

Matthew Henry (1662-1714): His Life and Influence by Allan Harman, Christian Focus Publications Scotland, (2012) (65 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. A Summary of Puritanism

J. I. Parker gave a summary of what constituted Puritanism:

Puritanism ... was a total view of Christianity, Bible based, church-centered, God-honoring, literate, orthodox, pastoral, and Reformational, that saw personal, domestic, professional, political, church, and economic aspects of a single whole, and that called on everybody to order every department and every relationship of their life according to the Word of God, so that all would be sanctified and become “holiness to the Lord”.

Puritanism’s spearhead activity was pastoral evangelism and nurture through preaching, catechising, and counseling (which Puritans themselves called casuistry), and Puritan teaching harped constantly on the themes of self-knowledge, self-humbling, and repentance; faith in and love for Jesus Christ the Savior; the necessity of regeneration, and of sanctification (holy living, by God’s power) as proof of it; the need for conscientious conformity to all God’s law, and for a disciplined use of the means of grace, and the blessedness of the assurance and joy from the Holy Spirit that all faithful believers under ordinary circumstances may know. Puritans saw themselves as God’s pilgrims, traveling home; God’s warriors, battling against the world, the flesh and the devil; and God’s servants under orders to do all the good they could as they went along. (Page 11-12)

2. Allow Liberty of Expression

Philip Henry kept detailed notes of his sermons, though he often included hints that were enlarged upon in delivery. He advised other pastors not to tie themselves down too closely to their notes, but, if the preparation had been carefully done, to allow for liberty of expression when preaching. (Page 25)

3. He Tithed His Salary

He set aside a tenth of his salary for the poor and took a special interest in the education of needy families. One of his sayings in reference to giving was: “He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose.” (Page 25)

4. Philip Henry’s Life, Marriage & Family

During the early part of his ministry a sister kept house for him. After some time he became friendly with Katharine Matthews, the only child of a wealthy couple who lived at Broad Oak, a farm situated in the township of Iscoyd in Flintshire. Katharine’s father was opposed to his daughter and heir contemplating marriage with Philip Henry. Some of her friends were also opposed. They claimed that while Mr. Henry was a gentleman, a scholar and an excellent preacher, yet they did not know where he came from. “True,” replied Katharine, “but I know where he is going, and I should like to go with him.”

Ultimately true love prevailed and the couple were married on the 26 April, 1660. It was a marriage that was to last for over forty-six years and produce six children—John, Matthew, Sarah, Katharine, Eleanor and Ann. John died of measles when he was six, but the others were spared to grow to adulthood. (page 25-26)

5. The Lords Day Was Truly Easter Day

The Lords Day for Philip Henry was a true Easter Day, and he commonly greeted his family on the Sabbath morning with the words used in the early church: *The Lord's risen; he is risen indeed*. Though the family were going out to worship in church. He more extensive family worship than on the other days of the week. In the evening again a similar pattern of family worship took place. In further catechizing the children and servants he wanted to ensure that they did not just know the words by rote, and family members repeated what they remembered of the sermon on that day. The children also reaffirmed a baptismal covenant that he composed for them, each one saying:

I take God the Father to be my chiefest good, and highest end.

I take God the son to be my Prince and Savior.

I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide and Comforter.

I take the Word of God to be my rule in all my actions.

And the people of God to be my people in all conditions.

I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord, my whole self, all I am, all I have and all I can do.

And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and forever. (Page 34)

6. Philip Henry Was Home Educated

Matthew's home education continued till his late teens. He professed personal faith in the Savior, and his life commended itself to his parents and other friends. Those who knew him thought that in the future he would grow to be a notable Christian and that his gifts would be used in the service of God's church. (Page 45)

