake it was made; and that he might completely fulfil it, and by so doing put a period to it: and he was made under the moral law, both as a man and the surety of his people, and was subject to all the precepts of it, and bore the penalty of it, death, in their room and stead, and thereby fulfilled it, and delivered them from its curse and condemnation. So the

Targumist ^{f78}, joins the incarnation of the Messiah and his subjection to the law together, as the apostle here does;

“the prophet saith to the house of David, because a child is born unto us, and a son is given to us, *hrj ml yhwł [atyrwa lybqw,* “and he hath took upon him the law to keep it, and his name shall be called”, etc..”

Ver. 5. *To redeem them that were under the law*, etc..] By whom are meant chiefly the Jews, who are elsewhere represented as in and under the law, in distinction from the Gentiles who were without it; (see ^{<R12>}Romans 2:12 ^{<R11>}1 Corinthians 9:20,21) the Gentiles indeed, though they were not under the law of Moses, yet were not without law to God, they were under the law of nature. The law was given to Adam as a covenant of works, and not to him as a single person, but as a federal head to all his posterity; hence he sinning, and they in him, they all came under its sentence of condemnation and death, God's elect not excepted, and who are the persons said to be redeemed; for Christ was not sent to redeem all that were under the law; for as all mankind were included in it as a covenant of works made with Adam, and all are transgressors of it, the whole world is pronounced guilty before God by it, and liable to the curse of it; but not all mankind, only some out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation, are redeemed by Christ, even all the elect, whether among Jews or Gentiles. The chosen among the Jews seem to be here principally designed; the redemption of them, which is the end of Christ's being sent, intends not only a deliverance of them from sin and Satan, and the world, to whom they were in bondage, but from the law under which they were; from the bondage of the ceremonial, and from the curse and condemnation of the moral law:

that we might receive the adoption of children; by which may be meant, both the grace, blessing, and privilege of adoption, and the inheritance adopted to; both are received, and that in consequence of redemption by Christ; and such as receive the one will also receive the other. Adoption, as a blessing of grace, exists before it is received; nor does the reception of it add anything to the thing itself; it was in God's designation from all eternity, who predestinated his chosen ones unto it by Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will; it was provided, laid up, and secured for them in the everlasting covenant; and is part of that grace given them in Christ before the world began; but sin intervening, whereby the law was broken,

obstacles were thrown in the way of God's elect receiving and enjoying this privilege in their own persons; wherefore Christ was sent to redeem them from sin and the law, and by so doing remove these obstructions, that so they might receive this privilege in a way consistent with the righteousness and holiness of God, as well as with his grace and goodness: receiving of it shows it to be a gift, a free grace gift, and not owing to any merit of the creature; faith is the hand which receives it, as it does all other blessings, as Christ himself, grace out of his fulness, righteousness, pardon, etc.. and has no more causal influence on this than on any of these; faith does not make any the sons of God, or put them among the children; but receives the power, the authority, the privilege from God through Christ, under the witnessings of the spirit of adoption; whereby they become such, and have a right to the heavenly inheritance, which they shall hereafter enjoy.

Ver. 6. *And because ye are sons*, etc..] That is of God, so some copies read; and the Ethiopic version, “inasmuch as ye are his sons”; not in so high a sense as Christ is the Son of God; nor in so low a sense as all men are his offspring; nor in such sense as magistrates are the children of the most High; nor merely on account of a profession of religion, as the “sons of God” was a phrase very early used of the worshippers of the true God; but by virtue of adoption, and which is not owing to the merits of men, who are by nature children of wrath, but to the free rich sovereign grace of God. It is a privilege and blessing of grace in which all the three persons are concerned. The Father has predestinated to it, and in the covenant has provided and laid it up; he set up his Son as the pattern to which these sons should be conformed, and proposed the glory of his own grace, as the end; by virtue of which act of grace they were considered as the children of God, as early as the gift of them to Christ; and so by him when he partook of their flesh and blood, and died to gather them together who were scattered abroad; (see ^{<RB3>} Hebrews 2:13,14 ^{<B15>} John 11:52). The Son of God has also an hand in this affair; for through his espousing their persons, they become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; and through his assumption of their nature they become his brethren, and so to be in the relation of sons to God; through his redemption they receive the adoption of children, and at his hands the privilege, the power itself, to become such. The Spirit of God not only regenerates them, which is an evidence of their sonship, but as a spirit of adoption manifests it to them, works faith in them to receive it, and frequently witnesses to the truth of it; all which show how any come and are known to be the sons of God. This

is a privilege that exceeds all others; it is more to be a son than to be a saint; angels are saints, but not sons, they are servants; it is more to be a child of God, than to be redeemed, pardoned, and justified; it is great grace to redeem from slavery, to pardon criminals, and justify the ungodly; but it is another and an higher act of grace to make them sons; and which makes them infinitely more honourable, than to be the sons and daughters of the greatest potentate upon earth; yea, gives them an honour which Adam had not in innocence, nor the angels in heaven, who though sons by creation, yet not by adoption. The consequence, and so the evidence of it, follows,

God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. The Syriac and Arabic versions read, “our Father”; all the three divine persons here appear, as having a concern in this business, as before observed; here are God and his Son, and the Spirit of his Son, said to be sent; by whom is designed not any work of his upon the heart, nor any of his gifts and graces; but he himself in person, even the same Spirit of God that moved upon the face of the waters at the creation of the world, and moved holy men of God to write the Scriptures; who formed and filled the human nature of Christ, and descended on him as a dove; and by whom Christ and his apostles wrought their miracles; and who is called the Spirit of his Son; as he is frequently by the Jews^{f79}, *j yçm Æl m l ç wj wr*, “the Spirit of the King Messiah”; and sometimes^{f80} *hyrmym j wr*, “the Spirit of his word”, the essential word of God; because he proceeds from him as from the Father, and because he dwells in him, in an eminent manner, as Mediator, and is sent by virtue of his mediation and intercession; and he is the rather mentioned under this character, because adoption proceeds upon the natural sonship of Christ, and is what is the peculiar office of the Spirit to testify. When he is said to be “sent”, it does not suppose any local motion or change of place in him, who is a spirit infinite, immense, and omnipresent; nor any inferiority to the Father that sends him, or to the Son whose Spirit he is; for he is one God with the Father and Son, and with the Father is the sender of Christ, (²³⁸¹⁶Isaiah 48:16), but it regards his peculiar office in this affair of adoption, by agreement of all the three persons; the Father predestinated to it, the Son redeems, that it might be received, and the Spirit is sent to discover, apply, and bear witness to it; which is a wondrous instance of the grace of God. The place where he is sent is “into” the “heart”: where he is as a principle of spiritual life, and which he furnishes and supplies with all grace; where he dwells as in his temple, and is the evidence of God's dwelling there, and also of interest in Christ; is

there as a pledge and an earnest of future glory; and the whole is a surprising instance of condescending grace. The work he does there is various, and consists of divers parts; as convincing of sin, and righteousness, working faith, and acting the part of a comforter; but what is here referred to, is the discharge of his office as a spirit of adoption, “crying Abba, Father”. The word Abba is an Hebrew, or rather a Syriac or Chaldee word, signifying “father”; and which is added for explanation sake; and its repetition may denote the vehemency of filial affection, the strength of faith and confidence as to interest in the relation; and being expressed both in Hebrew and Greek, may show that God is the Father both of Jews and Gentiles, and that there is but one Father of all; and if it might not be thought too curious an observation, it may be remarked that the word “Abba”, read backwards or forwards, is the same pronunciation, and may teach us that God is the Father of his people in adversity as well as in prosperity. The act of “crying”, though it is here ascribed to the Spirit, yet is not properly his, but the believers; and is attributed to him because he excites, encourages, and assists them as a spirit of adoption to call God their Father; and may be understood both of the secret internal crying of the soul, or exercise of faith on God as its Father, and of an open outward invocation of him as such, with much confidence, freedom, and boldness.

