

Baptists in the Colonies till 1750.

THE Atlantic seaboard of N. America attracted European settlers from 1599 onwards. With the foundation of Georgia in 1732, all the coast from Florida to Fundy was under English control. Many of the provinces had been organized deliberately as refuges for sects oppressed in their fatherland; Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Georgia are good examples.

Baptists therefore who found life difficult in Wales, England, Ireland, Germany, naturally turned their eyes hither. It might have been expected that they would migrate to the oldest colony, Virginia, or to the twin provinces of Massachusetts and Connecticut, settled by the Puritans. But in the Old Dominion the Church of England obtained a legal establishment as in the mother country, and therefore this colony proved the least attractive. And in New England the Puritans showed themselves even more intolerant; they arrogated powers of self-government, shipped back some Episcopalians who desired to worship according to law, established their own style of worship and taxed all residents to support it, and made life bitter for all who dared oppose their ministers. Even in Plymouth Colony, independent of the others till it was united with Massachusetts under a royal governor in 1692, something of the same persecuting spirit had developed. So the earliest Baptists could not keep a footing on the mainland, but

took refuge on the islands where they were less liable to interference.

From a Baptist standpoint, the period down to 1750 is not divided by any accession of kings; the landmarks are purely local. Chief among them are: 1639, first permanent church in Providence, near Rhode Island; 1663, settlement at Swansea in the Old Colony; 1671, separation of the Seventh-day church at Newport, Rhode Island; 1682, migration of the Maine church to Charleston, S.C.; 1689, migration of the New Hampshire church to Piscataway, N.J.; 1696, Seventh-day Yearly Meeting established; 1706, Philadelphia Association of Particular Baptists; 1719, arrival of German Baptists at Germantown; 1730, separation of German Seventh-day Baptists at Ephrata; 1739, arrival of General Baptist Messenger for Carolina and Virginia; 1739-41, 44-48, tours of George Whitefield.

It was these journeys of Whitefield which quickened religion and brought about the foundation of many Calvinistic "New-Light" churches, which mostly became Baptist. They also raised up many other evangelists, nearly all Calvinist, who travelled widely, and gave such an impetus to the Particular Baptists, that in a short time they felt themselves the Regular Baptists, and the Generals became negligible. All the more important therefore is it in this formative period to insist that there were at least seven types of church: General, Particular, General Seventh-day, Keithian, Rogerene, German, German Seventh-day; in 1738 no one could have foreseen which had a future, and which had none. The next few years were decisive; whereas by 1750 there had been more than a hundred Baptist churches founded, some of the Generals were extinct, others were changing, the Keithians had melted into the Regulars, the Rogerenes were stagnant, the German Seventh-day were so

extremely eccentric that it seemed improbable they could survive long on such lines. The Germans were prolific, but unenterprising; the Particulars were full of zeal.

The usual American plan is to deal with the churches, state by state. It seems more natural to trace the real genetic history of the different movements. If the early churches be plotted on a map, they show a thick cluster round Narragansett Bay, others near the mouth of the Thames, a thick cluster between the mouth of the Hudson and the upper Delaware, others up Delaware bay, with a group at the mouth of the Ashley and Cooper rivers. Early settlers clung to the water-ways; wagon-roads were not yet.

The first Baptist church was due to Roger Williams, and arose at his plantation of Providence in 1639; but it remained sterile till the nineteenth century, and except for setting an example seems of no historic importance. The settlers at Piscataqua (now Dover, New Hampshire) where there was a church under the Puritan clergyman Hanserd Knollys, heard of the incident, and the church was troubled so that the minister returned to England in 1641, and the Baptists moved round near to Providence, settling on Long Island, but not organising. Some members of Cotton's church at Boston, who had sided with Sir Harry Vane against the ministers, and had been expelled, went north with John Clarke as their leader, then came round to Narragansett Bay and bought an island which they re-named Rhode Island. Here they established a church, which presently received as members some Baptists from London, and by October 1648 if not earlier the whole church was Baptist. While both these were Calvinist, they were soon reinforced by other English immigrants, of the

General or Arminian type. Dispute was so keen that in each place it was found wiser to separate, and by 1656 there were two churches at Providence, two at Newport. The English General Baptists soon found their way to the Six Principles mentioned in Hebrews vi. as elementary, and adopted these as fundamental. As they planted new settlements at North and South Kingston and at Tiverton on the mainland, and then at the most westerly point of the territory secured by the charter of 1663, they seem to have adopted naturally the plan of a yearly General Assembly which had been maintained from 1654 in the mother country. Unfortunately no records survive, before 1710, nor did any antiquarian appear, as in Southwark, to gather up any scattered minutes: but the Six-Principle Baptists were certainly the first to organize in America.

