

A Baptist Governor of Madras in 1716.

MINISTERS always figure largely in the story of a church or a denomination. Not so often do we have the opportunity of knowing an ordinary member of a church, who showed in his daily life the result of the teaching he received and the religious company he kept. Such an opportunity has just come by the publication of the private letter-books of Joseph Collet while he was a servant of the East India Company, 1711-1719. These glance at the part he played in commerce and public life, but being his private letters, deal rather with friends, family and his religious life. Since Miss Clara E. Collet, of University College, has appended several family facts and notes, it is possible to refer to other contemporary evidence, and get a picture of life and thought in two London Baptist families. These were ignored by Thomas Crosby when he wrote his History, just as he ignored his Baptist neighbour, Thomas Guy. That a deacon should thus be silent about important members of churches is somewhat strange; it is much to be regretted that his pre-occupation with ministers set a bad denominational fashion and has given a specialised conception of the course of events.

This branch of the wide-spread family of Collets came from Maldon in Essex, through Canterbury to London. Here Henry Collet about 1641 married Elizabeth Harrison, whose brother Edward was soon made vicar of Kensworth, but became Baptist, and after evangelising over half Hertfordshire, so that four or five churches there are due to his efforts, settled down in his own home at Petty France, at the end of Broad Street, north of London Wall. Henry and Elizabeth Collet finally settled at Ratcliff in Stepney, where he died in 1676, styling himself "gentleman" in his will, which he sealed with the arms of Colet of Wendover. He had apparently made a good living by selling ironmongery and buying wheat.

Henry left a son John, living then at Long Lane in Southwark, who had married Mary Holloway, and had a son Joseph, three years old. A directory next year shows him as a merchant, partner with Nicholas Holloway in Nicholas Lane; their business linked them with the Larwoods of Amsterdam. With the Tulls and the Whites, the partners learned a new Dutch process of

dyeing scarlet with cochineal and tin; and though John Collet was a member of the Glovers Company, his business was increasingly dyeing. The partners took over works covering ten acres in the marshlands at Bow. These became Collet's property in 1693, and he was able to superintend from a new home in Hoxton Square.

Now this was a great centre for dissenters; and all the people named were such, most of them being Baptist. A mathematical school was kept by Benjamin Morland, attended by lads such as Philip Yorke, who climbed to become Lord Chancellor Hardwicke. John sent his son Joseph, who got a good education, making friends with lads of other Baptist and Presbyterian circles, such as Nathaniel Hodges.

John Collet had once entertained a conventicle in Southwark, where Kentish the Presbyterian preached. He now belonged to the church at Petty France, to which his great uncle, Edward Harrison, had ministered. Harrison died in 1689, leaving two sons; Edward the second was a goldsmith in Cheapside, Thomas was at once associated in the ministry. The senior pastor was now William Collins, once at Westminster School under Busby, and polished by the Grand Tour in France and Italy.

An important Assembly of more than a hundred Baptist churches was held in September, to which went Collins, Harrison and John Collet. Baptists then set an example to other dissenters, establishing a fund for many denominational purposes, including education for the ministry. Of the nine trustees, Isaac Marlowe came from the Southwark church of Keach and young Thomas Crosby; three were from Petty France, Richard Bristow, John Collet, and Edward Harrison the Treasurer. Bristow was in 1696 expelled the church for "renouncing the doctrine of the Trinity." This is the first time we hear of such opinions in this circle, but the theme henceforth crops out in the general religious thought of England, and will engage attention in this study.

John Collet died in 1698, and the widow inherited the dye-works for life. Joseph had married Mary Ross, and built a family of John and four daughters. He does not seem yet to have taken part in ecclesiastical affairs, but he was thinking, and the line he took deserves attention. It is closely connected with his friend, Nathaniel Hodges, and we must look at this lad's preparation for life, and at the denominational changes that brought them together again.