Ver. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a servant*, etc..] This is a benefit resulting from adoption, and the manifestation of it to the children of God, and supposes them to have been formerly servants; as whilst in a natural state they were the servants of sin, the vassals of Satan, slaves to the world, and the lusts of it, and in bondage to the law; but now being declared to be the sons of God under the witnessings of the Spirit, they are freed from the servitude of sin, from the captivity of Satan, from the slavery of the world, and particularly from the law, and that spirit of bondage which it brought upon them, which is chiefly designed; and from which they are delivered by the spirit of adoption, enabling and encouraging them to cry “Abba”, Father; so that they are now no more under the former servile spirit, the spirit of a servant,

but a son; whose spirit, state, and case, are vastly different from those of a servant: the servant has not that interest in his master's affections as the son has; nor that liberty of access to him; nor is he fed and clothed as he is, or shares in the same privileges he does; nor is his obedience performed in the same free generous manner, from a principle of love and gratitude, but in a servile and mercenary way; and though he may expect his wages, he cannot

hope for the inheritance; nor does he always abide in the house as the son does. He that is once a son, is always so, and no more a servant: predestination to sonship is immutable; it is God's act to put any among the children, and none can put them out; the covenant of grace, in which this blessing is secured, is unalterable; union with Christ, the Son of God, on which it is founded, is indissoluble; the spirit of adoption, wherever he witnesses, abides as such. They that are the sons of God may be corrected and chastised, as they often are, in a fatherly way; but these corrections are proofs for, and not against their sonship; they may indeed judge themselves unworthy to be called the sons of God, and may be in such frames of soul as to conclude, at least fear, they are not; but still the relation abides, and ever will. They will never more be servants, but always sons. The very learned Mr. Selden^{f81} thinks the apostle alludes to a custom among the Jews, who allowed only freemen, and not servants and handmaids, to call any Abba, Father such an one, or “Imma”, Mother such an one: but this seems to proceed upon a mistaken sense, and rendering of a passage in the Talmud^{f82}, which is as follows, *tyawl p amaw yawl p aba mtwa ^yrwq ^ya twj pçw µydb* [; which he thus renders, “neither servants nor handmaids use this kind of appellation, Abba”, or “Father such an one”, and “Imma”, or “Mother such an one”; whereas it should be rendered, “servants and handmaids, they do not call them Abba, Father such an one”, and “Imma, Mother such an one”; this is clear from what follows. “The Family of “R. Gamaliel” used to call them Father such an one, and Mother such an one”; which in the other Talmud^{f83} is, “the family of” R. Gamaliel “used to call their servants and their handmaids Father Tabi, and Mother Tabitha”; which were the names of the servant and handmaid of Gamaliel. Rather therefore reference is had to a tradition^{f84} of theirs, that

“a servant, who is carried captive, when others redeemed him, if under the notion of a servant, or in order to be one, he becomes a servant; but if under the notion of a freeman, *db [tçy al* , “he is no more a servant”.”

Or to the general expectation of that people, that when they are redeemed by the Messiah, they shall be servants no more; for so they say^{f85},

“your fathers, though they were redeemed, became servants again, but you, when ye are redeemed, *^ydb [tçm µta ^ya dw* [, “shall be no more servants”.”

which in a spiritual sense is true of all that are redeemed by Christ, and through that redemption receive the adoption of children, and is what the apostle here means.

And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ; which is another benefit arising from adoption. Such as are the children of God, they are heirs of God himself; he is their portion and exceeding great reward; his perfections are on their side, and engaged for their good; all his purposes run the same way, and all his promises belong to them; they are heirs of all the blessings of grace and glory, of righteousness, of life, of salvation, and a kingdom and glory; and shall inherit all things, and all “through Christ”: he is the grand heir of all things; they are joint heirs with him; their sonship is through him, and so is their heirship and inheritance; their inheritance is in his possession, it is reserved safe in him; and by him, and with him they shall enjoy it. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, only read, “an heir through God”, and so the Vulgate Latin version; and the Ethiopic version only, “an heir of God”.

Ver. 8. *Howbeit then, when ye know not God*, etc..] Whilst in Gentilism, and in a state of unregeneracy, they had no true knowledge of God; though they might know by the light of nature, and works of creation, that there was a God, yet they did not know who he was, but called either mortal men, or some one or other of the creatures, or stocks, and stones, and images of men's device, by this name; they knew not the God of Israel; they did not know God in Christ, and are therefore said to be without him; and a common description of them it is, that they knew not God: and whilst this was their case, what follows was true of them,

ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods; only by name, and in the opinion of men, but have no divinity in them, are only called gods, mere nominal, fictitious deities, who have nothing of the nature and essence of God in them; for there is but one God by nature and essence, the Father, Son, and Spirit; all others have only the name and appearance, but not the truth of deity; and these the Gentiles in their times of ignorance did “service” to, which is what the Jews call *hrz hdwb* [, “strange service”; that is, idolatry, concerning which there is a whole treatise in the Talmud, and which bears that name^{f86}. This service lay in paying homage to them, worshipping of them, and performing various rites and ceremonies in a way of adoration, and which they reckoned religious service; and which, comparatively speaking, whilst in this state of blindness, was

excusable in them; though it is a wonderful instance of grace that such idolaters should be the sons of God.

Ver. 9. *But now, after that ye have known God*, etc.,] God in Christ, as their covenant God and Father, through the preaching of the Gospel, and in the light of divine grace; God having caused light to shine in their dark hearts; and having given them the light of the knowledge of himself in the face of Christ, and having sent down into their hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying “Abba”, Father.

Or rather are known of God; for it is but little that the best of these, that have the greatest share of knowledge, know of him; and what knowledge they have, they have it first, originally, and wholly from him: that knowledge which he has of them is particular, distinct, and complete; and is to be understood, not of his omniscience in general, so all men are known by him; but of his special knowledge, joined with affection, approbation, and care: and the meaning is, that they were loved by him with an everlasting love, which had been manifested in their conversion, in the drawing of them to himself, and to his Son; that he approved of them, delighted in them, had an exact knowledge, and took special care of them: but, oh, folly and ingratitude!

how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? meaning the ordinances of the ceremonial law, he before calls “the elements of the world”, and here “weak”, because they could not give life, righteousness, peace, joy, comfort, and salvation; and, since the coming of Christ, were become impotent to all the uses they before served; and beggarly, because they lay in the observation of mean things, as meats, drinks, etc.. and which were only shadows of those good things, the riches of grace and glory, which come by Christ. The Galatians are said to turn again to these; not that they were before in the observation of them, except the Jews, but because there was some likeness between these, and the ceremonies with which they carried on the service of their idols; and by showing an inclination to them, they discovered a good will to come into a like state of bondage they were in before; than which nothing could be more stupid and ungrateful in a people that had been blessed with so much grace, and with such clear Gospel light and knowledge.