The beginnings of Baptist churches in Massachusetts were very difficult. At the end of 1642 the lady Deborah Moody with two other women were presented at Salem for denying infant baptism, and they withdrew to Long Island. Early in 1644, at the same place, W. Witter was charged for the same offence, and another man at Hingham; hereupon a law was passed enacting that Baptists should be banished from Massachusetts. Obadiah Holmes of Reddish and Didsbury, who had been at Salem since 1638, migrated to Rehoboth in the Old Colony, where he joined the church of the Standing Order. Roger Williams had been minister at Salem, and now Charles Chauncey at Scituate ceased baptizing infants; Witter was punished again in 1646, but not expelled the jurisdiction. Correspondence brought out complaints from Winslow that the Old Colony churches were leavened. It was however 1648 before things came to a head, when a man was presented at Dover on the same count. Hereupon Clarke of Newport with

Mark Lucar from London crossed into the Old Colony, deliberately, to spread Baptist principles. They baptized Holmes and others at Seekonk, whereupon the minister of Rehoboth excommunicated them. Massachusetts wrote to the Old Colony, to stop the movement, and as the Baptists held house to house meetings, the legislative of the Old Colony, passed a law forbidding this, though it was the very thing the original Pilgrim Fathers had done; under this law, Holmes was presented in 1650. Next year Witter asked for a visit at Lynn, and Holmes went with two others; they were arrested, two were fined, he was whipped. On returning home, he and eight friends were presented afresh at Rehoboth, and seeing that the old Colony, was inclined to become as intolerant as the men of the Bay, they all withdrew into Rhode Island. In 1653 Henry Dunster, head of the college at Cambridge, declared himself Baptist. He had to resign, and was succeeded by Chauncey, who by this time had overcome his scruples. Dunster crossed the border and settled at Scituate, where he died in 1659, not having founded a Baptist church.

The end of the Commonwealth period induced John Myles of Ilston to quit Wales with his Baptist church and its records. The little company settled within the Old Colony, in 1663, and it is singular that they were guided to Rehoboth. As they were duly fined in July 1667, they bought land further north and formed a new township which they called Swanzey. Thus the township which had once seemed to end a period of wandering and strife, expelled three successive Baptist leaders, Williams, Holmes and Myles. The Swanzey church became leavened with Arminian adherents, and within thirty years it divided.

The arrival of Baptists from London and Dart-

mouth precipitated the formation in 1665 of a church in Boston. Dwelling like the church of Pergamos right in the capital of the persecuting power, it is a marvel that it survived; but it did hold on its way, without any sister church on the mainland for seventy years. But manifestly it was tinged with the conservatism of the State Churches around, for when the Whitefield revival came, it was unresponsive, and a second church arose in 1743. By that time the new stir had caused the formation of causes at Sutton, South Brimfield, Bellingham, Leicester; and the impetus was given which was destined to bring Baptists to the front of the evangelical denominations in New England.

The year 1682 was a turning-point. For six years the valiant Holmes had been pastor of Newport, succeeding Clarke and Lukar; he now passed to his reward. His sons Obadiah and John went on to Pennsylvania, and about the same time Thomas Dungan who had spent a short time on Rhode Island, went further, and established the first Baptist church in that province, as will be described presently. Massachusetts was now in bad odour with the home government, and dared no longer enforce the penalty of banishment, which had been reiterated ten years earlier: and though a Baptist meeting-house had been nailed up, it now came into regular use. To the north at Newbury a second church was openly formed, but it soon disappeared, perhaps because some of its members shared in the remarkable migration now to be mentioned.