Nathaniel's family could afford to equip him well. The universities gave no degrees to dissenters, and their curriculum at this time was poor, as Bishop Butler acknowledged. Dissenting university men took private pupils, and an Oxonian at Taunton,

Matthew Warren, had made himself a reputation; to him Nathaniel was sent. The Presbyterians and Independents in the west had come to terms, and the "United Brethren of Devon and Cornwall" were much annoyed at Warren taking all sorts of pupils, rich or poor, especially if they were Baptist: and in 1695 they had the impertinence to pass a formal protest. He simply ignored it, and next year they reiterated their complaint, basing it this time on the possibility that the Paedobaptist position would be undermined with the skill here acquired—which does not speak well for their confidence in their position. The episode shows incidentally how independent and private were the early Academies, how a good social tone was valued in them, and how they gave a general education to fit for all careers. When Hodges went to Taunton he may have meant to follow his father or his uncle: the exhortations of the United Brethren perhaps turned his thoughts to the ministry. And on this side, Warren told Defoe later that 72 of his scholars were preachers.

In theology and philosophy Warren was not a devotee of the past; that was exactly the vice of the universities, in contrast to which these Academies flourished. He did indeed lecture on authors of repute, but he did not go further back than Derodon and Burgersdyk of Leyden and Saumur; and he recommended for private study Le Clerc, Locke, and Cumberland's refutation of Hobbes. He did not pursue any systematic course of theology based on the Creeds, the Articles, the Westminster Confession, but "encouraged the free and critical study of the scriptures." This indeed had been the practice of Milton with his pupils, though he was original enough to digest his results into a treatise on Christian Doctrine, which seemed to the government so novel and dangerous that the manuscript was confiscated, and it was published only last century.

Hodges settled in 1698 as pastor of the Baptist church at Plymouth, but this was a misfit. The church did not seem sorry when in January 1701/2 he "succeeded to earthly honours," and accepted a call to Artillery Lane in Spitalfields, where he settled on 7 June. This was the church of Harrison and Collet, reunited after a curious division which may be briefly noted.

Keach of Southwark was not content to sing the psalms of David, especially in the uncouth language of Sternhold and Hopkins. He wrote new hymns, some with foreign mission aspirations, taught his people to sing them, and published a hymnbook. Isaac Marlowe, one of his deacons, and a trustee of the Fund, was much distressed; after vainly asking the Assembly to intervene, and being censured for making trouble, he upset all London Baptist circles and split three churches. The monthly meeting of ministers was divided, Collins and Harrison

differing; when Marlowe rushed again into print, charging Collins with deceit and making other outrageous accusations, he did permanent mischief. Support of the Fund was paralysed, and the co-operative work which had begun with such promise, had practically died out.

In 1699 Thomas Harrison and those of the Petty France church who preferred to sing moved to the Lorimers' Hall on Basinghall Street, where they were joined by a contingent from the original church of 1612; within three years, both he and Collins died. As Marlowe had withdrawn to Leominster and had ceased troubling, the way seemed open for a revival. The London Baptist Association, which had suspended its meetings, was convoked again at Lorimers' Hall. The followers of Collins, who had had difficulties of their own and had been at other premises, now renewed the old ties, learned to sing, and the re-united church leased a fine meeting-house in Artillery Lane, Spitalfields. They invited Nathaniel Hodges from Plymouth and thus the school-friends met again. Collet could write afterwards that "Natt is well enough to get Artillery to cannonade me withal," and he chaffed him about "one or two of your manors."

Hodges then was witty and rich. He founded a club, whose name, Dic Ipse, rather hints at untrammelled thought. Besides Joseph Collet and Joseph Stennet senior of Pinners' Hall, and Giles Dent, who was perhaps of a Baptist family near Gamlingay, it seems to have included a Burroughs of Ratcliff. For nine years Joseph Collet developed in this atmosphere. Later allusions show some of the topics that interested this circle, and we can trace the kindred movements of thought.

