

**THE LIFE OF THE REV.
JAMES HERVEY, RECTOR
OF WESTON-FAVEL**

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The Life of the Rev. James Hervey, Rector of Weston-Favel by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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THE LIFE

OF THE

REV. JAMES HERVEY, M. A.

RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVEL.



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L I F E

OF THE

REV. JAMES HERVEY.

HIS BIRTH, EDUCATION, AND CONVERSION.

THIS eminent Christian, and excellent minister, was born February 26th, 1713, at Hardingstone, near Northampton, England, his father being then minister of Collingtree, in that neighbourhood. He received his first instruction from his mother, who taught him to read. Under her tuition he continued till he was seven years of age, when he was sent to the grammar school of Northampton, where he remained till he was seventeen, and learned the Latin and Greek languages, in which his genius and memory would have enabled him to make a much greater progress, if it had not been prevented by his schoolmaster, who would not suffer him, nor any of his scholars, to learn faster than his own son.

In 1731 he was sent to Oxford, where he resided several years. The first two or three years of his residence at this university were not distinguished by that diligent application to study for which he was afterwards eminent. Mr. Ryland says, "While at the university, he was much at a loss for want of a faithful friend to direct him to proper studies: he was ordered, in a very careless

manner, to read such and such books, which were altogether unsuitable to his taste, and, in a high degree, afforded matter of disgust, and discouragement. At last, by the peculiar agency of Providence, he was led to read Abbé de Pluche's *Nature Displayed*, well known by the title *Spectacle de la Nature*. The intrinsic beauty of the piece allured his imagination and passions; and when he had made an entrance into the work, he read with incessant eagerness, improvement and pleasure. This work cherished his natural passion for knowledge. He added Dr. Derham's *Astro-Theology*: this book assisted him in his first learned ideas of the starry heavens, and led him into views of the whole Newtonian system of philosophy. His conceptions were further aided by Ray's *Wisdom of God in Creation*, and Dr. Derham's *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, in his *Physico-Theology*. To these books he added Keil's *Anatomy*, which he studied with such incessant attention, and perpetual reviews, as to make himself acquainted with the structure of the human body better than any man I ever knew. He went on to read Mr. Spence's *Five Dialogues on Pope's Translation of Homer*, which, he often assured me, gave him a greater insight into the nature and beauty of composition than any author he ever read. By the most accurate digestion of these authors in his understanding, and a continued contemplation of the book of nature, he advanced his mind, and polished his genius in the line of science."

In 1733, becoming acquainted with some fellow-students,* who began to distinguish themselves by their serious impressions of religion, and their zeal

* Messrs. Wesley, Morgan, Ingham, and Whitefield.

to promote it, he was engaged in a strict attention to piety and usefulness. At this time he received the communion every Sabbath, and visited the sick and the prisoners in the jail: we find him also reading to poor people, who had not the advantage of knowing letters. He speaks of this to a friend: "I employ every day an hour or more, which I think is as much time as I can spare from my studies, with some well-inclined people of the poorer sort; we read Henry on the Holy Scriptures, and pray together: there is one set in one part of the city, and another in another; I meet at a neighbour's house."

At this time a happy friendship commenced between Mr. Hervey, while at home, and Mr. Risdon Darracot, a student under Dr. Doddridge: two souls eminently congenial for warm piety and usefulness. At a religious man's house, who belonged to Dr. Doddridge's church, but was in the parish of Weston-Favel, they had their first interview. Of this Darracot says, "Though now almost nineteen years ago, I retain a delightful impression of our converse then." They continued to correspond through life.

While at college, he often wrote to his relations, particularly to one of his sisters. Besides much good advice, he says, "I have frequently recollected, and, as it were, acted over again, the many pleasant hours we have spent together in reading holy and edifying works, or discoursing on pious and useful subjects." Mr. Hervey being a pupil of Mr. John Wesley at this time, he gratefully acknowledges his kindness to him in the following words: "I heartily thank you, as for all other favours, so especially for teaching me Hebrew. I have cultivated this study, according to your advice. I can never forget that tender-hearted and

generous Fellow of Lincoln, who condescended to take such compassionate notice of a poor undergraduate, whom almost every body contemned, and no man cared for my soul." The practice of Wesley through life, was to rise very early in the morning; and in this he was imitated by his amiable pupil, who was often seen at his studies when the other members of the college were retiring to rest.

He was ordained a deacon, by Dr. Potter, bishop of Oxford, September 14, 1736; and immediately afterwards he gave up an exhibition he had from his college of twenty pounds a year: his reason for which was, that he thought it unjust to retain what another student might stand in need of.

It appears, from his first letters, that in his early youth he showed a serious turn of mind; but several of these speak a language very different from those truths for which he was afterwards so able and zealous an advocate. The fact is, he was then an entire stranger to the doctrine of justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, and had strong prepossessions against it. An intimate friend of Mr. Hervey has told the public,* (and he most likely received the information from himself,) that till he was eighteen he had no serious impressions of religion, and afterwards, till he was twenty-seven, his views of divine truth were dark, indistinct, and confused. In this way he preached for several years.

Mr. Ryland says, "All this time was spent in reading improper books, trusting to his own virtue and righteousness for justification, and without the joys of God's salvation. He had no friend in all the world to recommend to him the best books—no friend to explain to him the true sense and

* Rev. John Ryland, late of Northampton.

meaning of the Holy Scriptures. All his external observances, and his attempts to practise virtue, had a tendency to build up a strong barrier between Christ and his soul. During part of this period, he possessed what he afterwards reckoned a rich treasure of gospel truth, 'Marshall on Sanctification;' but he let it lie by in his study, without the least attention, or so much as once reading it, till at last the providence and grace of God roused him to read this treatise, which was so much blessed to him. Mr. Hervey was left to make his own way in religious knowledge, and for a long time that way was in the dark: at last, in 1741, Jenks on Submission to Christ's Righteousness, and Rawlin on Justification, were put into his hand by Divine Providence. These were the books which, under the influence of the Spirit of God, first directed his apprehensions to Christ's righteousness. Marshall on Sanctification first led him to the great spring and means of gospel holiness. Mr. Thomas Hall on Perseverance, in the Lime Street Lectures, first led him into the comfort of that doctrine. He acknowledged to the Rev. Moses Brown, that Zimmerman on the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, was among the first books that led him to have a clear light and understanding of the gospel, and had been blessed to his experiencing true established rest in his soul. He was also much assisted in his researches into evangelical truth by Boston's Fourfold State of Man, and Witsius on the Covenants. Of this author he says, "I cannot but lament it, as one of my greatest losses, that I was not sooner acquainted with this most excellent author, all whose works have such a delicacy of composition, and such a sweet savour of holiness, that I know not any comparison more proper to represent their true character, than the golden pot