7. Matthew Henry's Education

At first Phillip Henry doubtless considered that, like himself, his son Matthew would go to university, most likely following in his footsteps and attending Oxford. However, as the years went by he realized that the university had changed, as the Christian presence had lessened since his own student days. While he had early on encouraged his friends to send their sons to university, later he changed his mind. He wanted to spare his own son Matthew from the snares and temptations at university, and hence kept him at home till he was almost eighteen. At that age, probably because he felt he had done as much as he could for Matthew's education, he decided to send him to London to attend the dissenting academy run by Rev. Thomas Doolittle (1630—1707). Academies such as this one were illegal institutions setup to enable boy from nonconformist homes to obtain the equivalent of a university education. In fact, they became more rigorous in

their teaching than the university of Oxford or Cambridge, and in particular they pioneered instruction in English at a tertiary level. Many of these academies also had in view the preparation of young men for the ministry, and in the course of time they become theological colleges preparing students for ministry in nonconformist churches. (Page 46)

8. A Good Companion Is a Good God

Matthew was further advised by his father that “a good Book is a good companion at any time, but especially a good God, who is always ready to hold communication with those that desire & seek communication with him. (Page 55)

9. Be in the Word as In an Inn

He wrote of us being “in the Word as an Inn, and must be done shortly”, and if our present lodging is hard and cold. „it is no great matter, our Lodging in our Father’s House will be soft and warm enough. (Page 62)

10. Effectual Calling Is the Work of God’s Spirit

Effectual calling is *a work of God’s Spirit* whereby, *convincing* us of our sins and misery, *enlightening* our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and *renewing* our wills he doth *persuade and enable* us to embrace Jesus Christ, *freely offered* to us in the gospel. (Shorter Catechism) (Page 71)

11. Digest Those Books You Have

At first Matthew Henry did not have all his library with him, for it was still at his parent’s home at Broad Oak. When writing to him on 28 November 1688, his father expressed his disappointment that he had not been able to get more of his books to him because of his horse’s weakness and the „foulness“ of the way to Chester. However, he gave him some good advice; “You must digest those you have the better; esp. the Book of Books; Study that most & your own heart & the people’s circumstances, & that wil doe much.” (Page 77)

12. Students Wanted to Spend Time With Philip Henry & His Family

Students who had gone through their studies at private academies wanted to spend some time with Philip Henry and his family before they entered into the ministry. When they came to stay, what he did was to impress on them the need above all else to be familiar with the text of the Bible. He reminded them of the maxim, *bonns textarius est bonus theologus*, “the good textual student is a good theologian“. He advised them to study Hebrews (they would have been already familiar with Greek, and Latin), and to use an interleaved Bible in which they could insert observations they came across in sermons and other books. When the young men arrived at his home he became their counselor:

You come to me [he said] as Naaman did to Elisha expecting that I should do this & other for you, and alas! I can but say as he did „Go wash in Jordan“ Go, study the Scriptures. I profess to teach no other Learning but Scripture Learning. It was but a little before he died that in reading Isa[iah] 50 he observed from v. 4. “The Lord God hath given me the Tongue of the learned”, that the true Learning of the Gospel Minister consists not in being able to speak Latin fluently, and to dispute in Philosophy, but in being able to speak a Word in Season to weary Souls. He that knows to do that well is a learned Minister. (Page 77-78)

13. To Discover What Are the Time Thieves of Our Time

The son gave good evidence from the outset, of ministry that he had listened well to his Father’s advice. His diary shows how assiduously he applied himself to his task as pastor, noting what visits he had made, how often he preached and from what text, the books he read, and his own spiritual state. Later, in a diary entry in the evening of the Lord’s Day, 9 November 1696, he noted that he had finished preaching on “redeeming the time” (Ephesians 5:16). He had pointed out to his congregation that it was very useful “to keep short Accounts every night how the day had been spent”. The purpose of this was to “discover what are the Thieves of our Time, and shew us what Progress we make in Holiness”. His advice to others was also meant to be taken seriously himself, and so he made this entry: “And why now should I not make the experiment?” (Page 78)

14. Money from Public Fasts Used for Poor People from Ireland

For some years from 1690 onward a national public fast was authorized on the second Wednesday of every month, from April till November. Matthew Henry observed these very solemnly. He preached at them and also very large offerings were taken up. This money was used initially for the poor from Ireland who had crossed over to England. (Page 80)

15. Alliterations from One Sermon

Certainly he was fond of alliteration, and though he did not employ it all the time, on occasions it made memorization of his main points very easy. Here is an example taken from a sermon dealing with the living God, a pardoning God. His headings were:

How *free* his pardons are.