Professor Wallis, of Oxford, had discussed the doctrine of the Trinity from a mathematical standpoint, and had initiated a long controversy, in which Locke joined from the philosophical side, and Newton from the Biblical. Another question was raised by Benjamin Hoadly of Cambridge, who from the first emphasised the ethical side of the New Testament rather than the doctrinal. In 1707 he preached an Assize sermon at Salisbury, which the grand jury ordered to be printed; he declared that the only requisites for salvation were clearly stated as Repentance towards God and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. At his London parish—for he was a terrible pluralist—he steadily opposed the accretions to Calvin's theology. Samuel Clarke, rector of Westminster, Boyle Lecturer in 1704 and 1705, dealt with the Being and Attributes of God; when he published, he initiated a great controversy, and his work proved in demand for seventy years. His line of thought was followed by Professor Whiston at Cambridge, and by a Baptist graduate of Leyden, John Gale,

who afterwards became chairman of Whiston's "Society for promoting Catholic Christianity." Now in the little Hackney club, Hodges and Collet were discussing these matters; a fact to be considered by those who estimate the quality of Baptist thought.

In these years, however, the Low Countries were the scene of great wars, in which Marlborough won such battles as Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet: Joseph conceived a great admiration for him. But wars are ruinous to ordinary business, and as the Collet dyeing was interlocked with Holland, it came to grief. It was necessary to arrange with creditors, who accepted 7s. 2d. in the £. Joseph resolved to assume the debt, a fine evidence of the high standard of probity in dissenting circles. The problem remained, how to discharge it. Now as dissenters were debarred from political and municipal careers, they had concentrated on such things as law, medicine, commerce. Among the stock-holders in the new South-Sea Company—which had a perfectly legitimate and lucrative business, despite the folly of speculators—and the more ancient East India Company, were many merchants: Gregory Page, a director of the latter, was a member of the Devonshire Square Baptist church. There was no difficulty in Joseph being appointed governor of Bencoolen, a trading post on Sumatra, subordinate to President Edward Harrison at Madras. (While the governor proved an excellent friend and adviser, there is no reason to think he was connected with the Harrisons in London Baptist circles.)

While this in itself shows the esteem in which he was held, his credit is emphasised by four friends being sureties to the company for £500 each that he might have a capital for his private trade. Another token of his high repute is that at this time he was put up for the Royal Society, and one of the first letters he received in the East announced his election as Fellow.

His wife had died; he placed his daughters in the care of friends, and embarked in 1711. He had bad fortune, for his ship was captured in Rio harbour by the French, and he had to ransom it and all his property and himself, by drawing bills on England—a further proof of the confidence he had in friends, and they in him. He resumed the voyage, and took over his duties at Bencoolen. An early report home asks that his son John be appointed to a post under the Company: he had many friends as directors, so John was sent out after a while to himself, but died within a year. So also did his brother John, who was trading independently in Persia.

The East India Company dated, by a hair's breadth, from the sixteenth century; consolidated by Cromwell and Charles II., it had established three chief trading stations, each under a

president, in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. In 1689, the directors laid down a new policy, avowedly copying their rivals, the Dutch East India Company, to "increase our revenue" and "make us a nation in India" where the Great Mogul at Delhi was parting with some powers to strong native princes in whose territories the Company was trading. After disputes with private traders, an award was made in 1708 whereby a monopoly was assured as against other English, and it was recognised that the Company was free to enlist troops and build forts to protect its trade: the condition being a loan to the Government of £3,200,000. This left the company as such in competition with French, Danes, Portuguese, etc., while its relations with the Dutch were dubious. Internally, the custom was recognised by which servants of the company were at liberty to trade on their own account, and perhaps even to use the splendid East Indian built for the company at Deptford.

Joseph was governor of an out-station on the west of Sumatra, protected by six or seven forts against natives and Dutch. He intended to use his private rights on a great scale, and did so well that within five years he paid off his ransom, his loans from friends, and the deficit in the bankruptcy of the dyeing business. Meanwhile as governor he restored order, brought local sultans to heel, built a new Fort Marlborough, purged the service of incompetent and untrustworthy men, bought slaves and sent them home as presents, with other local curiosities. A man like this was marked for promotion, and he was appointed to the chief position, Governor and President of Madras, a post reputed to be worth £10,000 a year—in opportunities rather than direct salary. He used the opportunities, mentioning one deal of £12,000. Those who would study the commercial and political side of his life, will find ample material.

