

**THE PLEASANTNESS  
OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE  
OPENED AND PROVED**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649458448

The Pleasantness of a Religious Life Opened and Proved by Matthew Henry

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Cover @ 2017

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**OPENED AND PROVED:**

**BY MATTHEW HENRY.**  
Author of the Exposition of the Holy Scriptures.

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**BOSTON:**  
**PUBLISHED BY PEIRCE AND WILLIAMS.**  
**PHILADELPHIA:**  
**TOWER, J. D. & M. HOGAN.**  
.....  
**1830.**



## THE PLEASANTNESS

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"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Prov. iii. 17.

TRUE religion is often in Scripture, and particularly in this book of the Proverbs, represented and recommended to us under the name and character of 'Wisdom,' because it is the highest improvement of human nature, and the best and surest guide of human life. It was one of the first and most ancient discoveries of God's mind to the children of men. When God made a 'weight for the winds' and a 'decree for the rain,' when he brought all the other creatures under the established rule and law of their creation, according to their respective capacities, then he declared this to man, a reasonable

creature, as the law of his creation. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding." Job xxviii, 28.

The great men of the world who engross its wealth and honors, are pretenders to wisdom, and think none to do so well for themselves as they; but, though their neighbors applaud them, and "their posterity," who reap the fruit of this worldly wisdom, "approve their sayings," yet "this their way is their folly;" and so it will appear, when God himself shall call them 'Fools,' and require their souls. The learned men of the world were well-wishers to wisdom, and modestly called themselves "Lovers of Wisdom;" and many wise principles we have from them, and wise precepts, and yet their philosophy failed them in that in which man's great duty and interests lies—acquainting himself with his Maker, and, keeping up communion with him; herein they that "professed themselves to be wise, became fools," and "the world by wisdom knew not God."

But true Christians are, without doubt, the truly wise men. They understand themselves best, and on which side their interest lies, who give up themselves to the conduct of Christ and



his word and Spirit; who consult his oracles, and govern themselves by them, which are indeed the true oracles of reason. Men never begin to be wise, till they begin to be religious; and they then leave off to be wise, when they leave off to do good.

Now to recommend to us the study and practice of this true wisdom, to bring us into a willing subjection to her authority, and to keep us to a conscientious observance of her dictates, the great God is here, by Solomon, reasoning with us, from those topics which, in other cases, are cogent and commanding enough. Interest is the great governess of the world. Every one is for what he can get, and therefore applies himself to that which he thinks he can get by. The common inquiry is, "Who will show us any good?" We would all be happy, would all be easy.

Now it is here demonstrated by eternal Truth itself, that it is our interest to be religious; and therefore religion deserves to be called wisdom, because it teaches us to do well for ourselves. And it is certain, that the way to be happy, that is, perfectly holy hereafter, is to be holy, that is, truly happy now. It is laid down for a principle here, "Happy is the man that findeth wis-

dom," that finds the principles and habits of it planted in his own soul by divine grace; that, having diligently sought, has at length found, that "pearl of great price."

This is that which the text speaks of. We are here assured, that the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness;" as if pleasantness were confined to those ways, and not to be found any where else; and as if the pleasantness arose not from any foreign circumstance, but from the innate goodness of the ways themselves. Or it denotes the superlative pleasantness of religion; it is as pleasant as pleasantness itself.

Wisdom's ways are so; that is, the ways which she has directed us to walk in, the ways of her commandments. They are such, that if we keep close to them, and go on in them, we shall certainly find true pleasure and satisfaction.

It is added, that "all her paths are peace." Peace is sometimes put for all good; here some take it for the good of safety and protection. Many ways are pleasant; they are clean, and look smooth; but they are dangerous, either not sound at bottom, or beset with thieves: but the ways of wisdom have in them a holy security, as

well as a holy serenity; and they that walk in them, have God himself for their "shield" as well as their "sun," and are not only joyful in the hope of good, but are, or may be, "quiet" also "from the fear of evil." But we may take it for the good of pleasure and delight; and so it imports the same as the former part of the verse. As there is "pleasantness" in wisdom's ways, so there is "peace" in all her paths.

There is not only peace in the end of religion, but peace in the way. There is not only peace provided as a bed, for good men to lie down in at night, when their work is done, and their warfare is accomplished, but there is also peace provided as a shade, for good men to work in all day, that they may not only do their work, but do it with delight; for even the "work of righteousness," as well as its reward, "shall be peace;" and the immediate "effect of righteousness," as well as its issue at last, "quietness and assurance for ever." Isaiah xxxii, 17.

There is not only this peace in the way of religion in general, but in the particular "paths" of that way. View it in the several acts and instances of it, in the exercise of every grace, in the performance of every duty, and you will find,