How *full* his pardons are.

How *frequent* his pardons are.

How *firm* his pardons are.

How *forward* he is to pardon

How *faithful* and just he is in pardoning. (Page 95)

16. Sanctified Common Sense of Matthew Henry

In the special annual lecture of the Presbyterian Church of England for 1879, A. B. Grosart deals with the sanctified common sense of Matthew Henry, and in so doing drew

attention to the wit and brevity of many of his sayings. His judgment was: „It is the combination of wit and brevity and brevity with wit, that makes his Commentary such a racy and delightful reading, and so memorial. You recognize that the man says something because he has got something to say. (Page 96)

17. Henry Preached 20 years to Prisoners at Chester

For twenty years Henry also preached to prisoners in the castle at Chester. While many of them were there long-term because of debt, yet others were imprisoned for violent crimes and some were awaiting execution. At times not only were prisoners affected by his preaching, but others present were so touched that tears flowed freely. The gaoler's wife was the instrumental cause of him beginning this missionary. She was a religious woman, and had a deep concern for the prisoners, and especially noted that no preaching was provided for them. Because she treated them with tenderness and compassion they were ready to listen to the preacher who came as a result of her pleadings. (Page 97-98)

18. He Tried to Disciple His Congregation

From within the congregation he was discouraged when he sought to carry out any reproof or discipline. He investigated the fact in every case, and any reproof was intended to restore the offending person. Sometimes his approach to them was rejected, and instead they subjected him to personal attacks, denouncing him as uncharitable and severs. When this happened, it was, he wrote in his diary, a temptation to me to lay aside the personal charge, but I dare not. I cannot do it. My God will humble me. Let him that thinketh he standeth, or is thought by his friends to stand, take heed lest he fall. The Lord make it a warning to me and to all. (Page 102-103)

19. The best picture of a minister lies in the hearts of his people.

We know that Philip was of middle stature, and almost completely bald-headed. He refused to wear a wig, saying, "As long as I have three hairs of my own, I will never wear anybody else's." Some of his friends wanted him to have a picture drawn, but he would not allow it, maintaining that the best picture of a minister lies in the hearts of his people. (Page 105)

20. Henry's Writing of the Bible Commentary

On 12 November, 1704 he began to write his notes on the Old Testament, completing them in 18 July 1712. Then he worked on the New Testament, reaching the end of Acts on 17 April 1714. He was no spared to write any further, and others took over the task. They based their work on notes he had made, including almost complete ones on the Epistle to the Romans. Clearly he had also spent considerable effort on the book of Revelation. He left some brief jotting on other epistles and there were some short-hand notes of public and private expositions. In all four volumes appeared during his lifetime, starting with the Pentateuch in 1706, while he had just completed the fifth volume before his death on 22 June 1714. (Page 110)

21. Matthew Henry Prepared for Further Sickness or Death

From that period on, Matthew Henry's health was problematic. In his diary he often referred to health concerns, and his expectation of further affliction and possible death. On 1 January 1705 he wrote:

If it be the will of God that this year should be a year of affliction to me, a year of sickness or reproach, or loss; if my family should be visited, if my illness should be cut short, if public trouble arise, if any calamity should befall me, which I am least apprehensive of now, I earnestly desire to submit to the divine disposal....If it be the will of God that I should finish my course this year, let me be found of Christ in peace, and by the grace of God death shall be welcome to me.