It is our concern to trace his outer ecclesiastical doings, and his inner religious development for the next four years. These things come out chiefly in letters to his relations and to his friend and pastor, Nathaniel Hodges, to whom he once sent a gold snuff-box.

From the first he assumed that the Governor governed all worship. That was the theory from Henry VIII. down to James II., and Collet put it in practice. "I have publick Prayers and a Sermon every Lord's Day . . . I look on myself here as acting a part, no matter whether that of a Prince or Peasant." Of course it was a queer situation, a Baptist to regulate worship for all the settlement; no one could object to his ordering the use of the Book of Common Prayer, read by his secretary. But he says that he himself preached; whether he wrote his own sermons is not clear; more probably he followed the "Homily" precedent

and chose printed sermons. Once we hear of one by Tillotson, whom his enemies used to twit with being the son of a Baptist. He soon had to "turn Parson," making the best of his Common Prayer Book to tie the Indissoluble knot for one of his Councillors. On the other hand, he was amused that he was daily prayed for with different rites by several kings and their subjects. "In my Dominions are a great many Religions, but no disputes as to the Civil Affairs. Every man may talk as he pleases but must do what I command." When he was promoted to be President at Madras, he found a Church built by the Company in 1680, served by two chaplains; one had to go home, the other held no service for three months, and objected to laymen reading the service in the church. He was brought to book, the place was opened, the Athanasian Creed was disused, because, as Collet wrote privately, he was not going to hear himself cursed publicly. He refused to stand godfather, avowing himself Baptist; but went to Church in the greatest pomp, the whole garrison drawn out to line the road, colours flying and drums beating. "Being myself head of the Church, Liberty of Conscience flourishes here." And he was surprised at a marriage proclaimed by sound of trumpet without any church ceremony.

Collet's attention was called to missions on his outward voyage. At the Cape of Good Hope he met a German, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, who had been for five years working in Tranquebar, under the auspices of the King of Denmark. He formed the opinion that the German was pious, but uneducated, and biased by an Enthusiastic turn. Here too he met Hottentots, and whereas in the literary circle of Hackney he had accepted the comfortable teaching that all men were naturally reasonable, he wrote to Richard Steele, à propos of *Spectator*, No. 389, that among these people human nature was lower than in any other, except absolute atheists. When he crossed from Madras to take up his post, he was accompanied by Father Dom John Milton, a priest of the Theatine mission (and perhaps a relation of the poet) who was to be chaplain to his Portuguese half-caste garrisons. No allusion is made to any work attempted among the natives by Roman Catholics.

Collet was awakened to the needs of the people, as distinct from his garrison and the factory servants. He found that the original pagan population had been pushed inland by Mahometans, whom he considered ignorant and positive. As to their conduct, if the Indians came short of refined European wickedness, they also came short of solid European virtue; corruption was more universal than the stiffest Calvinist had averred. Reformation of manners he soon brought about, by stern discipline of the service, and once the scandal of European bad

example was removed, he made a personal frontal attack on Islam. He discussed with an Imam, and challenged a high-priest to debate. This was evaded, and his missionary work was limited to bringing over the fattest sheep of the Roman Catholic flock to attend the Church of England service.

The German missionaries were at first backed by the new English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. But its charter only empowered it to work within Britain and its colonies, and there were no colonies in the East Indies at all; dominions of the Great Mogul, within which Danes had permission to have a trading station, were clearly outside its scope. So in 1713 the S.P.G. retired. As their supplies were aboard the vessel on which Collet first went out, and were captured by the French, he had ransomed them, partly at his own expense—at a price he afterwards found was exorbitant. His autocratic behaviour at Bencoolen will explain his considered opinion that the Tranquebar Mission was in jeopardy because the Danish Governor had no regard to the design of the Germans, and they had too little for his authority. Here he touched a problem that a century later was to give grave trouble between the British Governor at Calcutta, the Danish Governor at Serampore, and the Baptist missionaries; nor is it unknown between Belgian or Portuguese Governors on the Congo, and Americans or Swedes or English missionaries. Collet also feared that such success as the Danes had achieved, was not purely religious, and he coined a phrase that has never been forgotten, speaking of their "rice Christians." But at this stage he had rather heard at second-hand, not having yet been promoted to the mainland, where he could meet them and judge for himself.

