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A Family Chronicle

CHARLES NISBET

BOOK ONE

BY

R. WALLACE WHITE

A FAMILY CHRONICLE

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R. Wallace White

Dickinson College
Friends of the Library
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

FOREWORD

History is the cacophony of the echoes of many voices: statesmen and merchants, fighters and healers, homemakers and wanderers. And then there are the educators, those who keep the house of reason. These prepare and preserve the distillate of the past that we call knowledge.

Such educators as Charles Nisbet are among our most precious resources. He and the others who nurtured the first tender plantings of American higher education spoke with a clarity deserving an equally clear hearing across 200 years. The echoes of their lives and work must not be lost in the noise and confusion of an unrecorded and interpreted past.

It is then a genuine debt that we owe to Wallace White who has retrieved and amplified for us the tones of Nisbet's life and thought, his actions and their underlying values. In recovering again and again his history, we recover our own. We repossess not only a sense of institutional purpose but a deeper awareness of the dignity of learning, the joy of teaching, the refreshment of imaginative and disciplined thought. Others have written of Nisbet, among them Samuel Miller at the turn of the 19th century, James Henry Morgan the early 1900s, and more recently Charles Coleman Sellers in his distinguished history of Dickinson College. Nevertheless, the valued lives of the past must be celebrated again and again. Wallace White has invoked that rich mind and vital spirit for our continued benefit. It is a privilege to recognize his distinctive contribution, the continuing and profound influence of the learned Scot who is his subject and - with Benjamin Rush - our founder, and the higher learning in America to which he and we have given our lives.

As the 25th President of Dickinson College, I experience a filial warmth and regard for Nisbet although we are separated by 208 years and 23 other presidents. Each morning he greets me from his painting beside my office door in Old West. I hear the echo of his words, "mothers and schoolmasters plant the seeds of nearly all the good and evil which exists in our world." If White's small volume receives the reading it deserves, then we shall celebrate the life of one who planted well. Perhaps, too, our own sowing will be more effective.

Sam A. Banks
President
Dickinson College

PREFACE

Among those who are listed as descendants of Dr. Charles Nisbet you will not find my name. Some Scottish blood flows in my veins, and I suppose that if one should go far enough back in the history of that rugged land, a link might be found, but neither consanguinity nor the possibility of a relationship with the "Old Gentleman," as I now call him, have prompted me to peer into the affairs of his family.

The search for Nisbet connections was instigated on behalf of the College's plans for its Bicentennial celebration in 1973. At that time the portion of the College campus incorporating the Library was to be named after Dr. Nisbet. It became my task and pleasure to locate as many descendants of Nisbet as possible who would be then invited to the dedication ceremony. This would have been almost an impossible task if the College Historian, Dr. Charles Coleman Sellers, had not already done some preliminary work along this line. In the course of this he had become acquainted with one Douglas C. Turnbull, Jr., then of Baltimore and now of Cockeysville, Maryland.

Armed with the result of Charles Sellers' work, I attached myself to Douglas Turnbull, and by the time of the dedication ceremony together we had been able to locate approximately 125 adult descendants, all of whom were invited to attend. Many accepted the invitation and were on the scene when the ceremony, the first event of Dickinson's Bicentennial year, took place on September 15, 1972.

During the search for descendants, and as an aid to such activity, it became apparent, early on, that I should have to chart my way. This was done, and by the time the first Nisbet gathering took place a master chart and seventeen subordinate charts had been produced and distributed to descendants. This narrative has emerged from what is now found on charts.

Much of what you will read has been gleaned from long talks with people who have by this time become good friends. Some has been given to me by letter and some of it has been the result of research. I have sought and obtained the assistance of my friend, Charles Coleman Sellers, now deceased, Mrs. Martha Slotten, archivist of Dickinson College, and numerous "Nisbets." I have also availed myself of what was so well dealt with by the late Archibald Turnbull, whose privately printed work on William Turnbull, husband of Dr. Nisbet's eldest daughter, Mary, covers the Turnbull line in great detail. Members of this line of descent will find some of that work repeated in what has been written here and in later efforts, but there may still be a bit of something new for them in the more brief discussion of Turnbulls to be included for the edification of those not in the Turnbull line. I have read privately

printed works on the family of Alexander Brown of Baltimore, the Coxe family of Pennsylvania, another work which included Samuel Lawrence, married to Nisbet's granddaughter, and much about Bishop Samuel McCoskry, son of Nisbet's daughter, Alison.

With this second printing as with the first, I suggest that if any expressions of appreciation are due, they be directed to my wife, Sally, who has been married to me for thirty years, but has lived with Charles Nisbet the last nine. I am grateful to Mrs. Jeanne Hockley, of Dickinson College, who has faithfully labored with the various "Nisbet" charts as well as the manuscript for this effort.

