

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

# Glasgow RPCS Newsletter



JANUARY 2018

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## Worship Services:

Lord's Day Morning: 11am  
 Lord's Day Evening: 6pm  
 Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 7.30pm  
 Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

## Upcoming Lord's Supper:

### Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb

Lord's Supper Preparatory Service - 7.30pm

### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb

Lord's Supper Preparatory Service - 7.30pm

### Sabbath 4<sup>th</sup> Feb

Prayer Meeting – 10am  
 Morning Service (Lord's Supper) – 11am  
 Evening Service – 6pm

The services will be led by Rev. Stephen McCollum of Stornoway RPCS, Lord willing.

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## Minister's Article

### *Some Thoughts on a Birthday*

No, it's not my birthday... These thoughts came before me recently in my reading.

Most Christians come to realise the value of devotional books. By that, we mean books which have been written containing short extracts from scripture along with some edifying exposition and comment. In their place, they are invaluable – but that place must never be in place of the Bible itself.

Many of these works, such as Spurgeon's 'Morning and Evening' and Oswald Chambers' 'My Utmost for His Highest' are very well known and need no commendation from me. On the other hand, a recent flurry of such works falling from the presses, designed for those with little time, are all too often of little enduring worth.

However, for depth of thought, spirituality of mind, richness of experience and beauty of expression, I know of no work to equal that of William Jay – a Baptist minister in Bath, who ministered in the Argyle chapel there for over 60 years from 1791 until his death in 1852. His 'Morning and Evening Exercises' are well worthy of your investment of both time and money.

I am frequently arrested by his comments and I thought it might be useful to share the one I read the other day. Most of my articles in this magazine will often be concerned with matters which might sometimes be of a technical nature or even controversial – matters which are not always easy to bring into the pulpit but which nonetheless require treatment of some kind. However, I propose from time to time, to bring more devotional matters to the fore – and it is not out of place to allow someone else's words to speak for me on some occasions.

Here, with a minimum of editing, is what Mr Jay had to say on the following text of scripture, scheduled for our reading and meditation on January 14<sup>th</sup>:

*'And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants' (Genesis 40:20).*

'If the chief butler had been falsely, and the chief baker had been justly accused, the providence

of God was now seen in the clearing of the one, and the punishment of the other. If both were either equally innocent or guilty, here was an instance of the arbitrariness of a prince who probably prided himself in his absolute authority, and in having it said, 'Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive.' Or perhaps he intended to show his subjects that he would be known both in the exercise of mercy and judgment. The season was *his birthday*.

The birthday of princes has been anciently and generally solemnized as a token of the respect due to their sovereignty: but it has often been abused, and given rise to wickedness and mischief. We see this in the case of Jeroboam. At the commemoration of his birth, intemperance rioted; and the intoxication of the king himself injured his health and made him forget his dignity in his joining with low buffoons and jesters: 'In the day of our king, the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorers.'

And was it not so on a similar occasion with Herod? 'Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, high captains, and chief estates in Galilee'; the daughter of Herodias danced, the King was excited – and John was beheaded!

But in almost every rank of life, the usage prevails, of persons observing with some degree of festivity the day of their birth. The thing is lawful in itself *if it be used lawfully*. It may be used profitably. But as well as a day of congratulations, our pious forefathers made of it a day of pious feeling and regard.

And surely it should be made, first, a day of thanksgiving – to the Author and Giver of life for our being; for the place we occupy in the scale of creation; for the country and family in which we were brought forth; for our civil and religious advantages and for our preservation through so many perils and when so many have been cut off.

And surely it should be made a day of humiliation – that we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us; that we went astray from the womb; that our transgressions are innumerable, that our trespass is gone up into the very heavens – and that we have not improved as we ought to have done, any of our privileges: 'I do remember my faults this day.'

And surely it should be made a day of reflection – that as there is a time to be born, so there is a time to die; that so much of life is already passed away as a shadow; that when a few years are come, we shall go the way whence we shall not return; that our continuance here is as uncertain as it is short; that we may never see this day again – and if we do not, where shall we be when it returns?

And surely it should be made a day of prayer – that we may so number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom; that we may obtain pardoning mercy and renewing grace; that we may be prepared for all the duties and trials that lie before us; that ‘whether we live, we may live unto the Lord, or whether we die we may die unto the Lord’; so that, living and dying, we may be the Lord’s.