Through his brother John he developed an interest in the "Zend-Evestum," but John's death ended that enquiry, and he does not seem to have heard of the Parsees at Bombay. He referred his brother Samuel to a former chaplain, George Lewis, who had returned to London with stores of information about Persia. But Samuel's interest did not lead him to any such unusual scheme as promoting a mission to the Parsees.

Meantime the accession of the Elector of Hanover as George I, gave a new opportunity to Ziegenbalg. Under royal patronage, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge took up the project abandoned by its younger sister. And Collet met another missionary at Fort St. David, Gründler, who had planned a Charity School for teaching the Christian religion in Malabar and Portuguese. This precisely met Collet's views, and he paid the expense—the first direct bit of English work in the East. It led to the Company paying for another of Gründler's schools for company slaves, giving instruction in Portuguese;

and for a third in the Black Town for the natives, teaching in Malabar. The scheme was further developed by "a handsome Colledge" or hostel. The English residents proved by far the most charitable whom Collet had met. He sent a considered judgment to a friend, regretting the elaborate doctrinal catechisms used, preferring free search of the Bible, and extolling the plan of training children. As he wrote to several correspondents on these matters, it seems rather surprising that no Englishman came out to work under his aegis at Madras. As it was, the beginning of his government was marked by Gründler publishing a Tamil New Testament, and its close by a Portuguese Pentateuch; the first versions printed in India. But the S.P.C.K. never sent an English clergyman, and when the last Danish missionary died in 1798, the tenuous thread was just that one of his colleagues had visited the Danish settlement of Serampore and won the sympathy of the governor, who gave hospitality to the second band of men from the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

The actions of Collet are easy to trace; his inner thoughts correspond. That he brought about a great reformation of manners is clear; he would not accept the loan of wives and daughters of the sultans, as had perhaps been not unknown. In the thirty-seven letters to or about his daughters which have been printed, he shows himself most careful for their welfare in every way, and rejoices when one of them was baptized on profession of her faith. Other letters show that some of his correspondents appreciated allusions to Elisha, Agur, and a Corinthian harvest; they were well read in their Bibles. He mentions his private daily prayers, as though they were usual in his circle at home.

Theologians, however, would demur to his insistence on his hopes for a reward of his good works, though he was only like another great governor, Nehemiah. His revolt against all creeds was strong and constant. In discussing possible husbands for his daughters he stated his own four principles; that Natural Religion was the foundation of Revealed (the point made by James Foster and immortalized by Joseph Butler), that all things necessary to be believed or practised are contained in the holy scriptures, that every man ought to judge for himself, that persecution is of the devil. And these do seem to be the staple of his thought, the skeleton of his life. It is not surprising that he opened his mind to William Whiston, who ended his life a generation later as a Baptist of much the same type. A very revealing sentence to a loyal friend is, "I esteem Religion to be the perfection of human nature, and religious conversation the noblest entertainment of a reasonable mind."

At the age of forty-seven he resigned his post, having deliberately decided he had wealth enough to portion each daughter with £5,000, if they would marry not men of quality but country gentlemen, merchants or lawyers, and to start his two nephews whom he had adopted after the death of his son; his mother and other relatives he had already benefited. He had constantly followed the course of events at home, and considered it his duty to acquire an estate in the country as well as a London home, to stand for Parliament, and to throw himself into politics, especially the restoration of full religious liberty. He therefore left Madras in January, 1720/1. We may now survey what had been the developments at home in the nine years of his absence. And they may be connected with Collet's pastor and constant correspondent, Nathaniel Hodges.

