

## **Philip & Matthew Henry: 1631 – 1696 & 1662 – 1714.**

**Philip Henry:** Colossians 3: 11; *Christ is all and in all*. Chosen by one of Philip Henry's daughters, Mrs Savage; after his death from forty-one sermons based on this text. Henry did not publish any books during his lifetime but several handwritten sermons were left to his children. Each was to select one to be 'transcribed into their hearts and lives.' Henry's exposition of this text was not published until 1830. It tells of Christ in forty offices: the foundation, food, raiment, hope, life, truth, righteousness, propitiation, sanctification, resurrection, etc. Christ's sufficiency for the believer in all areas of life, with each chapter based on sermon notes. Several other books were also published.

**1: 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Monarchs;** Queen Elizabeth 1, died 1603, James VI Scotland & James 1 – 1625; **AV Bible 1611;** Charles 1, 1649 beheaded; Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, 1653 - 58; Charles 11, 1660 – 1685; James 11 – 1685 - 88, deposed in the Glorious Revolution, last Roman Catholic Monarch of England, Scotland and Ireland. His 15-year-old Protestant daughter Mary 11 married William of Orange, [known in Northern Ireland & Scotland as 'King Billy']; invited to take English throne, installed 1689. Battle of Boyne 1690. James defeated, exiled to France protected by Louis XIV. Mary died 1694 & William, 1702. Queen Anne of England, Scotland & Ireland, 1702-1714. In 1707 the Act of Union between Scotland and England formed Great Britain. 1710, St. Paul's Cathedral completed by Sir Christopher Wren. Queen Anne was followed by her third cousin, George of Hanover, George 111; 1714-1727. **Composers:** Corelli, born, 1653; Pachelbel; 1653; Purcell, 1659; Vivaldi, 1678; Telemann, 1681; J S Bach, 1685; Scarlatti, 1685, Handel 1685, Isaac Watts 1674 - 1748; **Plymouth Colony**, 1620; 1614-1648, Central Europe Thirty Years War [8 million deaths]; Great Plague of London, 1665 & 6, Great fire of London, 1666; Mount Vesuvius, 1666. John Owen (1616 - 1683), John Bunyan; 1628 – 1688.

**2: Great Ejection:** After restoration of Charles 11; St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1662, [Black Bartholomew] in co-sequence of the Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament in May that year, more than 2,000 ministers were 'ejected' or expelled from their churches, residences, and incomes because they would not conform to the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* as the uniform order for worship in the Church of England.

**3: Puritanism:** The term **Puritan** first used in 1560s of English Protestants who considered reforms under Elizabeth incomplete & wanted

more 'purification'. **John Flavel** (1630-1691) "The scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying." The Puritans understood that a mindless Christianity fosters a spineless Christianity. They taught that preparing to die is the first step in learning to live. Puritanism was a theological movement tied to the Reformation, Scriptures, Trinitarian theology, reformed church service, rights of conscience, stressed conversion; political involvement. When William of Orange became King in 1689, the Toleration Act was passed and 'the Puritan constituency had lost its power to be a movement in any meaningful sense and became a mixed bag of nonconformist congregations scattered up and down the country, marginal both to the Church of England and to England's national life.'<sup>1</sup>

**4: Philip Henry:** Born in Whitehall; his Welsh father a friend of Charles 1 and Philip a playmate of Prince Charles (Charles 11) and Prince James. Philip was thankful that God delivered him from the snares of the court. Following Latin studies he entered Westminster School in 1643 and studied under a Puritan, Richard Busby. Philip's mother a zealous Puritan gained permission for him to attend an early lecture at Westminster Abbey where he was converted and became a Puritan. In 1647 he was admitted to Christ Church, Oxford. At home in January 1649, he watched as Charles 1, who 'went by our door on foot each day', was on trial before Parliament and then was executed. In 1651 he earned his BA and his Master's the following year. His father died 1652 leaving the family in financial distress, relieved only by gifts of friends.

**5: Ministry::** Preached his first sermon in 1653, tutored a Judge's sons over several months while preaching at Worthenbury Chapel and worked with pupils at Oxford. Examined and ordained in 1658 in a strong Calvinistic confession, then helped organise North Wales clergy, and wrote association's agreement on worship. Married Katherine Matthews in 1660 and fathered six children. Sympathetic with royalist uprising and welcomed political change at Restoration but called before court for not reading The Book of Common Prayer. Chastised again without effect and while he had taken the oath of allegiance was refused reordination. After seven years at Worthenbury and blessed with many conversions, he was ejected from his pulpit in 1661.