Happy they who, without complaining of their lot, or being impatient to be gone, yet know the day of their death is better than the day of their birth. Though for them to live is Christ – yet, to die is gain. Every returning birthday tells them, ‘So much nearer your heavenly home.’

But how dreadful the state of those who know, and if they consider they must know, that every year advances them so much away from all they love; and brings them so much nearer a world in which they have no hope, so after which they can have no desire. If conscience be not stupified, and all thought banished by company and gaiety, a birthday to them is far from enviable: verses may be written, speeches may be received, smiles may be put on – but even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

What a difference in the two following references to their birth made by the individuals concerned:

**VOLTAIRE** (the famous atheist):

‘Who can, without horror, consider the whole world as the empire of destruction? It abounds with wonders; it also abounds with victims. It is a vast field of carnage and contagion. Every species is without pity pursued and torn to pieces through the earth, and air, and water. In man there is more wretchedness than in all the other animals put together. He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoys a transient good, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This knowledge is his fatal prerogative: other animals have it not. He spends the transient moments of his existence in diffusing the miseries which he suffers: in cutting the throats of his fellow-creatures for pay, in cheating and being cheated, in robbing and being robbed, in serving that he might command; and in repenting of all he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches equally criminal and unfortunate, and the globe contains carcasses rather than men. I tremble at the review of this dreadful picture to find that it contains a complaint against Providence itself; **AND I WISH I HAD NEVER BEEN BORN.**”

Now let us hear the language of an excellent man who died as he lived, full of confidence in God.’

**HALLYBURTON:**

'I shall shortly get a very different sight of God from what I have ever had, and shall be made meet to praise him for ever and ever. Oh, the thoughts of an incarnate Deity are sweet and ravishing. Oh, how I wonder at myself that I do not love him more, and that I do not admire him more. What a wonder that I enjoy such composure under all my bodily pains, and in the view of death itself. What a mercy that, having the use of my reason, I can declare his goodness to my soul. I long for his salvation; I bless his name I have found him, and die rejoicing in him. O blessed be God that I was born! Oh, that I was where he is! I have a father and mother, and ten brothers and sisters, in heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. Oh, there is a telling in this providence, and I shall be telling it for ever! If there be such a glory in his conduct towards me now, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne! **BLESSED BE GOD THAT EVER I WAS BORN!**'

These words, on account of their plainness and profundity, are best left without comment.

*Rev. Kenneth Stewart*



## Spotlight On...

# Congregational Meal



On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January we gathered together in the church hall for a congregational buffet. It was a great way to start the year, spending time with our brothers and sisters in the Lord, as well as meeting new people. Some members of the congregation were able to bring family and friends along. It was great to see so many people there, getting to know one another and enjoying fellowship together.

The evening served as a reminder of the Lord's goodness to us — providing for our every need and granting us companions in this life for the mutual encouragement of our souls. As we closed the evening with worship, our minister encouraged us to set our focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ in the year that lies ahead — He who is 'the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last' (Revelation 22:13).



At the meal, flyers were handed out for two upcoming evangelistic meetings here at the church — **An Introduction to the Christian Faith:**

A twenty-five minute presentation, followed by a 30 minute open Q&A, then tea and coffee. All welcome!

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> Feb, 7.30pm: 'The Bible — is it worth reading?'**

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb, 7.30pm: 'Jesus - is he worth knowing?'**

## Insight into...

### *The Shorter Catechism*

By Euan Macpherson



Many of you will probably associate this document, produced by the Westminster Assembly, with the teaching of our young folk in Sabbath schools and homes. Interestingly, a quote from Alexander Whyte's exposition of the catechism adds that it was also written with 'the uneducated layman' in mind. My copy of the Shorter Catechism brings the young and not so young together with one brief statement:

*'A manual of doctrine for both children and adults requiring an introduction to the Christian faith.'*

However, it was clear from my first examination of this 'manual', about 10 years ago, that what I required was a *re*-introduction to the Christian faith! Faith requires content and it was obvious that there was much foundational doctrine I was unclear about and some I frankly did not know. The preaching of the Word that I was starting to receive at that time had also exposed my negligence in reading the Word, with a resulting poor knowledge of Scripture.

The great surprise that came from my initial readings of the catechism was the discovery that it contained a very large section devoted to the Ten Commandments. I had regarded the Decalogue as setting before us an impossible ideal that surely belonged to Old Testament times – were not the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) the guideline for today's Christians, living in a modern world? A decade ago I'd lost sight of the commandments in a fog of confused thinking – or should I say, worldly thinking and ignorance?