In 1712 the London Particular Baptist Association was doing well. Among its constituent churches were Artillery Lane, and another wealthy one at Paul's Alley, Barbican, whose minister John Gale had created a sensation by a thorough and learned criticism of Wall's History of Infant Baptism; a church in Ratcliff was impressed enough to amalgamate with it, bringing in the Burroughs family. These churches were on good terms with the open-membership church at Pinners' Hall, which building was the Baptist Church House of that day. It belonged to the Hollis family, members of that church, and was used regularly by three Baptist churches. When Sir William Hodges died in 1714, Nathaniel inherited another large estate, and being thus wealthy, well connected, well educated, and pastor of a large historic church, he was evidently at the age of thirty-nine a Baptist Leader.

That year the Schism Act was passed, intended to confine all education to communicants in the Church of England, licensed by the bishops. But Queen Anne died on the very day it was to come into force, and statesmen sympathetic with dissenters had taken control. It has been said that Hodges and others were silenced by it; but this would not have been possible under its terms, and there is no evidence that in any respect it was ever put in force. On the contrary, Stinton promptly convoked all London Baptist ministers, and the record of the regular meetings they held shows that they considered an era of liberty had begun. The weak point was that the Act stood in print, and mobs might insist on its being enforced locally, or a change in the government might bring it into regular play. Twelve ministers therefore waited on the king with an address: "We desire nothing more than to enjoy our civil rights, with a just liberty"; and it was presented by Nathaniel Hodges, on behalf of all dissenters.

The renewed activity of the Baptist churches was stimulated

by the generosity of Thomas Hollis, who gave Stinton 100 guineas for them to distribute among their poor. His scale shows that the church of Hodges was in the front rank, while in a lower grade was that of Little Wild Street, which had recently called to the pastorate a second Thomas Harrison, grandson of Edward the founder of Petty France.

The accession of George I. led not only to the invasion of the Pretender, but to many outbreaks of violence, in which several meeting-houses of dissenters were destroyed. On the Fifth of November next year Hoadly preached a very loyal sermon, which led to his being appointed bishop of Bangor. Disturbances continued at intervals, till in March 1716/7 the London ministers again waited on the king, and boldly claimed both protection and the repeal of the four acts, Conventicle, Test, Corporation, Schism. The Riot Act secured public peace, the damages were made good, and the king when opening parliament foreshadowed restitution of all rights. But the Lower House of Convocation was most mutinous, and matters were delayed. Hoadly preached a sermon before the king that same March, which seemed to impugn the Church as a society, and deny its authority, while it declared regular uninterrupted successions as vain words. The Lower House speedily presented a formal protest, whereupon government adjourned it, and it was not allowed to do business for the remainder of the reign. On all these proceedings Hodges wrote to Collet, who naturally sympathised with Hoadly.

The controversy was transferred to the press, and William Law laid the foundations of a great reputation by his three letters to Hoadly; scores of other pamphlets appeared, and the government grew afraid. Dissenters therefore organised meetings in their own support, and there was a trial of strength in Parliament. In the end, the act of 1718/9 left ministers free to conduct worship and keep schools, while laymen might qualify for office in boroughs or under the crown, by producing a certificate that they had taken communion at their parish Church. The compromise satisfied nobody.

Meanwhile Particular Baptists drew together in 1717, to revive the plan of 1689, when John Collet and Edward Harrison (junior) had been trustees of a fund to help young ministers. On this occasion, the experience of Bristow's defection was remembered, and a rigid constitution was drawn up, to guard very carefully the orthodoxy of subscribers and of beneficiaries. Against this limitation vigorous protests were made, by both ministers and laymen, with no success. Hodges and his church were invited to join; but it is not clear that they did. A letter to Bromsgrove that year shows him in touch with Gale, Burroughs and Stinton, of whom the last soon died.