Later diary entries confirm that he was experiencing major health problems in the closing years at Chester (Page 111-112)

22. His Congregation Boasted of Its Liberalism.

Thus a congregation that had enjoyed and had been blessed by Matthew Henry's biblical ministry for twenty-five years gradually moved its theological status to become a centre of Unitarianism. Crook Street Chapel, Chester, built in 1700 to contain the growing congregation that had gathered under Mr. Henry's preaching became a congregation that had boasted of its liberalism. (Page 121)

23. Matthew Henry died in 1714 at the age of fifty-two. (Page 123)

24. Diary Entry: Mr. Henry's Will to God.

Firmly believing that my times are in God's hands. I here submit myself, and all my affairs for the ensuing year, to the wise and gracious disposal of divine providence; whether God appoint for me health or sickness, peace or trouble, comfort or crosses, life or death, his holy will be done. (Page 126)

25. Asking for the Lord's Preparation, His Last

At the end of that year he wrote in his diary on 13 December (1713) "I am very well today tho' very ill yesterday: How is this counterchanged. Yet I am girding on the harness. The Lord prepare me for the next fit and the last." (Page 126)

26. The Lord make me busy while working time lasts. (Page 127)

27. Matthew's Reflections on Being Robbed

He was returning home from his catechism exercise on Tuesday 3 March 1713, when robbers caught him about half a mile from Hackney. They took ten or eleven shillings, and Matthew Henry reflected on his experience so that it would be a blessing to him:

1. What reason have I to be thankful to God, that having travelled so much, yet was never robbed before now.
2. What abundance of evil this Lover of Money is the root of, that four Men should venture their Lives and Souls for about Half a Crown apiece.
3. See the power of Satan working in the Children of Disobedience.
4. The Vanity of Worldly Wealth, how soon we may be stript of it, how loose we ought to sit to it. (pages 127-128)

28. Henry Was Very Conscious of His Activity (Diary Notes)

He was very conscious of his incessant activity, and sometimes in his diary he comments on it. For example, on one occasion he wrote on a Lord's Day: "I went in the Evening to open an Evening Lecture near Schadwel Church, and preached from Psalm 73:28. I hope, through Grace, I can say the Reason why I am so much in my work is, because the Love of Christ constrains me, and I find by Experience it is good for me to draw near to God."

Matthew Henry paid his **last visit to Chester in June 1714.** (Page 129)

29. Holy, Heavenly Life Most Comfortable Life

That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God and communion with Him, is the most pleasant and comfortable life any one can live in this world. (Page 131)

30. He Preached on Both Old and New Testaments Each Sunday

Within his congregation at nine o'clock on Sunday morning, in addition to psalm singing and prayer, he both lectured on a portion of the Old Testament (that is, gave an exposition) and also preached a sermon. The same sort of pattern was followed in the afternoon, though, he lectured on the New Testament at that service. During the course of his ministry at Chester he went through the whole of the Bible with his congregation more than twice. On Thursday evening he also lectured, and his exposition on Scripture questions took twenty years. (Page 138)

31. In Ill Health He Ministered Constantly

In spite of ill health (diabetes and kidney stones were among his ailments) he constantly accepted opportunities to minister in other chapels or meeting places. (Page 139)

32. Matthew Henry's Pattern of Sermons

In planning his preaching at Chester, Matthew Henry was very systematic. His first series of sermons was on the misery of being in a sinful state. He followed on with sermons dealing with conversion, and this took him two years. Then came a series of sermons in which he laid down the **biblical pattern of Christ conduct** expressed in **twenty statements** that he expounded with an appropriate text for each head. After that he wanted to bring comfort to God's people and therefore entered on his long series on the covenant of grace, in which he dealt in order with "God in the Covenant", "Christ

in the Covenant”, “The Holy Spirit in the Covenant”, and “Peace in the Covenant“. At the end of this series, as with all his other ones, he preached a sermon or two summarizing the content of the preceding sermons and recapitulating the main points.

(Page 139)

33. Henry Had a Mighty Warmth of Spirit

His friend William Tong said that he had “a mighty Warmth, of Spirit both in praying and preaching, which he would often, especially in his younger years, transport him into Tears, and raise the auditory to the same pitch of affection”. In his diary for 10 September 1699, Matthew Henry noted that he preached that day on Psalm 73:26, “Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none on earth that I desire besides thee”. He added:

I had some enlargement of Affections and I find some prejudice to my bodily Strength by my Over-earnestness, but I cannot help it, for I believe the Things that I speak to be true and great, and I would be in my Work as one that is in earnest. (Page 140)