Ver. 10. *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*] Lest the apostle should be thought to suggest, without foundation, the inclination of

these people to be in bondage to the ceremonies of the law, he gives this as an instance of it; which is to be understood, not of a civil observation of times, divided into days, months, and years, for which the luminaries of the heavens were made, and into summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, which is not only lawful, but absolutely necessary; but of a religious observation of days, etc.. not of the lucky and unlucky days, or of any of the festivals of the Gentiles, but of Jewish ones. By “days” are meant their seventh day sabbaths; for since they are distinguished from months and years, they must mean such days as returned weekly; and what else can they be but their weekly sabbaths? These were peculiar to the Israelites, and not binding on others; and being typical of Christ, the true rest of his people, and he being come, are now ceased. By “months” are designed their new moons, or the beginning of their months upon the appearance of a new moon, which were kept by blowing trumpets, offering sacrifices, hearing the word of God, abstaining from work, and holding religious feasts; and were typical of that light, knowledge, and grace, the church receives from Christ, the sun of righteousness; and he, the substance, being come, these shadows disappeared. By “times” are intended the three times in the year, when the Jewish males appeared before the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the three feasts of tabernacles, passover, and pentecost, for the observance of which there was now no reason; not of the feast of tabernacles, since the word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us; nor of the passover, since Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us; nor of pentecost, or the feast of weeks, or of the first fruits of the harvest, since the Spirit of God was poured down in a plenteous manner on that day upon the apostles; and when the firstfruits of a glorious harvest were brought in to the Lord, in the conversion of three thousand souls. And by “years” are to be understood their sabbatical years; every seventh year the land had a rest, and remained untilled; there were no ploughing and sowing, and there was a general release of debtors; and every fiftieth year was a jubilee to the Lord, when liberty to servants, debtors, etc.. was proclaimed throughout the land: all which were typical of rest, payment of debts, and spiritual liberty by Christ; and which having their accomplishment in him, were no longer to be observed; wherefore these Galatians are blamed for so doing; and the more, because they were taught to observe them, in order to obtain eternal life and salvation by them.

Ver. 11. *I am afraid of you*, etc..] Which shows the danger he apprehended they were in, by taking such large steps from Christianity to

Judaism, and expresses the godly jealousy of the apostle over them; intimates he had some hope of them, and in the whole declares his great love and affection for them; for love is a thing full of care and fear:

lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain; in preaching the Gospel among them with so much diligence and constancy, though so many afflictions and pressures lay upon him. Faithful ministers of the word are laborious ones; and such an one was the apostle; and who indeed laboured more abundantly than the rest in all places wherever he came; and such will be concerned, as he was, lest their labours should be in vain, not to themselves, but to the souls of others, whose everlasting good and welfare they are seeking. But how is it that the apostle should fear that his labour in preaching the Gospel would be in vain, and become of no effect through their observance of days, months, times, and years? because that hereby the pure spiritual and evangelic worship of God was corrupted, they bringing into it that which God had removed, and so became guilty of will worship; their Christian liberty was infringed, and they brought into bondage, a deliverance from which the Gospel proclaims; the doctrine of free grace in pardon, justification, and salvation, was made void, they observing these things in order to procure them thereby; and it was virtually and tacitly saying, that Christ was not come in the flesh, which is the main article of the Gospel; for since these things had respect to him, and were to continue no longer than till his coming, to keep on the observation of them, was declaring that he was not come; which is in effect to set aside the whole Gospel, and the ministration of it; so that the apostle might justly fear, that by such a proceeding all his labour, and the pains he had took to preach the Gospel, and salvation by Christ unto them, would be in vain.

Ver. 12. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am*, etc..] Though they had gone so far backwards, yet still hoping well of them that they would be reclaimed, he styles them “brethren”: not in a carnal but spiritual relation, as being born of God, and belonging to his family; and out of his sincere and hearty love for them as his brethren in Christ, he exhorts them to be as he was; which some understand of affection, as desiring them to show the same love to him as to themselves, that he might be to them as another I, as a part of themselves; so true friendship makes, and true friends look upon each other to be, as Jonathan and David, and the first Christians were, of one heart and soul. But this phrase rather seems to have regard to likeness and imitation; and the sense is, that he would have them to be as he was, and do as he did; to be as free from the law, and the servitude and

bondage of it, as he was; to reckon themselves dead unto it, as he did; and to relinquish the observance of days, and months, and times, and years, and any and every part of the ceremonial law, and to account all these things, as he had done, loss and dung for Christ; and this he presses, not in an authoritative way, laying his commands as an apostle upon them, but in a kind and gentle manner entreating them: and which he backs with the following reason or argument,

for I am as ye are; as your very selves; I have the same love for you, you have for yourselves; I love you as I do myself; this way go such interpreters that understand the exhortation to regard love and affection: but rather the meaning is, be as I am, and do as I do, “because I was as you are”; so the Syriac and Arabic versions read the words. Some think that the apostle particularly addresses the Jews in these churches; and that his sense is, that he was born a Jew, as they were, was brought up in the Jewish religion, and in the observance of these things, as they had been, and yet he had relinquished them, therefore would have them do so likewise: or rather his intention is, that he had been as zealous for the observation of the ceremonial law, and all the rituals of it, as they now were; and though he was a Jew by birth, and had had a Jewish education, and so had been prejudiced in favour of these things, yet he had renounced them all; and therefore they who were Gentiles, and were never under obligation to them, should never think of coming into bondage by them; and since he had accommodated himself to them, and had become all things to all, that he might gain some, whether Jews or Gentiles, so he hoped they would condescend to him, and follow his example: or this may have respect, not to his former but present state, according to our version; and the sense be, I am as you are, and you are as I am with respect to things spiritual; we are both alike in Christ, chosen in him, and redeemed by him; are equally regenerated by his Spirit, and are all the children of God by faith in him, and no more servants; are all equally Christ's free men, and have a right to the same privileges and immunities; and therefore be as I am, as free from observing the ceremonies of the law, and so from the bondage of it, since we are upon an equal foot, and upon the same foundation in Christ.

Ye have not injured me at all; what injury they had done was to God, whose will it was that these things should be abolished; and to Christ, who had broken down the middle wall of partition; and to the Gospel, which proclaimed liberty to the captives; and to their own souls, by entangling themselves with the yoke of bondage; but no personal private injury was

done to the apostle by their compliance with the law. This he says, lest they should think that he spoke out of anger and resentment, and on account of any personal affront offered to him; which leads him to take notice of their former kindness and respect to him, and which he designs as a reason why they should pay the same deference to him now as then.

Ver. 13. *Ye know how, through infirmity of the flesh,* etc..] Meaning either their infirmity, to which the apostle accommodated himself in preaching the Gospel to them, delivering it in such a manner as suited with their capacities, feeding them with milk, and not with strong meat; or his own infirmity, respecting either some particular bodily infirmity and disorder, as the headache, with which he is said to be greatly troubled; or the weakness of his bodily presence, the mean outward appearance he made, the contemptibleness of his voice, and the great humility with which he behaved; or rather the many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions which attended him, when, says he,

I preached the Gospel unto you at the first; not the law, but the Gospel; and this he did at his first entrance among them, and was the first that preached it to them, and was the means of their conversion; and therefore, being their spiritual Father, they ought to be as he was, and follow him as they had him for an example.