One other attempt had been made more to the north as early as 1681. A company of settlers from the west of England included several Baptists headed by W. Screven, whose father in 1656 had signed the Somerset confession for the church at Somerton. From them, and others who previously had had to

content themselves with the Standing Order, a Baptist church was formed, with Screven as its pastor, duly recognized by the sister church in Boston, and its pastor Isaac Hull. The local authorities at once set themselves to stamp it out by fine, imprisonment, bonds to conform, &c. After a year and more, the church decided to follow the gospel advice, and being persecuted in one city to flee to another. Hearing of the good terms offered to settlers in Carolina, and the provisions for religious liberty drawn up by Locke and incorporated in its charter, the whole church migrated to the district at the mouths of the Ashley, Cooper and Edisto rivers. Here they were speedily joined by other settlers direct from England, and the church of Charleston dates its origin from 1683. From the start it embodied Calvinists and Arminians, and as had already happened, these soon preferred to separate and organise different churches rather than wrangle in external unity. Besides those members who lived on the neck which became the seat of government, there were others on Stono creek, who united with the General Baptist group, and more on Edisto island, who united with the Particulars. This latter group shifted in the next generation to Euhaw island, and in 1746 decided to accept the responsibility of being a separate church. The General churches, though fed at intervals by fresh immigrants, were untouched by the fervour aroused by Whitefield, and slowly decayed; by 1787 there was no further use for their Charleston property, which passed to the more energetic body.

Other Baptists who found that life under the New England persecutors was intolerable, made their way direct and via Long Island to New Jersey. With affection for their northern home they transferred its name Piscataqua to their new settlement at the mouth

of the Raritan, where they organised in 1689. The name of Thomas Killingsworth from Norwich assures us that this church also contained G.B. members, but the division which was to be expected took place on another line of cleavage, sixteen years later. This had already taken place on Rhode Island, and we may note the fresh development at Newport.

In London there was a General Baptist church which after one or two rather rapid transformations had come to believe that the Seventh-day was the Sabbath not for Israel alone, but for Christendom. A few pamphlets were published on the question, and the extreme eccentricity of some of its adherents did not utterly discredit it. Some immigrants to Rhode Island held this view, and after an attempt to live as peaceful members of the Newport G.B. church, they separated in 1671 and founded a Seventh-day church. Some of them went further afield, and in three years a second was established at New London. New adherents were won, mostly within the confines of Rhode Island, for Connecticut was not fond of dissent. It was manifestly difficult for them all to assemble each Saturday, and there were mutual difficulties in the way of their worshipping with any other church. They seem to have settled down to domestic worship, accounting themselves all members of one church, whether living on the island or on the mainland. They took the name of Newport, although they had no building there appropriated for the purpose; it was not the custom in that colony, as some royal commissioners remarked with surprise. To prevent leakage, a Yearly Meeting was organised in 1696, and at once there followed singular developments.

George Keith, a Friend from Aberdeen, became surveyor-general in East New Jersey and then school-master in Philadelphia. Here he came to suspect a

tendency of Friends towards Deism, and founded a new society, usually called Keithian Quakers. He was naturally led to return to Britain that he might oppose Quaker heresies at their source; and thus his colonial societies were left without any leader. One of them at Newtown in Pennsylvania adopted the Seventh-day Baptist position in 1697. Though no others seem to have swung quite so far, next year the Keithians at Philadelphia, Nottingham and New Providence declared themselves Baptist.

The example of a second community observing the Seventh-day strengthened the principle of other believers, and encouraged them to stand out in distinct churches. So from the Piscataway church which had already had such a disturbed history, there separated the Seventh-day observers in 1705. And three years later the brethren near Westerly decided to account themselves a separate church, when it proved that most of the brethren now belonged to the mainland group, not the island. Then came a pause, till two new waves of immigrants gave fresh opportunities in Pennsylvania.

The former of these was Welsh, and epoch-making, as will presently appear. But a few Welshmen who pushed up the Schuylkil and the French Creek, where they commemorated their early home of Nantmel, were persuaded in 1726 to adopt the Seventh day. And four years later a settlement of Germans a little further inland headed by Conrad Beissel, were won to the same belief; they established far the most remarkable of all Baptist brotherhoods, which as it held aloof from the English is better described in another connection. It sent out one colony far to the frontier which just survived 1750, and was then exterminated by the natives at the instigation of French priests.