The influence of Matthew Warren at Taunton had leavened the west, and trouble among the Presbyterians at Exeter led them to ask advice from the Committee of the Two Denominations in London. It seemed so important that leading laymen convoked all the London ministers of those Two Denominations to hear their draft Advice; and as Baptists in the west had sent a minister with a watching brief, while John Gale was very influential, Baptist ministers of London were invited also. Despite protests, they remained. At this point we can see that a grave mistake was made, in that the laymen offered to leave the matter to the ministers. Things took unexpected turns, and presently the ministers broke up into two groups, which sent different advices. They agreed so far as to say that separation was better than quarrelling within the church, and that the worshippers rather than ministers were final judges. But agreement was lost sight of in view of a difference. One party stood by the three creeds, and as by law even dissenting ministers must literally subscribe most of the thirty-nine articles, including an acceptance of these creeds, it called attention to them; the other declared that scriptures were sufficient in matters of faith. In the end, seventy-eight ministers took the conservative view, seventy-three the liberal. Among the fifteen "subscribing" Baptists was Thomas Harrison of Little Wild Street; it is not very surprising that in ten years he went further, subscribed all the thirty-nine articles, and became vicar of Radcliffe-on-the-Wreke, ending his days as his grandfather began, a clergyman of the Church of England. From surplice to surplice were three generations. Among the sixteen "non-subscribing" Baptists were Hodges and Gale. One immediate and unhappy result was that when the Barbican church offered to contribute to the Particular Baptist Fund, the offer was refused.

At Artillery Lane, Hodges resigned in 1721, and was followed by John Kinch, M.D., another well-educated "non-subscriber," from Barbican. By this time Joseph Collet had reached London, and on 21 November he transferred his membership to Barbican, where were his old friend Burroughs, and the kindred soul Gale. But Gale was dying, and the next co-pastor was another man of culture and education, who had been conducting an Academy, Isaac Kimber. He soon published a life of Cromwell, and became editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.

Collet acquired an estate at Hertford Castle, not so far from the quondam palace of Theobalds, which had been a stronghold of Baptists in his youth, and there he settled with his two unmarried daughters. This property gave him a stake in the country, and qualified him to stand at the next vacancy for a

knight of the shire. Perhaps he began to realise the difference between the all-but-absolute power of a governor in the East Indies, and the give-and-take, the intrigue, the bribery, in the House of Commons. He was not destined to be the first of the wealthy nabobs who fitted so awkwardly with parliamentary conditions; but at least his career presented no vulnerable points such as ended the public lives of Clive and Hastings. And he was spared any inglorious lingering retirement. For while he had, thanks to a clean life, come through the tropics without apparent danger, he could not endure the fogs of the Lea valley. After making a will, among whose bequests were £50 to Joseph Burroughs and £50 to Isaac Kimber, he passed away on 13 June, 1725. In death as in life he was unafraid, and the inscription he penned may still be seen in Bunhill Fields; while the gentle descent of the family is shown by the coat of arms from Colet of Wendover, he himself acknowledges "the gift of the one only supreme God the Father, by the ministration of his Son Jesus Christ."

And when his daughter Mary died, her husband Richard Warren placed a tablet to her memory in Tewin church, which speaks of Joseph Collet as "a man of extraordinary sweetness of temper, great probity and extensive knowledge."

His career shows, even accentuates, what was fairly frequent in dissenting circles. Religion was important within, commerce was important without. They were blended: if into ecclesiastical affairs a commercial spirit was creeping, religion had engrained probity into commerce: an Englishman's word was his bond. Had more men of his type been equally enterprising and equally true to their principles, the claim for religious equality could not have been resisted. If many like him had become deacons in Baptist churches, ministers might indeed have wondered who was "head of the church," but the churches would have gained in strength and influence. If many had thought, studied their Bibles as carefully, corrected their abstract thinking by comparison with the facts of the heathen world, Baptist missions would have begun two generations earlier.

Hodges resigned the pastorate; he settled nearer London, at Bethnal Green, and presently was knighted. He remained in good standing among the London ministers, but did not frequent the old Monthly Meeting we noticed in 1698, nor did he join a new one founded in 1723/4, on very exclusive lines. He lived to see a second Fund started to extend the plan of 1717, both by helping all needy Baptist churches, and to educate pious and sober young men inclined to devote themselves to the work of the ministry. This laid its finger on the crucial fact that a succession of able men seemed failing. A course of three years

at an Academy was planned, to be extended if wise to four or five; and post-graduate exhibitions of £20 were given. But he did not live long enough to endow it, dying in August 1727. And as his widow placed his handsome monument with its coat of arms, in Stepney churchyard, his memory was not cherished in all Baptist circles. There is even less excuse for forgetting Thomas Guy and his trustees, Sir Gregory Page, chairman of the East India Company, with his magnificent mansion at Blackheath, and the Hollis family, benefactors in England and the colonies.