34. Matthew Henry Followed the Puritan Method of Preaching

In many respects Matthew Henry’s sermons were typical of the Puritan period. The Puritans believed that preaching is vital in that it is the unfolding of God’s Word so that its teaching is plain to the minds of hearers. It is the principle way God has ordained of bring His life-giving Word home to humans. Zwingli began the practice of regular and consecutive exposition of Scripture, but it was the Cambridge Puritans who developed it most fully. Matthew Henry followed in their shoes as he opened up the Scripture to his hearers. (Page 141)

35. Use of Alliteration Makes Memorizing Easier

Analysis is the key to understanding, and the Puritans took up this point and utilized it with their orderly presentation of material. This was intended to make the matter plain to hearers and to help them to remember it better. Matthew Henry has been criticized for overuse of alliteration, but alliterated heading certainly made memorizing of main points of sermons very much easier. (Page 142)

36. Sermons Delivered with Simplicity Wonderful Phrases

It is not surprising that his preaching appealed to so many in his day and, being delivered with simplicity and wonderful turns of phrase, his sermons struck home to the consciences of hearers. (Page 143)

37. He Knew His Bible Exceptionally Well

He knew his Bible exceptionally well, referring constantly to other biblical passages. He studied the Scripture intently, and organized his materials methodically. Constantly he illustrated, not be lengthy stories, but by phrases and references that crystallized his points. Above all, he pressed home the truth to his listeners (and readers). He also

knew and utilized the great Christian writings from the early church down to his day. (Page 143)

38. To Have God Dwell with You, Daily Worship Him

To the wedding couple, Matthew Henry said: “If you would have God to dwell with you, you must set up and keep up, the daily worship of God in your families...Pray with your families. Read the Scriptures to them, and sing Psalms. (Page 144)

39. How to Grow in God

Grow upward in heavenly mindedness, grow downward in humility. Be pressing forward. The way to grow in grace is to use what we have. The Word is the means of our growth. Make daily use of it (2 Timothy 3:17). (Page 145)

40. Matthew Henry’s Sermons Still Available

There are sufficient sermons of Matthew Henry available to enable judgments to be made concerning them. They are testimony to a faithful gospel preacher, who, with a mind and heart set on things of God, sought to unfold the riches of Scripture. They are not just relics of the past, but will speak God’s Word to the present-day reader just as his *Exposition* continues to do.

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41. Matthew Henry’s Commentaries Are Still Popular After 300 Years

There is evidence that even three hundred years after his commentary was first published Christians are still using it, in spite of all the others available. This is what J. I. Parker has written:

For the record (though I do not suppose I am typical in this), modern expositions do not help me half as much as does Matthew Henry, the Puritan, and modern printed sermons do not suggest to me half as much as do those of C. H. Spurgeon and the sermonic writings of J. C. Ryle. (Page 147)

42. Several Questions Asked of Scripture of the Text

Though Matthew Henry did not personally sit at the feet of the great Puritans, yet his father Philip had, and so he was influenced by their approach. To understand their approach to the task of expounding Scripture they asked in essence several questions of the text:

1. What does the words actually mean?
2. What light do other Scriptures throw on the text? Where and how does it fit into the total biblical revelation?
3. What truth does it teach about God, and about man in relation to God?
4. How are these truths related to the saving work of Christ, and what light does the gospel of Christ throw upon them?

5. What experiences do these truths delineate, or explain, or seek to create, or cure? For what practical purpose do they stand in Scripture?

6. How do they apply to myself and others in our own actual situation? To what present and human condition do they speak, and what are they telling us to believe and do?

(Page 150-151)

43. The Gospel Is the Truth!

Preaching in the reformed tradition was the product of arduous mental exercise, and it was designed to provoke an exercise of mind in those to whom it was addressed. These men were concerned with truth. Their view of the gospel was that it is the truth “as it is in Jesus”, and it is therefore as truth that must be declared. Truth demands understanding in the preacher, and is addressed to the understanding of the hearer.

