

A Hertfordshire Worthy.

JONAS THURROWGOOD, OF HITCHIN.

IT does not appear that any biography of this excellent man, who seems to have healed the sick, as well as to have ministered to their spiritual necessities, has ever been published. I have acquired "A Sermon occasioned by the Death of Mr. Jonas Thurrowgood, a faithful servant and minister of Christ, who departed this life, July 2, 1753. By Benjamin Wallin, London. Printed for the Author, and sold by G. Keith, at the Bible and Crown, in Gracechurch Street, 1753." It is an octavo pamphlet of fifty-four pages, including title, and my copy has notes in pencil, probably contemporary, upon the title-page: "J. Thurrowgood was a Baptist minister in Herts., whose medical skill cured Mr. Wallin of the effects of an accident." "Benjamin Wallin, like his father, minister of Maze Pond Baptist Chapel"; "Ed. by Revd. J. Needham, of Hitchin."

Some few biographical data respecting the subject of this sermon may be gathered therefrom. Mr. Wallin states that Jonas Thurrowgood "lived full seventy-five years without any considerable change of abode," and that he was "put to providing for himself when scarce arrived at the age of seventeen." He was by his industry "helped to provide for a large family; his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren amount to the number of 78, 45 of whom are now alive." It appears that "he was trained up to no particular employ, in the manner that most youth are, yet he turned his hand to divers occupations with an aptness and success somewhat astonishing, which showed that he had good natural abilities." The preacher refers to the fact that "many have cause to be thankful to him, for he was very successful in helping those who were afflicted with ruptures, on which account, it is thought by some that his removal will be a great loss, and especially among the poor who fall under that calamity, with whom he was always very tender and moderate." Mr. Wallin, in referring to his own case, says: "A damage I

sustained when at nurse, which being concealed, as I suppose through fear, left me under an incurable lameness; the deceased undertook to help me when I was about fourteen years of age, and, blessed be God, he so far succeeded as to enable me to walk in a more comfortable manner than it was expected I should, and this was the product of a few months."

The story of his conversion is thus set forth: "Sir William Cooper, who, it is well-known, resided at Hertford Castle, gave him and another an invitation to his house for some innocent recreation, and accordingly they went. But it was upon the Lord's Day. The choice of that day for pleasure which, it is to be lamented, has now grown very common, greatly offended a pious servant in the family, who, with much seriousness, remonstrated against the folly of which they were guilty, and, particularly addressing our late friend, endeavoured to convince him of the evil of neglecting public worship and spending the day in sensual delights; and also exhorted him to think of his sinful condition. To these things Mr. Thurrowgood's attention was raised, who fell under some conviction, and being advised by the same person to hear Mr. Hayworth (who was then dissenting minister at Hertford), he readily complied, and, through divine blessing, it was followed with the happy consequences mentioned."

Later on "he joined the Church at Hertford, with whom he walked in a becoming manner, visibly growing in spiritual knowledge"; so much so, that "his minister would frequently advise troubled souls to discourse with him for their relief." We are told that "after some time he saw reason to alter his sentiments concerning a particular ordinance"—that of baptism—and became what is known as a Particular Baptist, and joined this church, then under the care of Mr. Peake.¹ He was soon called to the work of the ministry, and being invited, he preached for twelve years at a neighbouring village (Bendish) with great usefulness.

In a "List of Places," by the Rev. J. Evans, 1715, we find: "Bendish, in the parish of St. Paul's, Walden, preacher Jonas Thurrowgood, number of hearers, three hundred, among whom are thirty-five voters for the county." At the death of Mr. Peake, in 1717, Mr. Thurrowgood was "unanimously chosen and then solemnly set apart to that office in his stead, and that about thirty-six years ago." This was the Church at Tring, for Mr. Wallin states that his congregation "have reason to praise God for His kindness in continuing him so long, and that, notwithstanding

¹ Thomas Peake had charge of the church at New Mill, Tring, to which Hitchin was attached.

the very great distance of his habitation (Bendish) from the place of your meeting, he was seldom prevented, which is very remarkable. It is, indeed, somewhat extraordinary that one in his advanced age, and under the grievous disorder which had for some years attended him, should, after having travelled the usual journey of ten miles,² be able to carry on the public service among you which he did, and as I am informed, with remarkable spirit; and this but eight days before his departure."

His illness lasted but four days, and at three o'clock on the Monday morning Mr. Jonas Thurrowgood gave up the ghost, in the seventy-sixth year of his age; "A man under divine blessing, very serviceable in his generation."

Inquiry of the pastors of the Baptist communities at Hitchin and Tring has failed to reveal the existence of any memorial to this good man. All the inscriptions in the chapels and burial-grounds at both places have been recorded within recent years, and his name does not occur among them, so we must assume none was erected.

The Mr. Needham who edited Mr. Wallin's sermon on Thurrowgood was pastor of Tilehouse Street Baptist Chapel, Hitchin, from 1705 till his death, in 1742-3. He kept a school in Hitchin, where Benjamin Wallin was educated, and is said to have been a very austere man: one who knew him remarked that she never saw him laugh but twice in her life.

Urwick ("Nonconformity in Herts., 1884.") says very little about Mr. Thurrowgood, but it is possible that the records of the Baptist community might throw further light upon his life and work.

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² From Bendish to Tring would seem to be nearer twenty than ten miles, as the route is a devious one by bye-lanes that must have been all but impassable in winter.