Ver. 14. *And my temptation which was in my flesh,* etc..] The same with the infirmity of his flesh, and which was a trial of his faith and patience, and every other grace, as the afflictions of the saints be. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version read, “your temptation in my flesh”; that which was a trial of them, whether they would receive him or not. This

ye despised not; nor the apostle on the account of it, nor his ministry; they thought never the worse of him, nor of the Gospel he preached, because of this:

nor rejected; him, nor the counsel of God declared by him,

but received me; as they did, into their cities and places of worship, into their houses, and into their hearts and affections: and that

as an angel of God; with all that reverence and respect, that high esteem, veneration, and affection, as if one of the celestial inhabitants had been sent down from heaven to bring them the good tidings of the Gospel: or “as a

messenger of God”, as the phrase may be rendered: as one that had his mission and commission from God, which was not at all disputed by them: but they looked upon him under that character, and regarded him as such,

even as Christ Jesus; as his ambassador, as representing him, as being in his stead; yea, if he had been personally present as man among them, they could not have shown greater respect to him as such, than they did to the apostle; for as for any religious worship and adoration, that they did not offer to him; and had they, he would have addressed them in like manner he did the inhabitants of Lystra, (~~4444~~ Acts 14:14,15). Now since they showed him so much respect, notwithstanding all his infirmities, temptations, and afflictions, when he first preached the Gospel; what should hinder that they should not pay the same regard to him now, by abiding in his doctrine and following his example, since he was the same man in his principles and practices now as then?

Ver. 15. *Where is then the blessedness you spake of?* etc..] Or, as some copies read, “what was then your blessedness?” what, and how great was it? meaning, when the Gospel was first preached to them by him; when Christ was revealed to them as God's salvation; when the doctrines of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, and full pardon by his atonement and satisfaction by his sacrifice, were published among them; when the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, and the Spirit of Christ was sent thither, crying “Abba”, Father: but, alas! where was this blessedness now, since they were turning to the weak and beggarly elements of the ceremonial law, and were inclined to observe its ordinances, and bring themselves hereby into a state of bondage? They were happy persons while under the ministry of the apostle; as a Gospel ministry is a great happiness to any that enjoy it; for this is the way to find eternal life, to have spiritual peace and pleasure, joy and comfort, light and liberty, whereas a contrary doctrine leads to all the reverse. The apostle hereby puts them in mind how they were looked upon as happy persons by himself at that time, whom they received with so much respect and reverence, and his ministry with so much readiness and cheerfulness, and to so much profit and advantage; and also by other churches who were sensible of the high favour they enjoyed, by having so great a preacher of the Gospel among them; and even at that time they thought themselves the happiest persons in the world, and that they could not have been more so, unless they had had Christ himself in person among them; so beautiful were the feet of this bringer of glad tidings to them:

for I bear you record, that if it had been possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me; so fully persuaded was the apostle of their strong and sincere affection for him at that time, that he was ready to attest the truth of this in any form to any persons; that were it a possible thing for them, and could it have been of any advantage to him, they would even have plucked out their eyes, than which nothing is dearer, or more useful to a man, and have parted with them to him, and for his sake; and doubtless persons so affected would cheerfully have laid down their lives for him; but things had taken another turn since.

Ver. 16. *Amos I therefore become your enemy,* etc..] Not that he was an enemy to them, he had the same cordial affection for them as ever; he had their true interest at heart, and was diligently pursuing it; but they, through the insinuations of the false teachers, had entertained an ill opinion of him, and an aversion to him, and treated him as if he had been an enemy to them, and as if they had a real hatred of him: and that for no other reason, as he observes, but

because I tell you the truth; the Gospel so called, because it comes from the God of truth, is concerned with Christ, who is truth itself, and is dictated, revealed, and blessed by the Spirit of truth; and is opposed unto, and is distinct from the law, which is only an image and shadow, and not truth itself: it chiefly respects the great truths of salvation alone by Christ, and justification by his righteousness; and may also regard what he had said concerning the abrogation of the law, blaming them for the observance of it, and calling its institutions weak and beggarly elements; all which he told or spoke publicly, plainly, honestly, fully, and faithfully, boldly, constantly, and with all assurance, consistently, and in pure love to their souls; and yet it brought on him their anger and resentment. Telling the truth in such a manner often brings many enemies to the ministers of Christ; not only the men of the world, profane sinners, but professors of religion, and sometimes such who once loved and admired them.

Ver. 17. *They zealously affect you,* etc..] Or “are jealous of you”; meaning the false apostles, whose names, in contempt, he mentions not, being unworthy to be taken notice of, and their names to be transmitted to posterity. These were jealous of them, not with a godly jealousy, as the apostle was, lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity of the Gospel; but they were jealous, lest they should love the apostle more than

they, and therefore represented him in a very bad light, and expressed great love and kindness for them themselves:

but not well; their zeal and affection were not hearty, and sincere, and without dissimulation, but were all feigned, were only in word and in tongue, not in deed, and in truth: this zealous affection neither proceeded from right principles, nor with right views; they sought themselves, and their own carnal worldly interest, their own pleasure and profit, and not the good and welfare of the souls of these Galatians:

yea, they would exclude you; that is, either from the apostle, from bearing any love unto, and having any respect for him. What they were wishing and seeking for was to draw off the minds and affections of these persons from him; or they were desirous of removing them from the Gospel of Christ unto another Gospel, and did all they could to hinder them from obeying the truth; and particularly were for shutting them out of their Christian liberty, and bringing them under the bondage of the law; yea, were for separating them from the churches, that they might set up themselves at the head of them. Some copies read “us”, instead of “you”; and then the meaning is, that they were desirous of excluding the apostle from their company, and from having any share in their affections, which makes little alteration in the sense: and others, instead of “exclude”, read “include”; and which is confirmed by the Syriac version, which renders the word ܘܟܥܒܝܡܝ , “but they would include you”; that is, either they would include, or imprison you under the law, and the bondage of it; or they would monopolize you, and engross all your love to themselves; and which is also the sense of the Arabic version:

that you might affect them; love them, show respect to them, be on their side, follow their directions, imbibe their doctrines, and give up yourselves wholly to their care, and be at their call and command.

Ver. 18. *But it is good to be zealously affected*, etc..] A zealous affection when right is very commendable, as the instances of Phinehas, Elijah, John the Baptist, and our Lord Jesus Christ show, and a contrary spirit is very disagreeable. But then it must be expressed

in a good thing; in a good cause, for God, and the things of Christ; for the Gospel, and the ordinances of it, and for the discipline of God's house, and against immorality and profaneness, errors and heresies: and it should be “always”; not at certain times, and upon some particular accounts, but it

should be constant, and always continue; it should be ever the same towards God, Christ, and his ministers:

and not only when I am present with you; by which the apostle suggests, that while he was with them they were zealously attached to him and truth; but no sooner was he gone from them, but their zealous affection abated, and was fixed on others, which discovered their weakness, fickleness, and inconstancy; whereas he was always the same to them, and bore the same love to them, as the following words show.