The catechism's simple layout of each commandment started to clear the mist:

1. The scriptural wording of each Commandment
2. What it bids us do
3. What it forbids
4. The special reasons or motives for its observation (annexed to the first five)

Charles Spurgeon said:

*'[A sinner] will never receive grace until he trembles before a just and holy law.'*

These words from John Bunyan are well worth repeating too:

*'The Man that does not know the nature of the law cannot know the nature of sin, and he that does not know the nature of sin cannot know the nature of the Saviour.'*

A second surprise was to come several months after my introduction to the catechism, when Mr Stewart challenged the congregation to consider how many people in Partick knew what the chief end of man was ('to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever') — the answer: 'very few'. I remember thinking that at least I was now familiar with this opening question of the catechism... or was I?

Recently, and particularly since starting to prepare this article, this question has kept coming to the forefront of my mind. As soon as the question is posed, the answer automatically slips into place for many of us, but for the Christian, does that answer not then beg the question: 'How am I doing?' This is personal! It is good for me to ask this in order to check how I'm doing, night or day, wherever I am or whatever I'm doing, and to remember whom it is I serve and represent. God may be hidden from sight but I have the comfort and assurance from his 'only rule to direct us' (the Word of God) that He will 'never leave me nor forsake me' (Joshua 1:5).

Surely we can't leave this first question of the catechism without pondering the following two quotations from Alexander Whyte's exposition:

*'What is the final cause and chief end of man? Moral philosophy can put this question but it is a theology drawn from the Holy Scriptures that alone supply the answer.'*

*'The Westminster divines who drew the document were deeply-read and scholarly men: 'it is perhaps new to some of our readers to be told that the profound distinctions of an Aristotle and a Bacon are employed in the construction of that humble primer called 'The Shorter Catechism' (Macfarlan's Preface to Paterson's Catechism).'*

It might be interesting to conclude with a quick glance into Scottish covenanting history and look at three excerpts from the memoir of James Nisbet (1667-1728). During the Pentland Rising



of 1666, his father, John Nisbet, was badly wounded but survived and was to become a wanted man by the authorities. For safety, during his pre-teen years, James was concealed among other families but this separation from his parents exposed him to ungodly influences:

*'Upon account of which I gave up in a measure my foolish and wicked companions and restricted myself to as narrow a compass of retiredness as my circumstances would admit. I plied close to the reading of my catechism and Holy Bible.'*

On the run during his teens in these 'Killing Times', Nisbet was to escape death on many occasions. In 1683, he lost his mother and sister, as the whole family suffered under the extreme deprivations experienced by the persecuted. His father was executed in the Grassmarket in 1685. In 1687, in a remote part of the country, he set out for himself a 'scriptural perspective glass' — containing five points for his guidance and preservation. This is part of number three:

*'I am to continually search the Scriptures, Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Mr Durham's exposition on the Ten Commandments. From these [I am] to learn through grace to know what is sin and what is duty, what is to be believed and practiced.'*

