

The Forty-Fifth Chapter

How God led *Abraham* very wonderfully, and how he always stood by him in Temptation, and defended him: What we are to understand hereby

1. **A**BRAMHAM must be only as a pilgrim upon the earth, and travel from one place unto another, and dwell in tents;¹ and was everywhere tried, and tempted. His wife Sarah was twice taken from him; but wonderfully protected and preserved of God; as once by Pharaoh, in Egypt, and then by Abimelech, King of Gerar; but both times protected by God.

2. And now that Abraham, viz. the stock and beginning of the conceived ens of faith, in which Christ was understood, must thus wander from one place to another, and could have no abiding place upon the earth, and moreover must stand in fear and temptation: the same is the true type of Christendom upon the earth; how the same should not be bound unto any certain place; not unto any people that God did choose thereto in a peculiar manner; but that Christ was given, with his Gospel of the kingdom of God, to all nations.

3. And how he would wander with his knowledge from one people to another; and have no where any constant abiding place with a people, but be among the nations with his children upon the earth, only as a sojourner or stranger; and how they would continually try to destroy Christendom² among the nations, and cast reproach upon it, as they would sinfully reproach Sarah, Abraham's wife.

4. And how the Christians should be continually tempted and exercised of the nations, and plagued with contention and war. Also, how Christ would go with his Gospel from one people to another, when they should be weary and glutted with the same, and hold it only for a custom and a common ordinary thing; and so they would grow wholly blind in it, and make only a fine devout lip-labour³ thereof, and suppose to find out Christ by their acute disputations and arguments.

¹ Gen. xx.

² The true Christians.

³ A work of prating and fair spoken discourse.

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5. And then he would depart with the understanding and spirit from them, and come unto another people, which also would be only fleshly, and account and look upon Christ externally, as a mere man; as Pharaoh and this king Abimelech looked upon Abraham, and his wife; and desired to have carnal knowledge of Sarah, by reason of her beauty; which did signify and denote, that they would put on Christ in the flesh in an outward bestial manner, but not in power and spirit.

6. As it is here to be seen in Abimelech, and also in Pharaoh, that when they desired to know Sarah carnally, that the Lord came in among them with punishments, and plagues, and shewed them his angry countenance, shut them up, and dismayed them, as if he bound them with the chains of his might; and made their women barren, and terrified them with visions and presages; as he did to this Abimelech, and threatened him with death in the dream; and made known unto him that Abraham was a man of God; and how he was blessed of God.

7. Through which means God brought the nations to the faith; [for] when he came unto a fleshly unbelieving people, then he shewed himself in power and wonders; which the carnal nations seeing, did convert themselves, and turn unto God.

8. Thus Abraham must be a type of Christ's kingdom upon the earth; and go up and down from one people to another, whereupon the people which he left, did yet boast themselves of Abraham, and called themselves after his name, but were only historical children, brought forth of strange women without Abraham's faith and spirit.

9. Thus also it hath fallen out in Christendom, when they have been weary of¹ the spirit of Christ; and made only a prating business thereof, the spirit of Christ hath then departed, and hidden itself from them; and then these people have indeed stood yet in the history, and boasted themselves to be Christians, but have been indeed only the children of the bond-woman, viz. of Hagar; and the sons of mockery, who, with disputing and wrangling about Christ's name and will, have mocked, scorned, reviled, contemned, reproached, and branded each other for heretics; and mere Ishmaelites have risen of them.

10. As it is as plain as the day, that now men go from the scorning and reproaching each other, to the sword of murder; and will wholly slay and root out Christ [in his members], and set the Babylonical tower in Christ's stead, whereby a man shall be able in self-will and

¹ Negligent of.

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power to climb into heaven; so that a man need not enter in through the mortifying of the old evil man, but may be able to come in, after a fine hypocritical way with the selfhood of the evil man; or indeed as outwardly adopted children covered with Christ's purple mantle; where yet the will of self is unmortified, and cannot truly come to God.

