

# P R E F A C E

TO THE

## LIFE OF THE REV. THOMAS BEARD.

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### TO THE READER.

BEING favoured with the perusal of these papers in manuscript, by means of my acquaintance with that family of which this pious young man was a promising branch, I am willing to say with what pleasure I read them, and to recommend them to those of the rising generation among us, for whose real service and benefit they are designed.

It was an observable method, which both our blessed Lord and his apostles sometimes took, to preach a sermon first, and then work a miracle for the confirmation of it; or to work a miracle first, and then preach a sermon for the improvement of it. Miracles are now ceased, but (blessed be God) preaching is not, nor the power of the Spirit, *confirming the word by signs following*, of another nature. You have here a very pathetic, serious sermon; designed to engage all young people, and particularly the children of godly parents, to be betimes religious: and you have here joined with it a bright and eminent example of early piety, and that to a miracle of divine grace, which the sermon both gives the improvement of, and receives confirmation from.

How powerful the influence of bad examples is, to corrupt and debauch, we see daily: I am willing to hope, that this, and other the like good examples, may have a happy influence upon some, by the grace of God, to provoke them to a holy emulation; and may serve both as the plainest directions, and strongest persuasives, to all the instances of serious godliness; for it is not the interest of any party that this is intended to serve, but that of *pure reli-*

*gion* only, unmixed and *undefiled before God and the Father.*

The reflections which this thinking, praying youth made upon his own life, then when he had but few years to reflect upon, are here given you, as they ought to be, in their own native plainness and godly simplicity; and though, considered in themselves, there may be thought nothing extraordinary in them, that they should deserve to be published; yet looked upon as coming from one of sixteen or seventeen years of age, they are really uncommon, and upon that account, one may hope, will be the more taken notice of by those of that age: and to a good Christian, one truly *pious* thought is worth ten *fine* thoughts. And the publishing of them may help to make some little amends for the mighty loss we sustained by the death of one, that was so likely to have been serviceable to his generation. Nay, they may serve for a copy to the ripest and oldest Christians, and may shame many that have doubled and trebled his years, and yet are not so well acquainted as he was with their own spirits. The books which that learned and virtuous emperor, *Marcus Antoninus*, wrote *σε̄ εαυτου*—concerning himself, and to himself, are very valuable pieces of antiquity. And we should all find our hearts better, if we did more frequently retire into them; and our lives better, if we did more frequently reflect upon them.

Perhaps, if there were such a collection of the most remarkable instances of devotion, in those that were about the age of this young man, both which have been published, and which might be gathered up from credible reports, as there is of those in the earlier age, by Mr. *White*, in his *Little Book for Little Children*, and Mr. *Janeway*, in his

*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