Ver. 19. *My little children*, etc..] A soft and tender way of speaking, used by Christ to his disciples, and frequently by that affectionate and beloved disciple, John. It is expressive of the apostle's strong love and affection for them, and points out their tenderness in the faith, and that small degree of spiritual light and knowledge they had, as well as signifies that he had been, as he hoped, and in a judgment of charity believed, an instrument of their conversion, and was their spiritual parent: hence it follows,

of whom I travail in birth again; he compares himself to a woman with child, as the church in bringing forth souls to Christ sometimes is; and all his pains and labours in the ministry of the word to the sorrows of a woman during the time of childbearing, and at the birth. When he first came among them, he laboured exceedingly; he preached the Gospel in season, and out of season; he followed his indefatigable endeavours with importunate prayers; and his ministry among them was attended with much weakness of body, and with many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, comparable to the birth throes of a woman in travail: however, as he hoped he was the means of their being born again, of the turning of them from Heathenism to Christianity, and from serving idols to serve the living God, and believe in his Son Jesus Christ; but the false apostles coming among them had so strangely wrought upon them, and they were so much gone back and degenerated, that they seemed to be like so many abortions, or as an unformed foetus; wherefore he laboured again with all his might and main, by writing to them, using arguments with them, sometimes giving them good words, at other times rough ones, and fervently praying for them, if possible, to recover them from Judaism, to which they were inclined, to the pure Gospel of Christ.

Until Christ be formed in you; which is the same as to be created in Christ, to be made new creatures, or new men in him; or, in other words, to have the principle of grace wrought in the soul, which goes by the name of

Christ formed in the heart; because it is from him, he is the author of it, and it bears a resemblance to him, and is that by which he lives, dwells, and reigns in the souls of his people. Now though, as he hoped, this new man, new creature, or Christ, was formed in them before, when he first preached the Gospel to them; yet it was not a perfect man; particularly their knowledge of Christ, of his Gospel, and Gospel liberty, was far from being so, in which they went backwards instead of forwards; and therefore he was greatly concerned, laboured exceedingly, and vehemently endeavoured, which he calls travailing in birth again, to bring them to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is also the same as to be conformed to the image of Christ, which in regeneration is stamped upon the saints, and is gradually increased, and will be perfected in heaven; and that this might more manifestly appear, over which a veil was drawn, by their departure in any degree from the truths of the Gospel, was what he earnestly sought after: once more, it is the same as to have the form of Christ; that is, of the Gospel of Christ upon them, or to be cast into the form of doctrine, and mould of the Gospel, and to receive a Gospel impression and spirit from it; which is to have a spirit of liberty, in opposition to legal bondage; to live by faith on Christ, and not on the works of the law; to derive comfort alone from him, and not from any services and duties whatever; to have repentance, and the whole course of obedience, influenced by the grace of God, and love of Christ; and to be zealous of good works, and yet have no dependence on them for justification and salvation. This is what the apostle so earnestly desired, when, instead of it, these Galatians seemed to have the form of Moses, and of the law.

Ver. 20. *I desire to be present with you now*, etc..] His meaning is, either that he wished he was personally present among them; that he had but an opportunity of seeing them face to face, and telling them all his mind, and in such a manner as he could not in a single epistle; or that they would consider him, when they read this epistle, as if he was really among them; and as if they saw the concern of his mind, the agonies of his soul, the looks of his countenance, and heard the different tone of his voice:

and to change my voice; when present with them, either by a different way of preaching; that whereas before he preached the Gospel of the grace of God unto them, and his voice was charming to them like that of an angel, and even of Jesus Christ himself; but they having turned their backs upon

it, and slighted it, he would now thunder out the law to them they seemed to be so fond of; even that voice of words, which when, the Israelites on Mount Sinai heard, entreated they might hear no more; as these Galatians also must when they heard the true voice of it, which is no other than a declaration of wrath, curse, and damnation; or by using a different way of speaking to them, as necessity might require, either softly or roughly, beseeching or chiding them, which might more move and affect them than an epistle could:

for I stand in doubt of you, The Vulgate Latin reads it, “I am confounded in you”; and the Syriac, *hymtd*, “I am stupefied”; and to the same sense the Arabic. He was ashamed of them for their apostasy and degeneracy; he was amazed and astonished at their conduct; or, as the word may be rendered, he was “perplexed” on their account; he did not know what to think of them, and their state; sometimes he hoped well of them, at other times he was ready to despair; nor did he well know what course to take with them, whether to use them roughly or smoothly, and what arguments might be most proper and pertinent, in order to reclaim them.

Ver. 21. *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law*, etc..] Not merely to obey it, as holy, just, and good, from a principle of love, and to testify subjection and gratitude to God; so all believers desire to be under the law: but these men sought for justification and salvation by their obedience to it: they desired to be under it as a covenant of works, which was downright madness and folly to the last degree, since this was the way to come under the curse of it; they wanted to be under the yoke of the law, which is a yoke of bondage, an insupportable one, which the Jewish fathers could not bear; and therefore it was egregious weakness in them to desire to come under it: wherefore the apostle desires them to answer this question,

do ye not hear the law? meaning either the language and voice of the law of Moses, what it says to transgressors, and so to them; what it accused them of, and charged them with; how it declared them guilty before God, pronounced them accursed, and, ministered sententially condemnation and death unto them; and could they desire to be under such a law? or rather the books of the Old Testament, particularly the five books of Moses, and what is said therein; referring them, as Christ did the Jews, to the Scriptures, to the writings of Moses, and to read, hear, and observe what is in them, since they professed so great a regard to the law; from whence they might learn, that they ought not to be under the bondage and servitude

of it. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “have ye not read the law?” and so one of Stephens's copies; that is, the books of the law; if you have, as you should, you might observe what follows.

Ver. 22. *For it is written*, etc..] In (^{<0165>}Genesis 16:15 21:9)

that Abraham had two sons, not two sons only; for besides the two referred to, he had six more, (^{<0202>}Genesis 25:2) but it being only pertinent to the apostle's purpose to take notice of these two, he mentions no more, though he does not deny that he had any more. These two sons were Ishmael and Isaac:

the one by a bondmaid. Ishmael was by Hagar, Sarah's servant, who represented the covenant the Jewish nation was under the bondage of.

The other by a free woman. Isaac was by Sarah, Abraham's proper and lawful wife, who was mistress of the family, and represented in figure the covenant, and Gospel church state, and all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews, as under the liberty thereof.

Ver. 23. *But he who was of the bondwoman*, etc..] Ishmael, who was begotten and born of Hagar,

was born after the flesh; after the common order and course of nature, through the copulation of two persons, the one able to procreate, and the other fit for the conception of children; and was typical of the Jews, the natural descendants of Abraham, who, as such, and upon that account, were not the children of God, nor heirs of the eternal inheritance:

but he of the free woman was by promise; by a previous promise made by God to Abraham, that he should have a son in his old age, when his body was now dead, and when Sarah his wife, who had always been barren, was now grown old, and past the time of bearing children; so that Isaac was born out of the common order and course of nature; his conception and birth were owing to the promise and power of God, and to his free grace and favour to Abraham. This son of promise was a type of the spiritual seed of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles, the children of the promise that are counted for the seed; who are born again of the will, power, and grace of God, and are heirs, according to the promise, both of grace and glory, when they that are of the law, and the works of it, are not. All which is further illustrated in the following verses.

