

## A Thought on Exodus 40 and Acts 2.

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Article 17 of 47 **Short Meditations**

(Cavenagh, 1866.)

The Tabernacle is set up in Exodus 40, the Old Testament house of God. The Lord enters it and adopts it. The Cloud rests on it, and the Glory enters into it.

So is it, though in another form, in the New Testament house of Acts 2. The Holy Ghost, as a rushing mighty wind, enters into it, and cloven tongues like as of fire sit upon it. This is the Lord, (though again I say in another form,) adopting this latter house, as He had adopted the former. The house was now a living house, and the Lord *personally* enters it, bringing with Him His gifts, symbolised by the cloven fiery tongues. The house of old had been a material, and thus but a *shadowy*, house, and the Lord had entered it as the Glory, the *expression* or effulgence of the Divine presence.

We have, however, in connection with these things that are kindred in the two houses, to mark a strong contrast.

As soon as the Lord had seated Himself in the Old Testament house, He speaks — as we find in the opening chapters of Leviticus, which immediately follow Ex. 40. But He speaks as One that was seated there to be worshipped or to be reconciled. If His people apprehended Him in any measure of His divine worthiness, they might accordingly bring Him a burnt or a meat offering. If they valued communion with Him, they might bring Him a peace offering. If they found their conscience defiled by reason of any transgression or short-coming, He was there to receive a sin or a trespass offering, that the breach might be repaired, and atonement or reconciliation perfected. He therefore announces the offerings and the sacrifices, and delivers the laws of them elaborately and distinctly, as soon as ever He has taken His seat in the sanctuary. This is so.

From the New Testament house, the Spirit speaks, in like manner, as soon as He has entered it. Through the vessels which He had now filled, He speaks — as the Lord God, of old, had spoken from the tabernacle of the congregation. (Lev. 1: 1) But here is the contrast. He speaks of "the wonderful works of God." It is not again of what man was required to do, either as a worshipper or a confessor; as when the Lord had spoken from the former house; but of what God had already done in behalf of man. Peter's words are a sample of this — and they rehearse God's wonderful works in Christ; how He had approved Him in the days of His flesh — how by His counsel He had been delivered up to death — how He had then raised Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven, and made Him both Lord and Christ.

These are among "the wonderful works of God," which the Spirit through His vessels was rehearsing, the works of God in grace to sinners; such as the ministry, death, resurrection, and glory of the Saviour of men. This is what the Lord of the Temple was now doing. He was not speaking of what either thankful worshippers or convicted saints had to do, but of what He, the God of salvation, had already done. Very fitting surely it is, that the blessed One should be worshipped and satisfied — served by our sacrifices of praise, and sought unto by our confessions and humiliations. Through the eternal ages of glory, it will be the grateful as well as fitting business of His ransomed creation to worship Him. But still, if there be the good thing, there is the more excellent thing even with God. in redemption He shines as with fuller glory than in creation — and as He has said Himself, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." So is it a higher thing, a New Testament thing, in contrast with that

which was Old Testament, to find Him preaching or publishing His deeds of grace for us, rather than announcing His rights and His demands to us and from us. — Surely again I may say, this is so.

Faith, too, I would add, has its good way and its more excellent way. I would illustrate what I mean.

There is a disposition in some of us, to keep the Lord before us as the One who has been rejected and cast out here, and is, during this dispensation, a heavenly Stranger, accepted on high as the One disallowed on earth, a martyr at the hand of man. All this is so surely; and good and healthful for the soul it is, to have this sense of things upon it. But if this become exclusive or even predominant, it will tend to legality and a spirit of bondage and fear. If the Lord be seen unduly in this light, it will dispose us to many an accusing, self-condemning exercise of soul; for we must surely find out how little worthily we are in living, practical companionship with this rejected Christ of God.

We must, the rather, cherish a disposition or tendency in our souls, to know Him in the grace which He is ministering to us, in the love that He has declared He has to us, in the eternal security which His blood imparts to our condition, and the sure and bright blessedness He is preparing for us. If the other be the good way of faith, this is the more excellent way. As He once revealed Himself, as we saw before, in a good way, and then in a more excellent way, first in the Old Testament house, and then in the house of the New Testament; so faith has to exercise itself towards Him in kindred good ways and more excellent ways, such as these.

In the course of the Divine reasoning in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are instructed to see the Lord in the heavens, in these two attitudes or characters. For He is revealed to be there, as "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool," having been cast out here; and as "the Purger of our sins," the accepted, glorified Friend of sinners, for whom the highest place in heaven is only good enough.

We should eye Him in both, surely I know — but in the latter attitude and character the rather — for this is the "more excellent way" of faith — the way, too, I might be bold to say, which is the more acceptable to Him. See proofs of this in the Canticles.

In that little book, the exercises of the soul are not characteristic of one that was striving to be an imitator or follower of Christ in His place of martyrdom among men, but of one who knows His love, and desires to know it better, ashamed of honouring it so poorly. Christ is there rather an *object* than an *example*. The soul is occupied in making discoveries of Him, and growing in the enjoyment of Him — and He is occupied in ministering those discoveries, and encouraging those enjoyments. And this He does, in surprising grace; telling us that He is making kindred discoveries of His saints, and tasting responsive kindred enjoyment of them.