The remaining Seventh-day churches arose in more conventional methods. In 1737 the Welsh and Irish round Cohansey on Delaware Bay separated from the church, and named their community Shiloh. Three years later a similar division took place at Swansea on Narragansett Bay. In 1745 settlers from Stonington and Westerley who had built between the Shark and Squam rivers in Barnegat, and had hitherto been content to be regarded as members of Piscataway, organised at the Shrewsbury church, on the prompting of a deputation from the German Ephratists. It was already clear that New Jersey was to be a stronghold, as Plainfield testifies to this day. Perhaps it was not yet clear that a Seventh-day community can hardly adjust itself to life in the midst of those who have different social customs. The country was by no means crowded, and only in another century was it found wise to secure a sheltered asylum in the hills of North-western New York where the Seventh-day could be a day of rest without dislocating a mixed community.

One other minor movement took place in these early days, the first in Connecticut. John Rogers drank of the apocalyptic vials, and bid fair to travel in the footsteps of his earlier Fifth-Monarchy namesake. Other peculiarities were silent worship, ostentatious work on the Sunday, and quiet manual labour during their own services on Saturday. His energies were chiefly exerted at New London where he separated from the Seventh-day Baptists in 1680, accounting nothing obligatory unless it were expressly ordered in the N.T., and objecting strongly to all use of medicine. After some twenty years he had sufficient influence for Gurdon Saltonstall to condescend to an open debate, which was published by Rogers in 1701 at Philadelphia. Once having ventured into print, he had the presses of New York and Boston working to

spread his Epistles, especially to the Quakers and Seventh-day Baptists. It must have been a blow that Peter Pratt retorted in 1725 on the "New London Quakers, the disciples of John Rogers"; and as the founder was dead, his son of the same name took up the cudgels. All this time the Puritans were steadily oppressing them, and a little colony of Rogerenes moved into northern New Jersey, where after two experiments they settled on Schooley's mountain in 1734. Despite the press and persecution, there was no great accession, and the movement remained almost a family gathering traceable down to the revolution, and negligible.

On the island of Martha's Vineyard, part of the Old Colony, Baptists went among the natives, and by 1693 organised an Indian church at Chilmark. As the natives gradually died out, this disappeared; but it deserves to be remembered that the claims of the aborigines, so well respected by Roger Williams, were met in the deepest things. A second church was formed for them on the mainland in 1741. The neighbouring island of Nantucket had as its leading citizen Peter Folger, miller, weaver, blacksmith, surveyor, trusted to keep the records and be clerk of the courts. He was a member of Clark's church, but apparently did not organise his neighbours into a separate body. And the Baptists on Block island were content with the same domestic worship, accounting themselves to belong to the same church with headquarters at Newport.

Across the western border of Rhode Island, there was more enterprise. Perhaps it was felt that John Rogers was prejudicing the whole Baptist cause by his eccentricities, and that it was desirable to send a sane preacher. Certain it is that opposite New London on the other bank of the Thames, Valentine Wight-

man went from Clarke's church in Newport to raise the General Baptist flag at Groton in 1705. Not only did he keep it aloft, but he went to New York on preaching tours, and by 1714 had the pleasure of baptising Nicholas Evers, a brewer from Wiltshire, and organising a G.B. church there under the protection of the governor. New London itself was occupied in 1726, but soon came disasters. New York disbanded, selling its meeting-house; the New London Elder proved of bad character and wrecked his cause. Wightman rallied Evers to come and help him, so that the Groton church survived the shock. And then Wightman was cheered by the news that while his own tours had apparently done little, yet at Wallingford, north of New Haven, the reading of Delaune's Plea for the Nonconformists in 1731 had resulted in the formation of a Baptist church. Wightman had constantly to champion Baptists, and a famous debate of 1727 against the parish minister of Colchester, is typical of the denominational attitudes: the Standing Order cleric would not debate whether compulsory taxation for his support had any N.T. warrant, and contented himself with asserting that it was legal in Connecticut. From the inhospitable clime of New England, it is time to turn to the more genial atmosphere of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, both developed under the auspices of William Penn and the Friends.

