

**“MY . . .
GUEST=
CHAMBER.”**

P. R. MORFORD.

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IV

“MY GUESTCHAMBER.”

I CORINTHIANS XI. 18-34.

THE TWO words in Mark xiv. 14, “my guest-chamber,” are extremely touching from the lips of the Lord Jesus, as He was about to leave this world. Those whom He had chosen to “be with him” had seen His service, when there had been “many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” But now when His disciples say to Him: “Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?” He sends two of them into the city to meet a certain man with the message, “Where is my guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?”

Though the supper is not distinguished in the first two gospels from the passover yet I think I see in the expression that the Lord desired a spot where He would be shut in with His loved ones with the symbols of death, and if this be so, it gives us a key to what we are familiar with in the first

Epistle to the Corinthians, that is, the Lord's supper. This is the subject before us to-night; but I would first call your attention to the words in verse 18, "When ye come together in church" ("the" should be omitted), for I take it the One who calls the saints together "in church" or in assembly is the same One who on earth said, "Where is my guestchamber?" And doubtless, as far as this chapter goes, they were convened by the message of the Apostle himself, who declares that what he had delivered to them he had "received of the Lord." Paul had had a special revelation from the Lord in glory as to the import of the supper, and I believe it was that which primarily convened the saints here in assembly. They have been convened once, and when we meet now it is the extension of that. And further, this revelation from the glory connects itself with the glory, for the apostle adds, "ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come.*" The One who has passed out of this scene through death is to return, and to return in the displayed glory of His kingdom.

Now what is this coming together "in assembly"? It is the doorway into the greatest possible privilege saints can know

while here. And if the Lord convenes us, it is evident that everything "in assembly" must take its character from Himself. The word "synagogue," so familiar to the Jew, had the meaning of a meeting-place—a place where they assembled to meet one another; but that is not the idea of the assembly—it is the Lord who calls us together, and it is He whom we go to meet. We get the word synagogue used in the Epistle of James, where he says, "If there come into your assembly [in the margin synagogue]," and I have no doubt he speaks ironically, for he was writing to Jewish Christians who apparently had not reached the thought of the assembly. There the Lord is supreme, and no one else, He gives character to the scene, it is His presence that marks it all. There all is in suitability to the *risen Lord*, and if we grasp that thought it would put our being in assembly on a very different platform for us. We should then understand that He must give tone to and regulate everything in that holy sphere.

Let us take a human illustration to convey what is in my mind. The sovereign holds a *levée* and he receives there certain of his subjects. But there at the *levée* everything, down even to minute details of decorum and

dress, is prescribed by the one who calls them together: what is to be done is not left to the discretion of those who come. I do not care for human illustrations in divine things, for they all fall short, still you will see the point—that all takes its character from the sovereign himself and the etiquette of the court has to be rigidly observed. So in the assembly all takes its impress from the One who is supreme there, that is, the *Lord*. How wonderful the grace! This is why it is called the Lord's supper, to shew we cannot trespass there. *We* cannot say this is right or I think that will do. *He* is Lord and absolutely supreme there—we cannot, we dare not trespass.

It has been rightly said that people are known by the highest company they keep. No higher company can be given to God's saints than that of our Lord Jesus Christ in resurrection. And is that to have no effect on them? Is it not to be known? They should indeed be characterised in every detail of their life down here by entrance to the highest company in the universe. Therefore chapter xv. tells us that "evil communications corrupt good manners." And where do the saints of God learn good manners? They must get them in His presence—court manners are necessary for the sovereign and

manners suitable to God must be found with His people. In no school of man can you learn manners according to God—they are learnt in the company of the risen Lord. The Corinthians had had good manners, but they had given their ears to false doctrine and had turned aside and their good manners had become corrupted. We can learn only from the Lord what is befitting Himself; it would be impossible to learn from one greater than our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only great, but gracious. When here in this world His every act was marked by divine grace; all that He did was of such a sort and done in such wise that they said, and truly so, "He hath done all things well," or rather beautifully; it was carried out in divine grace. Just in this way did He take His place in that house at Emmaus, blessed foretaste of the way in which He takes it now in the assembly, and they knew Him. "He was known of them in the breaking of bread": who else would have done it in that grace? And where did it lead them? To the place where they could come under His formative power—it led them to God's assembly on earth, to continue in the company of the One who could teach them down here what is divinely suitable.