Ver. 24. *Which things are an allegory*, etc..] Or “are allegorized”: so Sarah and Hagar were allegorized by Philo the Jew^{f87}, before they were by the apostle. Sarah he makes to signify virtue, and Hagar the whole circle of arts and sciences, which are, or should be, an handmaid to virtue; but these things respecting Hagar and Sarah, the bondwoman and the free, and their several offspring, are much better allegorized by the apostle here. An allegory is a way of speaking in which one thing is expressed by another, and is a continued metaphor; and the apostle's meaning is, that these things point at some other things; have another meaning in them, a mystical and spiritual one, besides the literal; and which the Jews call *çrdm*, “Midrash”, a name they give to the mystical and allegorical sense of Scripture, in which they greatly indulge themselves. An allegory is properly a fictitious way of speaking; but here it designs an accommodation of a real history, and matter of fact, to other cases and things, and seems to intend a type or figure; and the sense to be, that these things which were literally true of Hagar and Sarah, of Ishmael and Isaac, were types and figures of things to come; just as what befell the Israelites were types and figures of things that would be under the Gospel dispensation, (~~4501~~1 Corinthians 10:11)

for these are the two covenants, or “testaments”; that is, these women, Hagar and Sarah, signify, and are figures of the two covenants; not the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Hagar was no figure of the covenant of works, that was made and broke before she was born; besides, the covenant she was a figure of was made at Mount Sinai, whereas the covenant of works was made in paradise: moreover, the covenant of works was made with Adam, and all his posterity, but the covenant which Hagar signified was only made with the children of Israel; she represented Jerusalem, that then was with her children. Nor was Sarah a figure of the covenant of grace, for this was made long before she had a being, even from everlasting; but they were figures of the two administrations of one and the same covenant, which were to take place in the world successively; and which following one the other, are by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews called the first and the second, the old and the new covenants. Now these are the covenants or testaments, the old and the new, and the respective people under them, which were prefigured by these two women, and their offspring.

The one from the Mount Sinai; that is, one of these covenants, or one of the administrations of the covenant, one dispensation of it, which is the first, and now called old, because abolished, took its rise from Mount

Sinai, was delivered there by God to Moses, in order to be communicated to the people of Israel, who were to be under that form of administration until the coming of the Messiah. And because the whole Mosaic economy was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, it is said to be from thence: hence, in Jewish writings, we read, times without number, of *ynysm hçml hkl h*, a rite, custom, constitution, or appointment given to Moses “from Mount Sinai”, the same phrase as here. Sinai signifies “bushes”, and has its name from the bushes which grew upon it, ^{f88}; in one of which the Lord appeared to Moses; for Horeb and Sinai are one and the same mount; one signifies waste and desolate, the other bushy; as one part of the mountain was barren and desert, and the other covered with bushes and brambles; and may fitly represent the condition of such that are under the law.

Which gendereth to bondage; begets and brings persons into a state of bondage, induces on them a spirit of bondage to fear, and causes them to be all their lifetime subject to it; as even such were that were under the first covenant, or under the Old Testament dispensation:

which is Agar; or this is the covenant, the administration of it, which Hagar, the bondwoman, Sarah's servant, represented.

Ver. 25. *For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia*, etc..] The Arabic version, instead of Arabia, reads “Balca”. The Syriac version makes Hagar to be a mountain, reading the words thus, “for Mount Hagar is Sinai, which is in Arabia”: and some have been of opinion that Sinai was called Hagar by the Arabians. It is certain, that *rgj*, which may be pronounced Hagar, does signify in the Arabic language a stone or rock; and that one part of Arabia is called Arabia Petraea, from the rockiness of it; the metropolis of which was *trgj*, or “Agara”, and the inhabitants Agarenes; and Hagar was the name of the chief city of Bahrein, a province of Arabia ^{f89}: and it may be observed, that when Hagar, with her son, was cast out, they dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, (^{<0121>}Genesis 21:21) which was near to Sinai, as appears from (^{<0402>}Numbers 10:12 ^{<0332>}Deuteronomy 33:2) so that it is possible that this mount might be so called from her, though there is no certainty of it; and near to it, as Grotius observes, was a town called Agra, mentioned by Pliny ^{f90} as in Arabia. However, it is clear, that Sinai was in Arabia, out of the land of promise, where the law was given, and seems to be mentioned by the apostle with this view, that it might be observed, and teach us that the inheritance is not of the law. It is placed by Jerom ^{f91} in the land of Midian; and it is certain it must be near it, if not in it, as is clear

from (~~(128)~~Exodus 3:1). And according to Philo the Jew^{f92}, the Midianites, as formerly called, were a very populous nation of the Arabians: and Madian, or Midian, is by^{f93} Mahomet spoken of as in Arabia; and it may be observed, that they that are called Midianites in (~~(1373)~~Genesis 37:36) are said to be Ishmaelites, (~~(138)~~Genesis 39:1) the name by which the Arabians are commonly called by the Jews. The apostle therefore properly places this mountain in Arabia. But after all, by Agar, I rather think the woman is meant: and that the sense is, that this same Agar signifies Mount Sinai, or is a figure of the law given on that mount.

And answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children; that is, agrees with and resembles the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of all the cities and towns in Judea; and she, being a bondswoman, represented that state of bondage the Jews were in, when the apostle wrote this, who were in a state of civil, moral, and legal bondage; in civil bondage to the Romans, being tributaries to the empire of Rome, and under the jurisdiction of Caesar; in moral bondage to sin, to Satan, to the world and the lusts of it, whose servants they in general were; and in legal bondage to the ceremonial law, which was a yoke of bondage: they were in bondage under the elements or institutions of it, such as circumcision, a yoke which neither they, nor their forefathers could bear, because it bound them over to keep the whole law; the observance of various days, months, times, and years, and the multitude of sacrifices they were obliged to offer, which yet could not take away sin, nor free their consciences from the load of guilt, but were as an handwriting of ordinances against them; every sacrifice they brought declaring their sin and guilt, and that they deserved to die as the creature did that was sacrificed for them; and besides, this law of commandments, in various instances, the breach of it was punishable with death, through fear of which they were all their life long subject to bondage: they were also in bondage to the moral law, which required perfect obedience of them, but gave them no strength to perform; showed them their sin and misery, but not their remedy; demanded a complete righteousness, but did not point out where it was to be had; it spoke not one word of peace and comfort, but all the reverse; it admitted of no repentance; it accused of sin, pronounced guilty on account of it, cursed, condemned, and threatened with death for it, all which kept them in continual bondage: and whereas the far greater part of that people at that time, the Jerusalem that then was, the Scribes, Pharisees, and generality of the nation, were seeking for justification by the works of the law, this

added to their bondage; they obeyed it with mercenary views, and not from love but fear; and their comforts and peace rose and fell according to their obedience; and persons in such a way must needs be under a spiritual bondage.