There was one church near Sandy Hook which was encouraged to organize in 1688, after members had been drifting in from the intolerance of New England for some time. Such was Obadiah Holmes of Manchester, who had been so cruelly treated at Boston in Massachusetts, and came to the peace of Middletown. Two of his descendants crossed to the Delaware, and did good service at Philadelphia, where

Judge John Holmes refused to entertain a suit by Friends against Keithians, on the ground that the charter guaranteed religious freedom. But this Middletown church did reproduce the strife between Generals and Particulars before the century ran out, and under the Welsh influence settled it in 1712 by 42 of the 68 members subscribing the confession published at London by Elias Keach in 1697. The English immigrants seem always to have included General Baptists, who indeed were not only the older, but were perhaps the more numerous till the end of the seventeenth century. They never won any from the Particular Baptists, but never could amalgamate; they either died out slowly from sheer want of energy, or became mere raw material to be moulded by the more energetic Calvinists, or if there were still *esprit de corps* they resented the latter seeking to alter their basis, as in the well-known case of Benjamin Keach. But as least America was never subjected to the influence of Matthew Caffin, and the G.B. churches never displayed any weakness as to the deity of the Lord. Their languour is typified by Henry Sator, who arrived in 1709 in Maryland, where the laws offered no hindrance to work. Yet though his house was always open to ministers, 33 years passed before a church was organised at Chestnut Ridge. This was due to Henry Lovell, a New Englander ordained at Piscataway in 1732, but soon expelled for bad behaviour: this evinced itself both at Sator's church and at its daughter at Opeckon in Virginia, so that they as well as Kehukee in North Carolina were left devoid of ministers, and in their need turned to the Philadelphia Association just after the middle of the century.

The pioneer of better things was Thomas Dungan, a refugee from Ireland. After calling at Rhode Island,

he went up the Delaware, and settled some 25 miles above Philadelphia. He was joined by refugees from Radnorshire, and they formed a Baptist church in 1684, calling it Cold Spring. All the Irish and Welsh immigrants hither were Calvinists, and the churches they formed seem never to have had any serious difficulty such as we have constantly noticed hitherto from the presence of G.B. settlers. Dungan may have chosen his site badly, but he was a good itinerant and became known. One day there landed at the capital a young man in gown and bands, who was taken for an episcopal divine and was invited to preach. In the sermon he was stricken with shame and avowed himself an impostor, able to sustain his part only because he was a son of a Baptist minister at Southwark, Benjamin Keach. In his remorse he sought out Dungan, was baptized, and returned to do in earnest what he had done for fun. By 1689 he had gathered a church on the banks of the Pennepek, a creek slightly above Philadelphia; though five were from Wales, five from England and only one from Kilkenny, yet the church was named Lower Dublin. Elias Keach now took up the work of Dungan, and soon had outstations at Burlington, opposite Cold Spring, in Philadelphia itself, at Chester down river, and even at Cohansey down the bay. The exact relation of these groups to Lower Dublin was not precisely defined, and various dates are assigned for their separate existence. Young Keach returned to England in 1692, and the Cold Spring church disbanded in 1702. Between these dates the Keithian movement had produced a new kind of Baptist, which fortunately did not hold aloof from others. And a new influence entered in this decade which proved dominant.

A Welsh element has already been observed, in Roger Williams, John Myles, and the founders of

Lower Dublin. With 1701 there arrived a colony from Pembroke and Carmarthen, which before leaving Milford Haven had organized into a church under Thomas Griffith. After experimenting at Philadelphia and Pennepek, they bought about fifty square miles in Newcastle County, named it Welsh Tract, and removed thither. By subsequent fixing of boundaries this is now in Delaware State. The church numbered 37, and had men with strong convictions, which they pressed on all the churches in Pennsylvania and Jersey, so that soon baptism was followed up by the laying on of hands, every member of a church signed a covenant, and public worship was enlivened by the singing of original hymns. By 1706 a Philadelphia Association was formed, which has been active and regulative ever since. The Confession of 1677 was translated into Welsh by Abel Morgan with amendments by the two Keaches on these points, and 122 members of the Welsh Tract church signed it in 1716. The Association in 1742 approved the revision, which has ever since been current, and is still standard in the South. Ministers from the Welsh Tract overflowed in all directions; within the half century Cohansey had Nathaniel Jenkins, while his son was at Cape May, Abel Morgan at Middletown, Griffith Jones at Duck Creek in Delaware. When news of the happy settlement reached Wales, another large colony came out in 1711, and settled eighteen miles west of Philadelphia in the Great Valley. Another group founded Montgomery in 1719 with Benjamin Griffith of Cardigan as pastor, and William Thomas in charge of a branch at Hilltown. Welshmen did much in stiffening the Keithians and bringing them into line, as at Brandywine and Southampton. Yet if they supplied the moulding force, we must not overlook the materials supplied by English from Ireland; if all

were as prolific as Dungan, this must have been most important, for eighty years after his death, more than 600 people claimed him as their ancestor.