Philip was silenced by The Act of Uniformity, St. Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1662. He wrote; 'Our sins have made Bartholomew day in the year 1662, the saddest day for England since the death of Edward the Sixth, but even this is

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<sup>1</sup> J. I. Packer, *Puritan Portraits*, Christian Focus, 2012, 20

for good.’ He left his house and took his family to property inherited by his wife at Broad Oak, Flintshire. Apart from brief occasions they remained there for the next thirty-four years; but trouble pursued him. Along with thirteen other preachers, he was suspected of insurrection and incarcerated in 1663 for four days at Flintshire. Two years later he was summoned to Cheshire for baptising one of his own children. As the month ended he was treated as a layman and made sub-collector of taxes for the town of Iscoyd. The 1665 Five Mile Act was a problem as his home was only four miles away from his former church at Worthenbury. He moved to Shropshire and regularly attended the local churches. Matthew Henry writes of his father; Philip: ‘He did not shoot the arrow of the Word over their heads ... but to their hearts in close and lively applications.’

Peace? **No**; in 1668 he preached in the parish church of Betley, Staffordshire. Distorted stories were reported to the House of Commons and four years passed before he was permitted to resume public ministry in his own home. Once the indulgence was withdrawn he preached freely until 1681 when he was fined for holding unauthorised meetings for worship. He became involved in public discussions, a debate with a bishop about ordination; confined for three weeks in Chester Castle; then added his name to a cautiously worded message in 1687 to James 11.

Once William and Mary ascended the throne and the Act of toleration was passed, Philip Henry was able to preach openly. He frequently preached in neighbouring towns but did not accept another pastoral position. His health declined and he died of colic at Broad Oak on 24 June 1696. His last words; ‘*O death, where is thy sting?*’ His grave is at Whitchurch and a marble tablet was erected in memory. His wife Katherine, sons John and Matthew; plus four daughters, all professed salvation in Christ alone. Philip Henry was known for Christ-centred worship and Godly conduct. As with the homes of most believers, every day began and ended with family devotions. Philip wrote; “ ‘If the worship of God be not in the house,’ then write; ‘Lord have mercy on us’ upon the door, for there is a plague, a curse in it.”<sup>2</sup> He wrote to his son: ‘See your need of Christ more and more and live upon Him. No life like it; so sweet, so safe. My Saviour is mine in all things. We cannot be discharged from the guilt of any evil we do, without His merit to satisfy; we cannot move in the performance of any good required, without His Spirit and grace to assist and enable for it; and when we

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<sup>2</sup> *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p73

have done all, that all is nothing, without His mediation and intercession to make it acceptable, so that, every day and in everything, He is All in All.'

**Matthew Henry:** A few weeks after his father was ejected from the Church of England ministry in 1662, Matthew was born in a Welsh farmhouse at Iscoed, Flintshire. A premature baby he was baptised when only a day old in case he died early. Educated mainly by his father and with the assistance of tutors, he was gifted in learning, became spiritually robust and in 1680 entered Thomas Doolittle's academy at Islington. Persecution forced the academy to relocate, so he moved to the estate of Bronington, Flintshire; inherited from his maternal grandfather. While continuing private theological study he was admitted to Gray's Inn to study law. In 1686 he started preaching in his father's area, then moved to Chester the following year because of business; he also preached in private houses until asked to be the local minister. In May 1687 he was privately ordained by six ministers in a London house; then returned to Chester to begin ministry; where communicants grew to 250 within a few years.

Matthew married Katherine Hardware of Cheshire in 1687 but she died in childbirth two years later, aged twenty-five. He married Mary Warburton in 1690; who gave birth to one son and eight daughters, three of whom died as infants. In 1700 a meeting house was built for him in Crook Lane, and a gallery added six years later as another church group had joined them; communicants numbered 350. Matthew also held monthly services at five neighbouring villages plus regular preaching to prisoners in the castle.

A two-story summerhouse in the rear of his home at Whitefriars was his study. Aged forty-two in 1704, he began work on a Bible commentary based on his system of expository preaching and his compilation of other writings on the Bible. As a child he had learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew plus acquiring a good knowledge of French. His profound knowledge, inquiring spirit and ability to convey doctrinal truths in simple but insightful ways came to the fore. He was invited to the important London congregation of Hackney in 1710 but remained at Chester for two more years and left amid many tears.

In addition to his commentary, he wrote thirty more works, mainly on practical piety. One book based on his sermon from 1 Corinthians 16: 19; *with the church that is in their house*; stresses how families can be called 'churches'. He practiced this and rose each day to pray with his family, and review parts of the sermon the family had heard the previous Sabbath. He catechised his

younger children in the afternoons; then when the younger ones were in bed at night, he taught the older children. He put together, *Family Hymns*, for use by his own family. Best known is his *magnum opus*, the *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, began in November 1704. He finished expository comments on Genesis to Acts. His commentary covering the Pentateuch, was published in 1707. That, plus four more volumes, from Genesis to Acts, were completed by his death. After his death, thirteen ministers put together a commentary mainly using his notes from Romans to Revelation. A practical Commentary rather than purely academic, it contains some remarks throughout the text based on what his father, Philip, expressed at family worship.

Matthew Henry revisited Chester in 1714 but fell from his horse on the return ride and was taken to the house of Joseph Mottershead, a neighbouring nonconformist minister. The next day he died and was buried in the chancel of Trinity Church, Chester; six men preached at his funeral. His simple emphasis: 'A life spent in the service of God, and communion with Him, is the most comfortable life anyone can live in this world.'