Ver. 26. *But Jerusalem which is above*, etc..] This Sarah was a type and figure of; she answered to, and agreed with this; which is to be understood, not of the church triumphant in heaven, but of the Gospel church state under the administration of the new covenant; and that, not as in the latter day glory, when the new Jerusalem shall descend from God out of heaven, but as it then was in the apostle's time, and has been since. Particular respect may be had to the first Gospel church at Jerusalem, which consisted of persons born from above, was blessed with a Gospel spirit, which is a spirit of liberty, out of which the Gospel went into all the world, and from among whom the apostles and first preachers of the word went forth everywhere, and were the means of the conversion of multitudes, both among Jews and Gentiles, and so might be truly said to be the mother of us all. The church in general, under the Gospel, may be, as it often is, called Jerusalem, because of its name, the vision of peace; being under the government of the Prince of peace; the members of it are sons of peace, who are called to peace, and enjoy it; the Gospel is the Gospel of peace, and the ordinances of it are paths of peace; and the new covenant, under the administration of which the saints are, is a covenant of peace.

Jerusalem was the object of God's choice, the palace of the great King, the place of divine worship, was compact together, and well fortified: the Gospel church state consists of persons, who, in general, are the elect of God, among whom the Lord dwells, as in his temple. Here his worship is observed, his word is preached, and his ordinances administered; saints laid on the foundation, Christ, and being fitly framed together, grow up unto an holy temple in him, and are surrounded by him, as Jerusalem was with mountains, and are kept by his power unto salvation. This is said to be above, to distinguish it from the earthly Jerusalem, the inhabitants of which were chiefly men of the world, carnal men; but this heavenly Jerusalem, or Gospel church state, chiefly consists of persons born from above, called with an heavenly calling, and who bear the image of the heavenly one, whose conversation is in heaven, who are seeking things above, and in a little time will be there themselves; its constitution and form of government are from above, and so are its doctrines, and its ordinances. The Jews often speak of $\alpha\lambda\upsilon\iota\delta\mu\iota\zeta\omega\rho\upsilon$, or $hal\ [\]$, or $hl\ [m\ \iota\ \zeta]$, "Jerusalem above"

^{f94}, as distinguished from Jerusalem below: and to this distinction the apostle seems to have respect here, who further says concerning this Jerusalem, that she

is free; from the servitude of sin, Satan, and the world, from the yoke of the law, and from a spirit of bondage; having the Spirit of God, the spirit of adoption, who is a free spirit, and makes such free that enjoy him; and where he is, there is true liberty. He adds,

which is the mother of us all; that are born again, whether Jews or Gentiles, as particularly the church at Jerusalem was, and the Gospel church state in general may be said to be; since here souls are born and brought forth to Christ, are nursed up at her side, and nourished with her breasts of consolation, the word and ordinances. This form of speech is also Jewish: thus it is said ^{f95} that

“Zion, **l arçyd ^ma**, “the mother of Israel”, shall bring forth her sons, and Jerusalem shall receive the children of the captivity.”

Again, explaining (²¹⁸²Proverbs 28:24) it is observed ^{f96}, that there is no father but the ever blessed God, **wma ^yaw**, “and no mother” but the congregation of Israel. Some copies leave out the word “all”; and so do the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, and only read, “the mother of us”, or “our mother”.

Ver. 27. *For it is written*, etc..] (²³⁴⁰Isaiah 44:1), which is cited to prove, that the heavenly Jerusalem, or Gospel church state, is the mother of us all, and has brought forth, and still will bring forth, many souls to Christ, even many more than were under the legal dispensation by the Jewish church, though the Lord was an husband to them, (²⁴¹³Jeremiah 31:32). The words are,

rejoice thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband; by her that was “barren”, and “bore” not, and “travailed” not, and was “desolate”, is not meant the Gentile world, which before the coming of Christ was barren and destitute of the knowledge of him, and from among whom very few were called by grace; but the Gospel church in the first beginnings of it, in Christ's time, and especially about the time of his death, and before the pouring forth of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when the number of its members were few; for the names of the

disciples together were but 120, when it seemed to be barren, and desolate, and deprived of its husband Christ, but was quickly to have a large accession to, it, both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore is called upon to “rejoice, break forth”, and “cry”; that is, to break forth into songs of praise, and express her spiritual joy, by singing aloud, and setting forth in hymns and spiritual songs the glory of powerful and efficacious grace, in the conversion of such large numbers of souls, the like of which had never been known under the former administration. Three thousand were converted under one sermon, and added to this first Gospel church; and the number of its members still increased, and the number of the men that afterwards believed was about five thousand; and after this we hear of more believers being added to the Lord, both men and women; and also that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith; and when out of this church, the apostles, and other preachers of the Gospel went everywhere into the Gentile world, thousands of souls were converted, and a large number of churches formed, and a spiritual seed has been preserved ever since; and in the latter day Zion will travail in birth, and bring forth a numerous offspring; a nation shall be born at once, and the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Agreeably to this sense the Jewish writers, Jarchi, Kimchi, and Aben Ezra, understand this passage of Jerusalem; as does also the Chaldee paraphrase, which renders it thus:

“Praise, O Jerusalem, which was as a barren woman that bringeth not forth; rejoice in praise, and be glad, who was as a woman which conceives not, for more are the children of Jerusalem forsaken than the children of the habitable city, saith the Lord.”

Ver. 28. *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was*, etc..] The Ethiopic version reads, “you, brethren”; and so one of Stephens's copies. As the two women, Hagar and Sarah, might be, and are allegorized; so likewise their respective offspring. Isaac signified, and was a type and figure of Abraham's spiritual seed, whether Jews or Gentiles, under the Gospel dispensation: and as he was, so they are,

the children of promise; as Isaac was promised unto Abraham, so were this spiritual seed, when it was said unto him, that he should be the father of many nations, as he is the father of us all, even of all them that believe, be they of what nation soever; and as Isaac was born by virtue, and in consequence of a promise made to Abraham of God's free good will and pleasure, and his generation and conception were beyond the strength and

course of nature, were the effects of a divine power, and were something supernatural; so this spiritual seed are born again, by virtue, and in consequence of a promise, not only made to Abraham, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the covenant, that he should see his seed, enjoy a numerous offspring, and which should endure for ever; and also to the church, of whom it is said, that this and that man should be born in her; and particularly in consequence of the promise cited in the foregoing verse, from whence these words are an inference, deduction, or illustration: and these children of the promise, so called from hence, are born again, above and beyond the strength of nature; not through the power and free will of man, but through the abundant mercy and sovereign will of God, by his powerful and efficacious grace, and by the word of promise, the Gospel, as a means. Moreover, to these children, or spiritual seed of Abraham, signified by Isaac, do all the promises belong, as that of God, as a covenant God gave unto them; of Christ, as a Saviour and Redeemer; of the Holy Spirit, as a sanctifier and comforter; and of all good things, of temporal mercies, so far as are for their real good; and of all spiritual blessings, as righteousness, peace, pardon, comfort, all supplies of grace, and eternal life: and these likewise receive these promises; the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of promise, opens and applies them to them, puts them into the hand of faith, and enables them to plead them with God, and to believe the performance of them; so that this character in all respects agrees with them.