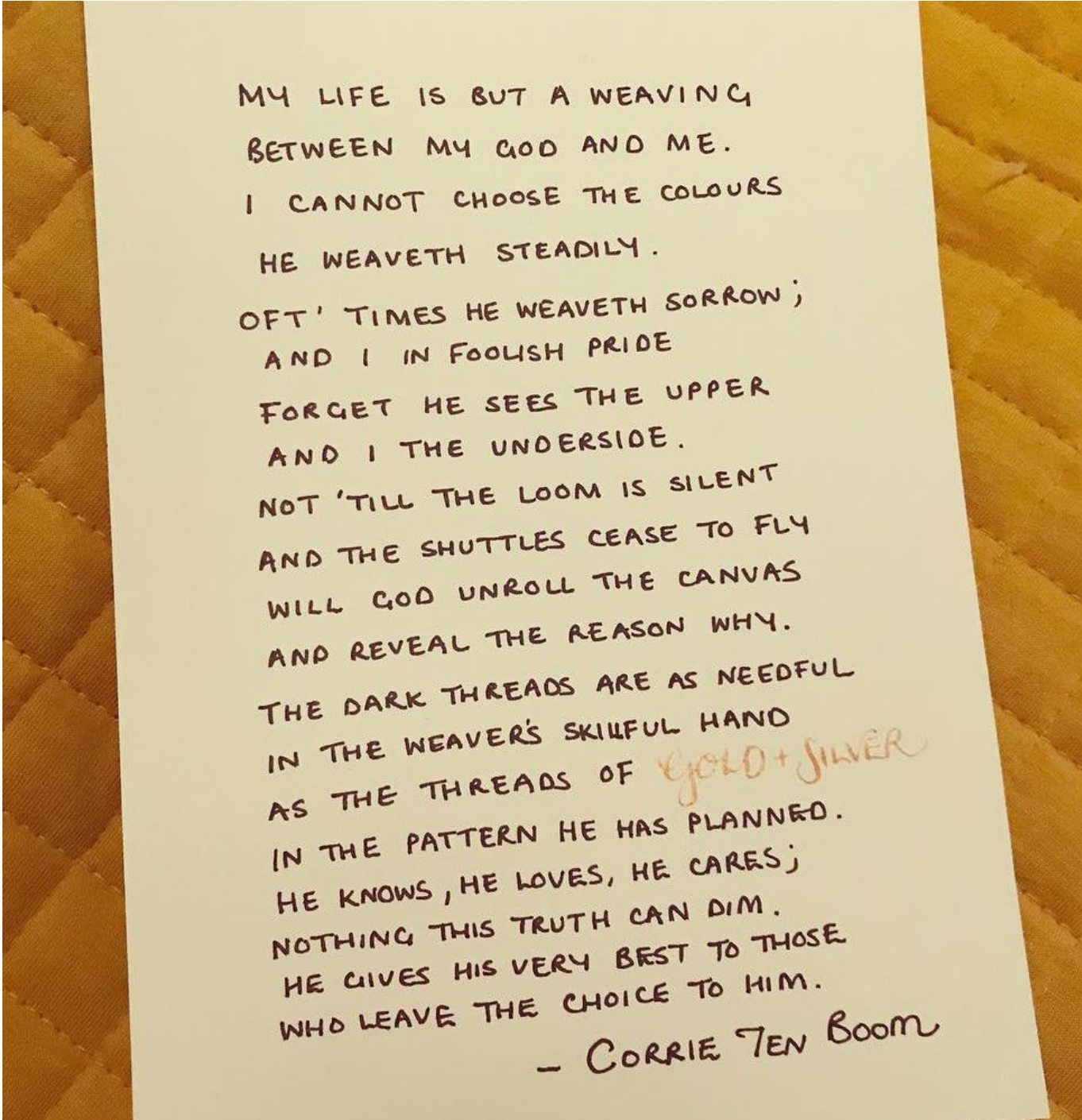
During the Revolution Settlement, he left the society people and, after much reluctance, friends persuaded him to attend the preaching of the gospel in the Church of Scotland. His memoir of that period is fascinating and I'll leave you with a final quote from it:

*'I wrestled through all the reign of Great King William and Queen Anne, enjoying the gospel clearly and faithfully preached by several worthy ministers to the great edification and comfort of my soul, meditating frequently on the Scriptures and repeating weekly the Shorter Catechism to myself.'*

(Quoted from *Our Covenant Heritage* by Edwin Nisbet Moore, published by Christian Focus).

## The Weaver's Loom

At the turn of the year, one of our members took a moment to write out Corrie ten Boom's well-known poem – a timely reminder for all the Lord's people...



MY LIFE IS BUT A WEAVING  
BETWEEN MY GOD AND ME.  
I CANNOT CHOOSE THE COLOURS  
HE WEAVETH STEADILY.  
OFT' TIMES HE WEAVETH SORROW;  
AND I IN FOOLISH PRIDE  
FORGET HE SEES THE UPPER  
AND I THE UNDERSIDE.  
NOT 'TILL THE LOOM IS SILENT  
AND THE SHUTTLES CEASE TO FLY  
WILL GOD UNROLL THE CANVAS  
AND REVEAL THE REASON WHY.  
THE DARK THREADS ARE AS NEEDFUL  
IN THE WEAVER'S SKILLFUL HAND  
AS THE THREADS OF *GOLD + SILVER*  
IN THE PATTERN HE HAS PLANNED.  
HE KNOWS, HE LOVES, HE CARES;  
NOTHING THIS TRUTH CAN DIM.  
HE GIVES HIS VERY BEST TO THOSE  
WHO LEAVE THE CHOICE TO HIM.  
- CORRIE TEN BOOM

## The Lord's Supper

As we hope to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first Lord's Day in February, 'Approaching the Lord's Table as a Bride' provides a useful perspective...