(Page 151)

44. Three Necessities in “Opening Up the Text”

Just as it is important to note the developments in exegesis work that preceded and influenced Henry, so the fact that the Puritan influence continued and in a sense came to a climax in the ministry of Charles Simeon (1759-1836) in Cambridge must also be noted. Whereas the Puritan spoke of „opening up the text“, Simeon spoke of bringing „out of the Scripture what is there“. There are three things that are indispensable in a sermon according to Simeon. First, there must be *unity* in design; secondly, there must be *perspicuity* in the arrangement; and thirdly, there must be *simplicity* in diction.

(Page 152)

45. Matthew Henry’s Six Great Principles

In commencing his great task Matthew Henry thought it necessary to spell out the six great principles that were his presuppositions. They were:

1. That religion is the one thing needful.

2. That divine revelation is necessary to true religion.

3. That divine revelation is not now to be found nor expected anywhere but in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

4. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were purposely designed for our learning.

5. The holy scriptures were not only designed for our learning, but are the settled standing rule for our faith and practice.

6. That therefore it is the duty of all Christians diligently to search the Scriptures, and it is the office of ministers to guide and assist them therein. (Page 153)

46. Their Position of Women by Both Henry’s

This means that Matthew Henry was exposed to his father’s education up to the time he went to London to study law in 1685. In addition he listened to his father expounding the Scriptures in the family all the time, as well as hearing him lecture and / or preach

on many Sundays. It would be most surprising if he did not pick up many of his father's expressions. This is confirmed by examination of the *Exposition* as compared with passages in his father's work. While the exact work from Philip Henry is much more restricted than that of his son, yet it is sufficient to help in this regard. Matthew Henry's comment on Genesis 2:21 is often quoted. This is what he wrote:

4. That the woman *was made out of the side of Adam*, not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

It is clear that he borrowed the idea here from his father. A manuscript survived of his father's exposition in the handwriting of Matthew at the age of twenty, and it was published in 1829. This is what Philip Henry wrote on this verse:

Adam lost a rib, but got a better thing out of it, even a help meet for him. Thus God uses [it accustomed] to deal with his children: they lose sometimes some of their creature-comforts; but then perhaps they get more of the Creator's comforts, and that's a blessed exchange. This bone was taken out of Adam's side, fitly nothing noting the woman's place, not of his head, to be above him; nor out of his feet, to be trampled on by him, nor from before him, as his better; nor from behind him, as his servant;—but out of his side; to be equal with him near his heart, for he owed her love; under his arm, for he owed her protection. Surely they forgot from whence the woman was taken, that carry themselves haughtily and abusively toward their wives. (Page 154-155)

47. Matthew Henry Was Well Prepared for Commenting on the Bible

These two factors (his father's training and his own ministry) worked together to produce a mind and heart well prepared for commenting on the Bible. They also explain the width of literature that he was able to draw upon and use fruitfully in his writing.

First of all, he was very familiar with Latin and Greek classical writers, such as Plutarch, Cicero, Seneca and Epictetus, and also the Jewish historian Josephus. From the church fathers he quotes writers such as Tertullian, Chrysostom and Augustine. He knew the Reformers and the post-Reformation writers, quoting Bishop Patrick, Daniel Whitby, Dr. Lightfoot, Joseph Caryl, George Fox and Joseph Hall. The comments of Hall (1574-1656), Bishop of Norwich, on the historical passages of the Old and New Testaments seem to have been very influential on him. For example, Hill wrote on 1 Kings 17:3-6: "O the strange caters for Elijah! I know not whether it has been more miraculous, to preserve him without meat, or to provide meat by such mouths." Matthew Henry picked up on this comment when writing of the ravens and calling them "caterers". Both father, Philip and son, Matthew, were well acquainted with the poetry of George Herbert and used it in their writing. (Page 155-156)

48. Matthew Henry Writings of His Commentary

On 12 November 1704 he began to write his notes on the Old Testament, which he completed on 18 July 1712. Then he worked on the New Testament, reaching the end of Acts 17 April 1714. He was not spared to write any further, and others took over the task. They based their work on notes he had made, including almost complete ones on the Epistle to the Romans. He left brief jottings on other epistles and there were also some shorthand notes of public and private expositions. In all, four volumes appeared during his lifetime, starting with the Pentateuch in 1706, while he had just completed volume 5 before his death on 22 June 1714. (Page 157)