A colony of thirty members left Welsh Tract in 1737 and settled on the Peedee river in South Carolina. Hitherto the scales had been very even in Virginia and the Carolinas between the Generals and the Particulars, but the appearance of this sturdy Welsh Neck church decisively tipped the balance, which could not be redressed by the appearance of a Messenger from the G.B. Assembly to Stono. For George Whitefield had now begun his wonderful journeys, and the churches that sprung up in his wake were both Calvinist and aggressive. There was very little direct contact, yet his superintendent of the Orphan Home at Savannah, Nicholas Bedgegood was baptized, and in the second half of the century became useful in promulgating Baptist views.

In New England, Whitefield's influence told differently. There arose new churches, separate from those of the Standing Order, which were petrifying. Not only were most of these destined to go further and become Baptist; but the animosity of the Established Church was diverted chiefly to them, so that pure Baptist churches were able to arise without special and prompt persecution. Thus the first decade of the new era saw the rise of thirteen Baptist churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut, nearly trebling the number in that district.

New York was all but immune. Some New Jersey settlers crossed the Hudson to Fishkill in 1740; others organized in their own province at Scotch Plains; and one or two who went to New York city instituted domestic worship to which came also ex-members of the defunct G.B. church. Just over the

Connecticut border was a little church at Horseneck, Stamford; and the Oyster Bay church on Long Island was technically in the province. Such was the low state of the Baptist interest in what was destined to be the Empire State. Its improvement was due to John Gano, who did for the Middle States what his brother Huguenot, Francis Pelot, did for South Carolina.

Two other bodies of Baptists remain for notice, both due to immigration to Pennsylvania from Germany. The "Colleges of Piety" which arose there in imitation of the Collegiants who originated at Rynsburg in Holland, led in a few cases to the adoption of Baptist principles. This can be traced in von Hochenau's Confession of 1702 at Detmold. Even in the Palatinate there was no love for dissenters, and when Penn travelled to advertise that land was granted cheaply to those persecuted for conscience sake, emigration rapidly swelled, and brought to his province a most extraordinary assortment of refugees. Among them were many Baptists, the denomination dating from Alexander Mack; the early settlers sent back such good reports that every German Baptist community crossed the ocean, leaving none at all in their former land. They are not to be confounded with the Mennonites; their new neighbours called them Dunkards, Dunkers, Tunkers, but they style themselves German Baptist Brethren.

An offshoot from them adopted the Seventh-day, and clustered at Ephrata near Lancaster. Here many hermits lived in cabins, others were organised into a brotherhood, which was matched by a sisterhood, the two communities having extensive buildings for dormitories, refectories, worship, industries of many kinds, including a printing-press and bindery whence went forth propaganda works and much done for other

Germans. Around the central cluster of buildings were many farms taken up by more ordinary German Seventh-day Baptists. About 1750 these were at their zenith, but the celibate communities attracted few recruits, and the advent of Lutheran pastors drew off the younger generation, so that the sect to-day barely survives at Snow Hill. A colony that had gone along the Shenandoah valley, to Virginia and across the mountains into the Mississippi basin seemed in 1750 most promising; but the French were aiming to dominate that region, and exterminated the settlement seven years later, the few prisoners dying in a monastery in France. The Ephrata community deserves notice for having founded Sunday-schools a generation before they were gathered in England; seeing that the needs of frontier settlements claimed the children as workers, they used the Saturday to teach their own children, and the Sunday to teach the children of those who took that as their day of rest.

The main body of the German Baptists clustered round Germantown, though a fresh immigration from Gimbshiem in 1749 caused the settling of Bermudian in York county. Christoph Sauer is well known as a leading printer, who not only did for his compatriots all that his rival Franklin did for the English, but also published for them a Family Bible, before any Bible in English had been printed in America, and followed it up with a pocket Testament and a Psalter. Alexander Mack had a son of the same name, who travelled widely and then settled down in 1748 to shepherd the community. To him it is usually ascribed that they increased and so became an important factor in the life of the province, though their retention of many customs long since abandoned by English Baptists causes them often to be regarded with some amusement. To-day they number nearly 100,000.