— Reformation Scotland

<http://www.reformationscotland.org/blog/2017/01/13/approaching-the-lords-table-as-a-bride/>

**Do we take the Lord's Supper as seriously as we ought? Communion is not high on the list of trending issues in evangelicalism today. Some have a casual attitude towards it. In many evangelical churches the Lord's Supper is tacked on to the end of a service and quickly dispatched. In some cases, perhaps the congregation has forgotten it would be administered before they arrived at the service. Do we take it as seriously as God does? Should we give it any less importance than a bride gives to her wedding day?**

Perhaps that it is a startling comparison to many. This is the striking and unusual picture used by William Guthrie. He unfolds it in a way that takes us into a serious consideration of the Lord's Supper. It is a memorable way of thinking about how we should prepare for it and what we should expect in it.

The Lord's Supper is a means of grace that nourishes the soul. We do not mean by this the unbiblical notion that mere eating and drinking automatically bring grace. Rather, like the Word it is an appointed means that the Holy Spirit uses to bring blessing to us so that we grow in grace. Scripture teaches that the Lord's Supper involves communion with Christ enjoyed in the present (1 Corinthians 10:16). It is not just a remembrance of what took place in the past, though there is more to such commemoration than some assume. Remembering in Scripture involves not just a mere act of recollection but affectionate remembrance of something/someone with ongoing application of its significance.

### Christ's People are His Bride

We are familiar with believers being described as the bride of Christ in Scripture (2 Cor. 11:2;

Eph 5:25-27). In his classic book *The Christian's Great Interest* William Guthrie makes use of this in relation to faith in Christ. "A man must be sincere, and without guile, in closing with Christ...not hankering after another way". It must be a heart and not only a head matter: "the man not only must be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it, loving and liking the thing...so that 'it is all a man's desire', as David speaks of the covenant".

*'If a man be cordial and affectionate in any thing, surely he must be so here in this 'one thing that is necessary'. It must not be simply a fancy in the head, it must be a heart-business, a soul-business...not, a business in the outer court of the affections, but in the flower of the affections, and in the innermost, cabinet of the soul, where Christ is formed. Shall a man be cordial in any thing, and not in this, which comprises all his chief interests and his everlasting state within it? Shall "the Lord be said to rejoice over a man as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride," and to "rest in his love with joy?" and shall not the heart of man go out and meet him here? The heart or nothing; love or nothing; marriage-love, which goeth from heart to heart; love of espousals, or nothing: "My son, give me thine heart.'"*

## The Lord's Supper is for Christ's Bride

Thus Guthrie describes in Scriptural language how the soul enters into a marriage contract or covenant with Christ. The Lord's Supper is a renewal and confirmation of that covenant and our vows. It is natural, therefore, to think of the Lord's Supper as one of the special ways in which the heavenly bridegroom enjoys fellowship with His bride. As Thomas Watson puts it: "the saints so rejoice in the Word and sacrament, because here they meet with their Husband, Christ".

*'The wife desires to be in the presence of her husband. The ordinances are the chariot in which Christ rides, the lattice through which he looks forth and shows his smiling face. Here Christ displays the banner of love (Song 2:4). The Lord's Supper is nothing other than a pledge and earnest of that eternal communion which the saints shall have with Christ in heaven. Then he will take the spouse into his bosom. If Christ is so sweet in an ordinance, when we have only short glances and dark glimpses of him by faith, oh then, how delightful and ravishing will his presence be in heaven when we see him face to face and are for ever in his loving embraces!'*

1 Corinthians 11:29 speaks of the danger of "eating unworthily" i.e. in an unworthy manner. This means that we must give serious attention to the way that we partake of the Lord's Supper.



The Larger Catechism in Q174 deals with how the Lord's Supper should be received. It stresses reverent attentiveness, those who partake should: "diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings". Vigorously stirring into activity graces within such as love and resolute faith also involves:

*'judging themselves, and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fullness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.'*

William Guthrie addressed some of these aspects in describing the believer's approach to the Lord's Table in terms of a bride on her wedding day. He has given a memorable picture with which to associate some of these things. A bride is not only full of love and anticipation on her wedding day, she is fully prepared for and engaged in all that takes place. The following are some of the comparisons Guthrie makes.

Would a bride be careless about whether she and her dress are clean? Any bride wants to look her best. In the same way a believer should not be going to the Lord's Table careless about unconfessed sin in their lives and not seeking to leave them and put them to death.