Ver. 29. *But as then*, etc..] In the times of Abraham, when Hagar and Sarah, the types of the two dispensations of the covenant, and Ishmael and Isaac, the figures of the two different seeds, the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham, legalists and true believers, were living:

he that was born after the flesh; which was Ishmael, who was a type, or an allegorical representation of such who were under the Sinai covenant, and were seeking for righteousness by the works of the law; as he was born after the flesh, according to the ordinary course of nature, and was, as he was born, a carnal man; so are self-justiciaries, notwithstanding all their pretensions to religion and righteousness, just as they were born; there is nothing but flesh in them; they are without God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and have neither true faith, nor hope, nor love, nor any other grace; they have no internal principle of goodness in them; flesh, or corrupt, nature, has the government of them, is the reigning principle in them; their minds are fleshly, and so are their tenets; and such is their conversation, they trust in the flesh, in outward performances, in their own righteousness, and so

come under the curse; for as many as trust in an arm of flesh, or are of the works of the law, are under the curse of it:

persecuted him that was born after the Spirit: by whom is meant Isaac, who, though he was not conceived under the overshadowings of the Holy Spirit, without the help of man, as Christ was; yet because of the divine power which was so eminently displayed in his conception and generation, under all the difficulties, and disadvantages, and seeming impossibilities of nature, he is said to be born after the Spirit: and besides, he was also regenerated by the Spirit of God, was a good man, and one that feared the Lord, as the whole account of him shows; and in this also fitly pointed out the spiritual seed, true believers, under the Gospel dispensation, who are born again of water, and of the Spirit, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds; in whom the work of the Spirit is begun, and grace is the governing principle; in whom the Spirit of God dwells and operates; and whose conversation is spiritual, and who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The persecution of Isaac by Ishmael was by “mocking” him, (^{<0219>}Genesis 21:9) the Hebrew word there made use of is in allusion to Isaac's name, which signifies “laughter”: and Ishmael laughed at him, jeered and derided him. The Jewish doctors are divided about the sense of this: some say that the word rendered “mocking” is expressive of idolatry, according to (^{<0236>}Exodus 32:6) and that Ishmael would have taught Isaac, and drawn him into it; others that it signifies uncleanness, according to (^{<0317>}Genesis 39:17) and that he talked to him in a lascivious and indecent manner, in order to corrupt his mind: others that it designs murder according to (^{<0124>}2 Samuel 2:14) and that he intended to kill him, and attempted it ^{f97}; it is pretty much received by them, that either he finding him alone, or they going out to the field together, he took his bow and drew it, and shot an arrow at him, with an intention to kill him ^{f98}, though he pretended it was but in play: and one of their writers on the text says ^{f99}, that the word used, by gematry, that is, by the arithmetic of the letters, signifies **gwrhl**, “to slay”; so that this persecution was not by words only, but by deeds: but others ^{f100} of them more rightly think, that it meant a contention about the inheritance, which Sarah's words to Abraham seem to confirm; and that Ishmael claimed the birthright, and despised Isaac as the younger son; insisted upon the right to the inheritance, and mocked at the promise of God, with respect to Isaac; and might threaten what he would do to him, should he claim it thereupon: mocking has been always reckoned a species of persecution; so the Old Testament saints, among

other instances of persecution, had trial of “cruel mockings”; thus our Lord was persecuted, and also his apostles

and even so it is now. The carnal Jews, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, persecuted the spiritual seed that believed in Christ, both by words and deeds; they confiscated their goods, imprisoned their persons, and even put them to death; and the false teachers, though they did not, and could not go such lengths, yet as persons fitly represented by Ishmael, they derided the apostles, and mocked at the doctrines of grace preached by them, and despised those that embraced them; and pleaded that the inheritance belonged to them, upon the foot of the works of the law: and so it is at this day; though there is no persecution of men's persons and estates, yet there never was a greater persecution of the doctrines of grace, and of the righteousness of Christ, and the saints more mocked at and derided for maintaining them; and that by persons just of the same complexion as those in the apostle's time, signified by Ishmael, carnal professors, and self-righteous persons.

Ver. 30. *Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture?* etc..] This is a Talmudic form of citing Scriptures, and answers to **harqyam**, “what says the Scriptures^{f101}?” the passage referred to is (^{<0210>}Genesis 21:10) and which are the words of Sarah to Abraham; but inasmuch as she spake them under divine inspiration, and they were approved of and confirmed by God, as appears from (^{<0212>}Genesis 21:12) they are ascribed to God speaking in the Scripture:

cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. There is very little difference in the citation from the original. The apostle omits the word “this” in both clauses, which though very proper to be expressed by Sarah, to point out the person she meant, and as being in a vehement passion, was not absolutely necessary to be retained by the apostle, since by the context there is no difficulty of knowing who is meant by her; though the Alexandrian copy has the word in it: and instead of “with my son, with Isaac”, the apostle says, “with the son of the free woman, Sarah”; there speaking of herself, whose character the apostle gives, in opposition to the bondwoman: in like manner a Jewish writer^{f102} reads and interprets it,

“for the son of this woman shall not be heir **hrybgh ^b μ[**, “with the son of the mistress”.”

The casting of Hagar and Ishmael out of Abraham's family was a type and emblem of the rejection of the carnal and self-righteous Jews from the Gospel church state; nor ought any carnal persons, any that are after the flesh, unregenerate ones, or that trust to their own righteousness, to be in a Gospel church; as they will also be excluded and thrust out of the kingdom of heaven, into which no unregenerate and unrighteous, or self-righteous persons shall enter. The Jews make this ejection of Hagar and her son to be both out of this world and that which is to come ^{f103}. The reason given why the one should not be heir with the other perfectly agrees with the Jewish canons; which was not because he was the son of a concubine, for the sons of concubines might inherit, if they were Israelites, and free, but because he was the son of a bondwoman, for thus they run ^{f104};

“all that are near of kin, though by iniquity, are heirs, as they that are legitimate; how? thus for instance, if a man has a son that is spurious, or a brother that is spurious, lo, these are as the other sons, and the other brethren for inheritance; but if, **h j p ç ^ m w n b**, “his son is by an handmaid”, or by a strange woman, he is no son in any of these matters, **l l k ç r w y w n y a w**, “and no heir at all”:

and again ^{f105},

“an Israelite that hath a son by an handmaid, or by a Gentile, seeing he is not called his son, he that he has after him by an Israelitish woman, **h k j n l r w k b**, “is the firstborn for inheritance”, and takes the double portion.”

The reason assigned for non-inheritance in the text implies that the children of the free woman, the spiritual seed of Abraham, shall inherit the privileges of God's house, the blessings of grace, and eternal glory; they are children of the promise, and heirs according to it; when the children of the bondwoman, self-righteous ones, shall not; for the inheritance is not of the law, neither are they heirs who are of the works of it; nor is it to be enjoyed by mixing the law and Gospel, grace and works, in the business of salvation.

Ver. 31. *So then, brethren,* etc..] This is the conclusion of the whole allegory, or the mystical interpretation of Agar and Sarah, and their sons:

we are not children of the bondwoman; the figure of the first covenant, which gendered to bondage, and typified the Jews in a state, and under a

spirit of bondage to the law; New Testament saints are not under it, are delivered from it, and are dead unto it:

but of the free; of Sarah, that was a type of the new and second covenant; and answered to the Gospel church, which is free from the yoke of the law; and whose children believers in Christ are, by whom they are made free from all thralldom and slavery; so the children of the mistress and of the maidservant are opposed to each other by the Jews^{f106}. The Vulgate Latin version adds to this verse from the beginning of the next chapter, “with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free”; and the Ethiopic version, “because Christ hath made us free”; and begin the next chapter thus, “therefore stand, and be not entangled”, etc.. and so the Alexandrian copy, and three of Stephens's.