49. His Work Habits & Birth of His 8th Daughter

His industrious nature was already clear from his ministry up to 1704, but his diary reveals how steadily he worked on his *Exposition*. It was practically a daily occupation for the last ten years of his life, and accomplished amidst all other pressures on his time. He was preparing the second volume when his eighth daughter, Theodosia, was born. With his wife in labor, he went to his study to carry on his work. His diary note was: Between two and three o'clock this morning, while my wife was ill [!] I retired to my study to seek God for her, and my children. Being willing to redeem time, I did a little at my Exposition, and Ezra 3 to the latter end, was before me, of the mixture of joy and sorrow; showing that the remembrance of former troubles ought not to drown the thankful sense of present mercies. (Page 161)

50. His Diary Notes Show the Progress He Made

Nov.12 [1704] This night after many thoughts of heart, and many prayers concerning it, I began my notes on the Old Testament. It is not likely I should live to finish it, or if I should, that it should be of public service, for I am not *par nogotio*, yet in the strength of God, and I hope with a single eye to his glory, I set about it; that I may endeavor something, and spend my time to some good purpose; and let the Lord make what use he pleaseth of me. I go about it with fear and trembling, lest I exercise myself in things too high for me. The Lord help me to set about it with great humility. (Page 161)

51. Recognize the Bible as the Word of God & Treat It Treat Way

In approaching his Scripture, Matthew Henry believed that we have to come to it recognizing that it indeed it is the Word of God, and treat as such. „Seriousness“ or „solemnity“ has to characteristic that marks our attitude to the text of the Bible. I writing about religion in the home he gave the instruction:

Read the Scriptures to your family, in a solemn manner, requiring their attendance on your reading, and their attention to it; and inquire sometimes whether they understood what you read. I hope you are none of you without Bibles in your houses, a store of Bibles, everyone his Bible. Thanks be to God, we have them cheap and common in a language that we understand. The book of the law is not a rarity with us as it was in Josiah's time. We need not fetch this knowledge from afar, nor send from sea to sea,

and from river to the ends of the earth to see the Word of God; no, the Word is near us.... It is better to be without bread in your houses than without Bibles, for the words of God mouth are and should be to you more than any necessary food. (Page167)

52. The Holy Spirit Must Lead into All Truth

In relation to the Old Testament, Matthew Henry encouraged his readers not to think the Old Testament as “an almanac out of date, but rather see it as is confirmed and illustrated in the New Testament. To read it aright, the Holy Spirit has to be the one who leads the reader into all truth. (Page 167)

53. Not Every Scripture Taught a Lesson

The task of explaining the meaning of the biblical text he likened to removing the stones from the mouth of the well. Application, on the other hand, is like drawing water out of the well. Not every verse of Scripture taught a lesson, but he considered it appropriate that he endeavored to mix with the exposition such hints or remarks as I thought profitable for, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, aiming in all to promote practical godliness, and carefully avoiding the matter of doubtful disputation and strife of words. (Page 168)

54. His Commentaries Have a Pastoral Touch

He wrote the commentary in the process of preaching, and therefore there is a pastoral touch to it. This sets it apart from many other commentaries. Just as his preaching ministry was coupled with prayer for divine help, so also his commentary was accompanied with petitions for help in its preparation and blessing in its use. It is a model of spiritual practicality. The content of the commentary was to produce spiritual change. (Page 169)

55. J. R. Parker Praises M. Henry’s Commentary

As a final summary statement of the quality of Matthew Henry’s *Exposition* and its continued value, let J.I. Packer have the last say:

Simple and practical in style while thoroughly scholarly and well-informed for substance, the Commentary remains an all-time classic, standing head and shoulders above any other popular exposition produced either before or since. (Page 170)

56. Matthew Henry’s Writing Ability

It is surprising that, in the midst of a very busy ministry, Matthew Henry was able to write so much. However, he was clearly very disciplined in his work, and made use of regular hours in his study as well as snatched moments to write a verity of work that was published either in his lifetime or later. (Page 171)