It is well to get together and to tell God all

He has been to us and to recount His ways with us—we can all thank God, and I trust we do, for His mercies, but that is not the idea in this chapter. It is not our supper—it is the Lord's supper that calls us together, and it is He whom we come to meet—we draw near to find Him in the circle of "His own." We get it very beautifully in pattern in John xii. "They made *him* a supper"—it was His. Scripture presents the supper as the means whereby He would rally us round Himself that we may minister there to the heart of the risen Lord. In that way it is consolation to Him that during His absence we remember Him—call *Him* to mind.

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I would remind you of the great difference between chapters x. and xi. Chapter x. is the table; chapter xi. is the supper; and while God is in view in chapter x., Christ Himself is in view in chapter xi. The table is always there—the supper is eaten when the saints are convened. And between these two subjects we get the relative place of Christ to man, of man to woman, and of Christ to God. We find too that no longer have demons to be taken into consideration but angels. It was necessary that what is comely

should be made known before the supper is brought in, seeing the supper is the highest privilege afforded to saints on earth. There could have been nothing like it before redemption had been accomplished, and there can be nothing of the same character when the Lord's glory is manifested. It is our privilege, in this the night of His betrayal, to respond to His love and gratify the heart of the blessed Lord. Privilege is the thought of the supper, though responsibility flows from it; as with every privilege there is its corresponding responsibility.

Now the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup of consolation was not a wholly new thing any more than baptism. They had both existed in Judaism, but they are now stamped with an entirely new force. This statement may occasion surprise with some, yet we shall find it substantiated in Jeremiah xvi. where the marginal reading of verse 7 is "break bread for them," and the verse goes on to speak of drinking the cup of consolation. There was evidently a custom of this sort for the dead as remembering them. Now the Lord took up this known rite and endowed it with living reality, in that it is for *His* remembrance—His, who has been into death and the grave, but who has come up out of it, and we realise through the

supper in assembly what His presence is amongst us as "alive." "This do ye . . . in remembrance of me," for the calling me to mind. The supper too, as we noticed, was given from the glory, and had we no other directions than those stated in the three gospels we might hesitate, but there is great blessing in recognising that it was given to Paul from the Lord's present position of exaltation—it gives us our warrant for doing this often. "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come.*" From these words it is perfectly clear that the supper is to cover the whole period of the Lord's absence. Should it not affect our hearts that during this absence He invites His loved ones to His "guestchamber," His assembly, that they may learn how He has loved them and given Himself for them. He would withdraw them from the gloom that has settled upon the world into the light of His unchanging love. You will recollect how it is said when Judas went out from His presence, "And it was night." That is recorded to teach us that while this world was sinking into deepest darkness, inside all was brightness. That guestchamber was the anteroom from which they might pass into

all the glory. "Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall *straightway* glorify him."

Straightway—He is not to wait for the world to come to receive the glory, but God glorifies at once the One who glorified Him on earth, and they found that it was so. He must pass into death and they would pass, through the appropriation of His death, into all the appreciation and blessedness of that scene filled by Christ, where they would know Him not only as Lord but as Head.

There is another scripture (which, though perhaps some may think the application strange, yet has often been a comfort to me, so I pass it on) in Proverbs xxxi. 7: "Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." We come, perhaps, to the celebration of the supper burdened with our own thoughts, but in the presence of the risen Lord (not necessarily in the actual drinking of the cup) we are enabled to cast it off. We forget our poverty and remember our misery no more, and everything takes its colour for us from Himself in resurrection. He thus offers us in His death a place of oblivion and a new

way by which we may pass over into the place of light and joy which He occupies as the One risen.

Again, Paul says, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus . . . took bread." The dignity of the Lord is connected throughout with the supper. As Lord, everything belongs to Him, nor could it speak of Him as Lord had He not title to all. Thus when here He might have asked of His Father to send the heavenly armies to crush His foes. To this He had title, but He went instead into death: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) He laid aside every dignity that attached to Him as King of Israel that He might also take up His rights over us, the Gentiles.

Let us note, too, that it was "the same night in which he was betrayed" that He instituted His supper. We may affirm *we* could not have betrayed Him, but we have to learn that we each carry within us a Judas, and, recognising it, to say: Only of God's grace are we preserved from such depths.

How solemn, then, to have part in this supper. Can we wonder that it states,

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"? and again, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat for he that eateth and drinketh eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Are we surprised, or should it terrify us? Rather should it lead us to examine and prove ourselves lest we touch these things in a light manner. It involves constant self-judgment on our part, as we keep the feast of unleavened bread. (chap. v. 8.) We are thus continuously cast on the Lord, that we may worthily enter His presence and be there in liberty of conscience. We, in that way, drink and forget our poverty. What relief to have ourselves shut out from view and Himself, in abiding joy, filling our heart.

