

COLLECTIONS
OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

VOL. I.
OF THE SECOND SERIES.

BOSTON:
JOHN H. EASTBURN, PRINTER.
1838.

ACCOUNT OF THE DISSENTING INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE STATES, A. D. 1759, IN A LETTER FROM REV. DR. SPENCER TO DR. STILES.

Rev. and dear Sir,

WHEN I sent you a broken account of the dissenting interest in these parts, I was too ill to be particular, and shall attempt this one as being more perfect.

The dissenters are made up of Independents, Baptists, and Presbyterians. The last denomination are the most numerous. Besides these there are several Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, and French Protestant churches. The best account of these several denominations I have been able to obtain, is as follows :

1. Presbyterian clergy. This body formerly consisted of two synods, viz. the New York and Philadelphia, but in May, 1758, united into one, called the New York and Philadelphia synod. This synod collects all the Presbyterian clergy living in the provinces of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. The synod consists of eight presbyteries respectively made up of ministers contiguous, without any regard to the boundaries of counties or of provinces; so that the number of ministers, for instance, of New York Presbytery, are, by a great majority, made up of the clergy of New Jersey.

<i>The Names of Presbyteries.</i>			<i>No. of Ministers.</i>	
Hanover	Presbytery, Virginia,	-	-	14
Dunnegal	Do. Maryland,	-	-	11
Lewiston	Do. Pennsylvania	-	-	6
New Castle	Do. in Do. -	-	-	11
Philadelphia	Do. in Do. -	-	-	12
New Brunswick	Do. in New Jersey,	-	-	11
New York	Presbytery,	-	-	22
Suffolk	Do. Long Island, N. York,	-	-	13

2. Dutch reformed churches in the provinces of New York and New Jersey, which formerly belonged to one Cœtus, but are now jumbled into two.

Dutch Ministers,	-	-	-	20
------------------	---	---	---	----

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 3. | Lutheran Ministers, in New York, (I believe) | 2 |
| | in New Jersey, - | 0 |
| | in Philadelphia, (about) | 4 |
| 4. | French Protestants, in New York, - | 2 |
| | in New Jersey, - | 0 |
| | in Pennsylvania, (I believe) | 0 |
| 5. | Independents, in New York Province, at Long Island, | 3 |
| | These or Congregationalists in New Jersey, &c. | 0 |
| 6. | Baptists, in New York Province, - | 3 |
| | in New Jersey, - | 5 |
| | in Pennsylvania, (about) | 4 |
| 7. | The Church of England is but a very small part of the inhabitants of these provinces, having very small congregations, and they are not numerous. | |

Church of England Clergy,			
In the province of New York,	-	-	7
New Jersey,	-	-	5
Pennsylvania,	(about)		4

Were you to estimate the proportion of numbers in these several denominations, you would consider that there is a large number of Presbyterian vacancies within the bounds of our synod, especially in *Virginia*, where there is *not one minister to three societies*, and the number of vacancies increases daily. We have great need of young men who are willing to travel into the lower countries, which seem happily inclined to receive the gospel.

I am, dear Sir,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

ELIHU SPENCER.

Shrewsbury, Nov. 3, 1759.

Rev. Mr. STILES.