57. Matthew Henry's Doctrine of the Last Supper

As he set out the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he reverted to his oft-repeated practice of using alliterative heading to summaries his views: [The Lord's Supper] „was appointed to be a commemorating Ordinance, and a confessing Ordinance“. He expressed the general puritan view that it was not just a bear sign but an Ordinance in which Christ's benefits are communicated to believers:

Christ, and all his benefits, are here communicated to us. Here is not only bread and wine set before us to looked at, but given to us to be eaten and drank; not only Christ made known to us, that we not contemplate the mysteries of redemption, but Christ made over to us, that we may participate of the benefits of redemption. God, in this ordinance, not only assures us of the truth of the promise, but according to our present case and capacity, convey to us his Spirit the good things promised. (Page 178)

58. Live Dedicated Lives to God

The sermons (on paper) were on three appropriate passages (Psalm 5:3, *My voice thalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will direct my prayers unto thee, and will look up*; Psalm 25:5, *On thee do I wait all the day*; Psalm 4:8, *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety*). He wanted to make the point that communion with God is essential if we are to grow in grace and become more fitted to share in the joy of heaven. All those who go to heaven begin their heaven now. The sermons were practical in their orientation, and called upon Christians to live dedicated to God and in humble dependence on His grace. (Page 181)

59. He Was a Highly Systematic Pastor

If Matthew Henry had completed five volumes of his *Exposition* during his busy pastorate, this would have been considered an amazing feat. But to publish so many other works as well points to a highly systematic pastor and scholar. By spoken *and* written word he was ministering not only to his own day but to successive generations of Christians who have been blessed by them. The continual printing of Matthew Henry's writing is testimony to their worth. (Page 184)

60. Charles Wesley Copied Matthew Henry

It has often been noted that Charles Wesley's hymn „A charge to keep I have, a God to glory“, is based on Matthew Henry's comment on Leviticus 8:35, and uses many of his phrases. This is how the commentary runs:

We have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to serve, and it must be our daily duty to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord our Master, who will shortly call us to an account about it. (Page 188)

61. Scripture to Bring Readers to Faith & Wise unto Salvation

Matthew Henry never lost sight that the aim of the Scripture was to bring readers to faith, making them wise unto salvation. “The whole tendency of the work”, he asserted, “is to produce spiritual wisdom, an ardent love of holiness, and a conscientious and diligent regard to all the revealed will of God, in the performance of public and private duties.” (Page 194)

62. A Testimony to Matthew Henry from William Jay

A testimony to Matthew Henry’s worth as a commentator comes from William Jay (1759-1853). In his autobiography, when he discussed commentators, he wrote:

But for private and pious use I never found anything comparable to Henry, which, as old John Ryland said, „a person cannot begin to read without wishing he was shut out from all the world, and able to read it through, without stopping. (Page 194-195)

63. Spurgeon Wrote of Matthew Henry

In his Commenting and Commentaries Spurgeon Wrote:

First among the mighty for general usefulness we are bound to mention the man whose name is a household word, Matthew Henry. He is most pious and pithy, sound and sensible, suggestive and sober, terse and trustworthy. You will find him to be glittering, with metaphors, rich in analogies, overflowing with illustrations, superabundant in reflections. He delight in apposition and alliteration; he is usually plain, quant, and full of pith: he sees right through a text directly; apparently he is not critical, but he quietly gives the result of an accurate critical knowledge of the original fully up to the best critics of his time. He is not versed in the manners and customs of the East, for the Holy Land was not so accessible as in our day; but he is deeply spiritual, heavenly, and profitable; finding good matter in every text, and from all deducing most practical and judicious lessons. (Page 195-196)

64. Allen Harman Remarks of Henry

All references that occur are to be integrity of character and the grace that he displayed. (Page 201)

65. Allan Harman Writes of Matthew Henry

What he said shortly before his death, and which is beautifully illustrated in all that he did, was „that a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God and communion with him, is the most pleasant and comfortable life that anyone can live in this world”. (Page 201)