

*Token for Children* ; it might be as useful in its kind, as these have been to the age for which they were calculated. St. John writes distinctly to *little children*, and to *young men*, 1 John ii. 12, 13.

That God, by his grace, would make the next generation wiser and better than this, and qualify many to be a seed to serve Christ, that *from the womb of the morning he may have the dew of their youth*, and the church the blessed fruits of that dew,

through a long day, and that the *first-ripe fruits* which *our souls desire*, may not be *nipt*, as here they were, in the blossom, is the desire and prayer of.

A hearty wellwisher to the rising generation,

MATTH. HENRY.

Chester,

March 1, 1710-11.

## P R E F A C E

TO

### MURREY'S CLOSET DEVOTIONS.

#### TO THE READER.

It is certain and evident that the power and prevalence of a spirit of true devotion, as it is very much the holiness and comfort of particular persons in whom it reigns, so it would go far towards the redressing of the general grievances of the church and nation; and both in the heart and in the world, would introduce a heaven upon earth. And even from secret devotions, as from a root or spring unseen, a great deal of public benefit may arise, through the grace of Him, who even in this world, in this way, rewards openly the good he sees in secret.

I must, therefore, always readily and gladly lend a hand, such a one as it is, to every thing that may contribute towards the keeping up, and carrying on, of a correspondence between heaven and earth, and to assist the breathings of humble pious souls towards God; which I think this composure of *Closet Devotions* hath a direct tendency to, among the many books for direction and help in prayer we are blessed with, in our language; which are a valuable treasury, capable of being added to.

And I cannot but take this occasion to say, with what pleasure I observed, that in the late act of parliament, which lays a duty upon all pamphlets, and particularly newspapers, there is an express proviso, that books of piety and devotion shall not

be charged with the duty, that they might not be made dearer, and so the spreading of them hindered; wherein methinks, the law hath given a very useful hint or intimation to the inhabitants of our land, which I heartily wish they would take; and it is this, that they would employ themselves more as those primitive Christians did, who *continued with one accord in prayer and supplication*; and less as the *Athenians* did, who *spent their time in nothing else but in telling and hearing, in writing and reading, new things*.

The assistance here offered to pious and devout affections, is such as needs not my commendation. If I be not mistaken, it will commend itself to those, who in their judgment approve helps of this kind, and will with a serious disposition look into it. For the matter of the devotion is of common concern to all Christians, at all times, and in all conditions. The first and great principles of our religion are to be to us as our daily bread, by receiving and digesting of which, the spiritual life is strengthened and supported. They are things which we ought frequently to inculcate upon our own hearts, that they may become very familiar to us, and ready at our right hand upon all occasions; such a copiousness there is in them to the enlightened understanding, that they can never be drawn dry, and such a pleasantness there is in them to the sanctified affections, that they can never be worn thread-bare: They are

ke the manna, which every faithful *Israelite* can ve upon with abundant satisfaction, as long as he here in this wilderness; and desires no varieties, o other dainties; and which none but the mixed ultitude will grow weary of, and call light bread.

And as the matter here is such as every one is concerned in, so the expression is such as every one may telligently make use of. It is, as I think the language of our devotions should be, plain, and easy, nd natural, and (which is particularly aimed at, nd more than any thing in this essay) it is throughout Scriptural: They are *words which the Holy Ghost satheth*, and in those it is fittest to address to God. ome, perhaps, will despise it, because the language s not fine; for my part, I like it because it is not orced: The *enticing words of man's wisdom*, are no ore the strength and beauty of praying and preaching now, than they were in *St. Paul's* time, but the ommanding words of the oracles of God.

This matter is admirably well expressed, by a great and celebrated judge, both of sense and language, in a paper of the same date with this epistle, which coming into my hands so seasonably, just us this was going out of them, I beg leave to transcribe some lines: "It happens very well (saith our Spectator) that the *Hebrew* idioms run into the *English* tongue with a particular grace and beauty: our language has received innumerable elegances and improvements from that infusion of Hebraisms, which are derived to it out of the poetical (I will add, and other) passages in holy writ. They give a force and energy to our expressions, warm and animate our language, and convey our thoughts in more ardent and intense phrases, than any that are to be met with in our own tongue. There is something so pathetic in this kind of diction, that it often sets the mind in a flame, and makes our hearts burn within us. How cold and dead (saith he) doth a prayer appear, that is composed in the most elegant and polite forms of speech which are natural to our tongue, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase, which may be drawn from the sacred writings. It has been said by some of the ancients, that, if the gods were to talk with men, they would certainly speak in *Plato's* style; but I think we may say, with justice, that when mortals converse with their Creator, they cannot do it in so proper a style, as that of the Holy Scriptures."

Those who find either need of, or advantage by, the words here made ready to their hands, may, no doubt, in their retirements, follow them with their pious affections, acceptably to God, and profitably to themselves, (as they do the prayers that are publicly offered up by their ministers in the congregation,) and make them their own; yet, with these needful cautions, that they double their guard against formality, and that they rest not herein, but press forward towards perfection. And those who, through divine grace, have obtained a good measure of the gift of prayer, by consulting and perusing these draughts of addresses to God, may be helped in using the gift they have, may be improved in it, and may have their *pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance*. Why may we not be taught to pray, as well as to meditate, from the performances of others? and why not from prayers in writing, as well as by word of mouth? The truth is, we need all the helps we can get to assist and further us in our work of this kind; and all little enough, nay, and all too little, unless the blessed Spirit himself *help our infirmities, by making intercession in us, with groanings, which after all cannot be uttered*.

But though this performance needs not my commendation, nor can my poor worthless name add any reputation to it, yet I think myself somewhat concerned to recommend it: partly, because the worthy author is one I have long known, and have an intimate acquaintance with, and a great value for; and I have reason to think him upon this account very fit to assist the devotions of others, because he is a devout good man himself, and of a piece with what you here see of him: and partly because the performance is somewhat corresponding with what I designed in the *Method for Prayer*, published about two years ago, as an example with the rule. The nail, as there directed, is here well driven: and O that, by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace and supplication, the honest intentions of both may be answered, and it may be *a nail in a sure place*; and that this, and all other proper and pious endeavours to advance true devotion, may redound to the honour of God, and the spiritual and eternal welfare of the souls of men; to which I desire always to approve myself a hearty wellwisher.

MATT. HENRY.

June 14, 1712.