As Crosby foresaw, indeed lamented by 1740, the quality of London Baptist ministers deteriorated. No longer did good families send their sons to be trained for this work. The only educated ministers had to be imported from the country, Foster from Dorset, Weatherley from Somerset, Gifford from Bristol, Stennet from Exeter. The others were at best self-educated, like Gill; and the lack of contact in their plastic years with other lads preparing for other careers was an irremediable loss. This, of course, told on the congregations, which might indeed be pious and orthodox, but tended to lose all people who valued culture as well. And when the narrow party hesitated to associate with the others, one Fraternal was wrecked, another shrank into a mere smoking club, and the Association ceased to function.

There was, of course, another side to this, a side put so vehemently that its truth has been mistaken for the whole truth. It is true that two churches served by cultured ministers ultimately became semi-Arian, and died out. But it should be emphasised that they were frequented by men who moved in educated and influential circles, that they made an impression on London literature and life. When Defoe was recounting in the year of Hodges' death the progress of London, out of twelve great new improvements he described, one was Guy's Hospital, one was the Bunhill Fields where Collet and Sir Gregory Page were buried, one was a large new meeting-house for Hodges' church. These churches died only when the leases of their buildings expired, and when there was no supply of enterprising educated young men to face new problems. If they tended to Arianism, so did all England, within and without the Established Church; and the remedy was not in such an orthodoxy as Gill and Brine professed, but in a fervid enthusiasm such as Whitefield exhibited. This, it is to be feared, Joseph Collet would not have valued, but as he did recognise the value of missions abroad, perhaps clear thinkers might have seen their value at home also. And that education is quite compatible with orthodoxy is shown in the careers of Gifford and Stennet; when Gill's preaching had

emptied his church, these men filled two new ones, and kept up the tradition of Hodges, Kinch, Kimber and Foster.

One other ill effect followed from the narrowness and ignorance of men like Skepp, Dewhurst, Noble, Ridgway, Rees: Such ministers lost the confidence of laymen in nearly every respect except that of personal character. They could not grasp big issues. They would not support education. They were not interested in public affairs. The General Body of Ministers, founded in 1727, was supplemented within six years by lay Deputies from the Dissenting Churches, who soon came to speak and act for all. We know nothing of equal intimacy being continued between lay and ministerial families such as is shown in the relations of Collet and Hodges.

When another west-country man came to Crosby's church in London, educated in the one Baptist Academy at Bristol, John Rippon, then at last the tide began to submerge the "continent of mud" deposited by John Gill. He built up again a church that had shrunk, he introduced again the idea of literature and founded a Baptist Register, he responded at once to the missionary appeal, till his church, now "one of the wealthiest within the pale of Nonconformity," was a most generous supporter of missions at home and abroad, and the home of a Baptist Union which revived the ideals of Edward Harrison and John Collet.

W. T. WHITLEY.

GREAT GRANSDEN in Huntingdon profited by the labours of Francis Holcroft the Cambridge evangelist. A pedit-baptist church was organised in 1703 under Jabez Conder, who died 1724. After eight years, Benjamin Dutton was called from the open-membership church at Eversholt; a meeting-house was built, and he went to America to collect for the cost, but was wrecked in 1748. Under the influence of him and his wife Ann, the church became Baptist. David Evans of Molleston and Hook Norton, was here 1749-1751 before taking up his life-work at Biggleswade. Then came Timothy Keymer, a comb-maker, who had excited much controversy round Norwich and Worstead in connection with William Cudworth's Methodism. In his time Ann Dutton endowed the church, so at his death in 1771 it was left stable.