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In chapter x. we *break* the bread, but here we *eat* it. In weighing the difference in expression recently I have thought that the distinction lies in this: breaking the bread and drinking the cup is our own act and involves responsibility; in that way we become partakers of the Lord's table, and so express our fellowship; but, on the other

hand, the *eating* and drinking is appropriation—a taking home to myself the import of the symbols, and thus we discern His body. The one has an outward bearing—the other an inward. They do not represent material bread and wine to us, as by the Lord's own ordering they stand for His body given for us and His blood shed for us. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." If we take them in any natural, unthinking way, we do it unworthily and such an one "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." But if I eat the supper as bringing the Lord's love to my heart I discern His body.

Then what is incidental to the act is that we thereby "shew the Lord's death till he come." The Lord's death—the death of Him who has an absolute and incontestable title to everything in this scene and to the earth itself. So the saints, in recognising this and giving Him His place as Lord, are committing a positive act of treason against the present world-system. In breaking bread they avow that all the power in this world is usurped from the hands of One whose right it is to hold everything, and who eventually will do so. To own His Lordship is, in truth, to be treasonous to the world-system—not to its kings and princes, but to the system against whose usurped

power the Lord's supper is a standing witness. When it does discover the true character of this testimony it will utter the words, "Treason, treason," thus pronouncing its own doom, for the Lord will have come to take up His rights here. The type of this is given in the Old Testament. (See 2 Kings xi. and 2 Chron. xxiii.)

The whole question is one of loyalty to the Lord, and it is raised in our shewing the death of Him "whose right it is" till He come, covering thus, in this act of devotion to Himself, the whole period of His rejection. To turn our back on this privilege is to surrender loyalty to Christ.

The responsibility connected with the privilege is correspondingly great. If we fail to walk here in self-judgment, the Lord will most certainly bring in present chastisement. He will not judge us with the world, but will chasten, because He is Lord, and as such will suffer no indignity. Deep is the responsibility of having to do with Him in this character, and His rights must be paramount with us. But it is not of responsibility that I would now speak, but of the favour of having a place in His "guestchamber," itself the antechamber to the highest privilege. Though this is not developed here, we are brought to a spot where, as placed morally

beyond death, our old history is closed and
It is filled by Himself.

When thus assembled, we appropriate
His death that we may know Himself. The
actual presence there of the Lord, objectively
and living, is a fact of stupendous moment.
A divine mystery, we cannot explain it, but
we can enjoy its reality. It may be said,
however, we realise it only in our hearts.
We dare not thus limit it, for He Himself
said, "*I will come to you.*" This privilege
He has accorded to the whole church and as,
on our part, we are in suitability, we shall
discern its reality. He makes Himself
known to us and as He still, as once in
pattern for the present period, shews us
His hands and His side, our hearts embrac-
ing in thought the whole church and bow-
ing down in worship, enter on that to the
threshold of which we are here conducted.

Human language is inadequate to express
what He can there unfold to us. We can
be thankful, in one way, that no model has
been placed on record of such a meeting.
We might then be occupied with mere
correctness, but here the Head must guide
us. In the realisation of this, how guarded
would be our behaviour! In that august
assembly saints do not address one another,
nor do they take part on individual lines,

but He as pre-eminent holds all in His control. The privilege of eating and drinking embraces no less than the whole christian company on earth; it cannot be individualized, but we recognise it as the common privilege of all saints. We enter there into the love in which He gave Himself for His church.

Had we a due sense of the dignity of His person we should be wholly subdued by it. In His presence we learn "good manners"—what is suitable to Himself, and to the new order, of which He is the Head. Every subsequent meeting takes its character from His supper. He died to bring about a world which could come under the power of His "anointing," and He lives now to impress His character on all. When men die they are obliged to leave the administration of their wills to others, but He has died and lives again to administer His own testament. As the risen Man He addresses Himself to the hearts of His saints to draw them to His own "guestchamber" that He may lead them into the knowledge and enjoyment of divine affections and instruct them in the sphere of the new relationships that depend upon the name of Father. He invites them to "come and see" where He dwells. He who is in the bosom of the Father came

forth from the Father into the world, that He might, by His death and resurrection, make it possible for such as we to be introduced as His brethren into His dwelling-place of holy love—to behold His glory and the glory of the Father—to fall down and worship.