Would a bride be sleepy at her wedding ceremony? It is too important to her to be only half-awake to what is taking place. The very excitement of the occasion makes it impossible. This is how it should be for a believer approaching Christ in the Supper.

Would a bride be distracted and give her attention to anything other than her bridegroom and the significance of the ceremony? It is even more strange for a believer to be distracted from the heavenly bridegroom and all that is offered in the Supper. What more important thing could the mind and heart consider?

Would a bride be diffident and reluctant to come to be married or to look at her bridegroom? Yet some believers draw back and are reluctant to come to Christ's Table because of doubts about themselves and their salvation. But as the Larger Catechism shows in Q172, the Lord's Table is for weak and doubting Christians so that they can be strengthened.

### **A dirt-stained bride is unbecoming**

In approaching the Table of the Lord, remember it is unbecoming that in the day and hour of espousals the bride should be dirty. It is not becoming for her to have known spots on her which she does not attempt to put off. It is true, at first Christ taketh a dirty bride by the hand, and often has to wash her afterwards. But now in this solemn confirmation of marriage, a filthy bride with known iniquity cleaving to her (with her consent) is a dreadful thing.

### **A drowsy bride is shameful**

A drowsy bride is shameful when so solemn a transaction is being carried out before so many witnesses. It is not a good sign to be sleepy and drowsy. It is true that the three disciples slept and were very heavy very soon afterwards in a great crisis. But that was the forerunner of a sad defection.

### **A distracted bride is unseemly**

To be distracted and have your attention diverted on such a solemn occasion is a sign of rank corruption. It shows little awe of God and small esteem of Christ Jesus. How unseemly it would be for a bride in the presence of her bridegroom to dally with other things – even if they were gifts received from the bridegroom himself! She is going to give her marriage consent, or ratify it before witnesses.

### **A diffident bride is very unseemly**

It is very unseemly to be diffident towards the Bridegroom at the very time when He has called all His friends together to be witnesses of what He has done and said for her. He is communicating to her the highest, clearest and surest pledge of love He can, putting His great Seal to all the charters of the Covenant which are read over and over. After all this to look down and be jealous and to say in your heart, “He is but mocking me” is a great provocation. Be not therefore unbelieving but believing.



## A prepared bride

The Lord's Supper requires self-examination and due preparation (1 Corinthians 11:28). Any bride makes great preparation for her wedding day, she plans for nothing else so fully and thoroughly as this. Does the Lord's Supper in its special communion with the Heavenly Bridegroom not require more preparation than we commonly give it? These considerations about repentance, love and careful attention apply to preparation also.

The Larger Catechism dwells on how to prepare for the Lord's Supper as well as how to receive it. In Q171 it stresses preparation through examining ourselves in relation to various matters:

- Whether we are in Christ (2 Corinthians 13:5);
- Our sins and shortcomings (1 Corinthians 5:7);
- Whether our understanding is true and adequate (1 Corinthians 11:29);
- Repentance after examining ourselves by God's requirements (1 Corinthians 11:31);
- Love to God (1 Corinthians 10:16);
- Love to others (1 Corinthians 11:18);
- Forgiveness towards others (Matt 5:23-24);
- Desires for Christ (John 7:37);
- New obedience (1 Corinthians 5:7-8);
- Renewing the exercise of grace (Hebrews 10:21-22,24);
- Serious meditation (1 Corinthians 11:24-25);
- Fervent prayer (2 Chronicles 30:18-19)

## Conclusion

Guthrie's analogy is helpful in encouraging higher views of the Lord's Supper and how we should best profit from it spiritually. It reflects the Scriptural emphasis of the Larger Catechism on reverent attentiveness, repentance, love and faith amongst other spiritual exercises. It is a means of blessing for grace being stirred up into activity. Surely there would be a higher spiritual temperature amongst believers if we took these things to heart and put them into practice.

**RP Global**

The international RP Holiday Conference will be held in Ireland in July – if you're interested, you can find all the relevant information on the poster below...

**GOLD COAST  
INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAY  
CONFERENCE**

**14-21 JULY 2018**  
**PSALM 138 - REV MATT KINGSWOOD**

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**CLOSING DATE: 28TH FEBRUARY 2018**

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Other sources used: <http://www.reformationscotland.org>  
<http://www.goldcoast2018.rpc.org>

Glasgow  
RPCS  
Newsletter

January 2018

*“For there is one God and one  
Mediator between God and Men,  
the Man Christ Jesus”  
1 Timothy 2:5*