11. Now as these people were afterwards judged, when Abraham departed from them, they being only mockers of the children of Abraham, as may be seen in Pharaoh, and the heathen also, especially in the land of Canaan: so likewise it hath happened to the Christians, that these nations which continued only under the name of Christ, and yet were only heathenish in the heart, were always judged and banished by such heathenish people. As may be seen by Asia, Egypt, and Greece, and many other nations besides, how God hath pulled off the mantle of Christ from them, as verbal hypocrites and mockers of Christ, and given them a darkened heart and understanding of the kingdom of Christ, and cast away their candlestick, that they could no longer say, We are Christians, and belong unto Christ, but Turks, and barbarous people, begotten of the wild tree of nature.

12. Thus Christ must here in this world wander only as a light from one people to another, *For a testimony unto all people* (Matt. xxiv. 14). And unto thee, O Germany,¹ it is now shewn (and also to those nations of whom thou art born with the name of Christ), in that thou hast for a long time walked under the mantle of Christ with a heathenish heart, and boasted of the adoption, but lived only in the iniquity of the flesh: That thy judgment is nigh at hand.

13. For the angel of the judgment calleth aloud to the residue of Abraham's children in Christ, Go out of Sodom: Abraham in Christ is gone away from you; ye have no more of Christ than an empty breath; and a disputing verbal lip-labour; a mockery, whereby one brother doth contemn, scorn, and mock another for Christ's knowledge's sake, and only killeth Christ in his members. The city, Jerusalem and Babylon, wherein thou hast gloried [and proudly perked up thyself in thy devout hypocrisy] shall go to ruin. Amen.

14. Lo, a star shineth from the East and North, which shall blindfold thee, and break down thy walled towers and strongholds in Jerusalem and Babylon. For thou art called no longer, Jerusalem, but Babel; and the children which sit in the shadow of the night, and which lie imprisoned in Babel, shall be delivered; and come forth, and

¹ And to thee also, O England.

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enter into the city of God, which he hath set open to all nations and tongues of the earth, that his glory may be known: A light for all nations [or people].

15. The figure of Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech (Gen. xx) is an emphatical type of Christendom, how they should be weak in their own power, and be delivered by God alone; as Abraham was of a faint and timorous spirit, when he was to go among these nations, and prayed his Sarah, that she would say of him, that he was her brother; that so they might not slay him, for her sake. To signify, that a Christian in his own strength is not able to do anything, or to take unto himself therein the spirit of Christ; who gives courage; but he must go only naked among his enemies; and not at all rely on himself and his knowledge, but merely and only upon God's grace.

16. For he himself cannot stand, Christ alone in him must be his sole courage, and steadfast perseverance. As Abraham here, in his own abilities, was full of doubt before Pharaoh and Abimelech, and continually fearful of his life, and must see only when and how God would shield him and his Sarah. And this history is excellently, elegantly and exactly written of Esdras,¹ in the vision of the spirit of Christ concerning Christ's kingdom, as if the spirit had on purpose figured this history concerning Christ's kingdom, for it aimeth directly thereat.

17. But the outward man understands nothing of the kingdom of Christ. As we may see in Sarah, when she conceived and brought forth Isaac: she said, the Lord hath made me to laugh, the people will laugh at this, that the very aged Sarah should give a child suck. She did not yet understand the type² of Christ; but the spirit of Christ in her understood it; and not the natural man in selfhood, but the will which was resigned and given up to God, the same alone did apprehend the Covenant, and the spirit of Christ.

18. But reason, viz. the self-full will, did not perceive anything thereof, it was only matter of mirth and laughter to it; for it looked only upon itself, what it was. As Abraham's will of self-ownhood looked only on itself, and was afraid and dismayed; and yet in him there was the great might over all powers and principalities; but it did not belong to the human ownhood.

19. For Christ in his children doth not belong to the human ownhood, viz. to the self-will; neither doth he appropriate or give in himself to it; but unto the humble, resigned will; to that he doth

¹ Note, Esdras.

² Image.

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incline and appropriate himself; and sometimes he doth also defend the own will thereby.

20. For the own self-will is of the nature of this world, born of flesh and blood. But the resigned will dieth to the world, and is brought forth to life in God. Thus also we are to understand in Abraham and in all Christians a twofold will, viz. one of this world, which always stands in fear; and then, according to the second Principle, viz. the kingdom of heaven, the poor captive soul's will, which diveth and immerseth itself into God's mercy, in hope.

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