As for myself, this thing has taken me by the nape of my neck and will not release me until I have completed the job. It is an absorbing task to unravel family threads and pick up some interesting history along the way. I have enjoyed every minute of it, even the visits to cemeteries.

R. W. W.

Carlisle, Pennsylvania
July 30, 1980

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CHARLES NISBET

Chapter I

Preparation for an Unforseen Future

In this, as in most recitals of fact, it will be well for us to begin at the beginning - who was Charles Nisbet; where did he come from; what about his family background; what of his education and his career as a minister of the Church of Scotland; and most of all, what manner of man was he, who left a prosperous living in his homeland for all the uncertainties of a new Republic?

Charles Nisbet's biographers have him born on January 21, 1736, in Haddington, Scotland.[1] In fact, although the parish records of Yester, near Haddington, have no entry of the date of his birth they do show his baptism on January 8, 1736, the son of "William Nisbet" a schoolmaster "in Long Yester" (a district within Yester) "and Alison Hepburn his spouse..."[2] Other records indicate his birth in Long Yester. He had two brothers, one older and one younger, and a sister. The elder brother, Andrew, entered the ministry and subsequently became pastor of the parish of Garvald, in the Presbytery of Haddington, surviving Charles by several years. The other brother, William, became a merchant and lived until 1784 or 1785.[3] Of the sister we know only that her name was Susan and that she was born in April 1740.[4]

Being the child of a schoolmaster apparently served young Charles well, for upon entry to the University of Edinburgh in 1752, at the age of sixteen, he had already so diligently studied Latin and Greek that he was able to tutor others.[5] In addition to this activity, he wrote for some of the popular periodicals of the day, thus rendering himself self-supporting. He remained at the University in what we should now call undergraduate status for two years. There is no record of the award of a degree, but this is not considered to have been out of the ordinary, for at that time there was little interest in degrees and they were rarely awarded. There is record, however, of his enrollment in at least two courses: Greek and Moral Philosophy.[6] Upon completion of the two years, he entered what was known as "Divinity Hall" at Edinburgh, as a student of theology, with a view to the Gospel Ministry. Completion of this course required an additional six years of study.[7]

All of this effort was during what has been called "The Golden Years of Scottish Education." At this time the University of Edinburgh had for some few years been developing a "professorial" method of teaching - one which did away with the tutorial systems of Oxford and Cambridge, and Harvard in America. Instead of being guided by a single tutor throughout his college career, the student attended the lectures of specialists as in our colleges today. Nisbet carried this system with him to America and installed it at Dickinson College. This method of instruction was advanced for its time and from its results was fruitful in its application. Another change was taking place while the young man was at his studies. Teachers were beginning to move away from the old

practice of lecturing in Latin. At Edinburgh, many people of the town desired to audit lectures and to accommodate them, each lecture would include a review in English of the previous lecture. From this came a gradual abandonment of classical tongues except in a quotation or as a means of explanation. This concept Nisbet also carried with him to the new land.[8] From the beginning, lectures at Dickinson College were in English.

The zeal of this young man was extraordinary. By the time he had finished with his formal education he was not only well versed in Philosophy, the Scriptures and the works of the world's greatest writers and thinkers, but was also skilled in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, German and probably "Erse," according to his biographer, Samuel Miller.[9] He seemed to his fellow Scots a Titan of erudition. His memory was prodigious and he was termed "a walking library." It was while he was still a student that his tremendous capabilities became known to teachers and preachers of Scotland. One of his earliest and most lasting friendships was formed during these years - with John Witherspoon, later to become head of Princeton, from whose pulpit in Paisley Nisbet preached his first sermon and whom years later Nisbet joined in matrimoney to his second wife.[10] Witherspoon also was a native of Yester Parish.[11]

Upon completion of his studies, and at the age of twenty-four, he was licensed on September 24, 1760 to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Edinburgh.[12] This "license" did not amount to an ordination, but was the Presbytery's first step in that direction. The young preacher's first engagement was to supply a church in the Gorbals, an ecclesiastical district of Glasgow, for which service he was to receive, in addition to his stipend, a house in which to live. The Scots of the parish were extraordinary canny, for observing that Nisbet was unmarried, and a domestic residence did not seem to them to be necessary, they postponed compliance with this portion of the arrangement. Nisbet stood for this for a two year period, when having received a call from another parish "he thought it was his duty to remove." It was in connection with this episode that we first encounter the sarcastic wit of Nisbet which became his greatest weakness. For his final sermon he preached on Acts XXVIII, 30: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own house, and received all that came in unto him."[13] With that quotation as his farewell, he departed for Montrose, which was to be his home for many years.

Montrose is located on the east coast of Scotland, about thirty miles south of Aberdeen. It was a Royal Borough and a prosperous town, having active fishing, manufacturing and shipping enterprises, and serving as a market town for the surrounding area. The parish was well-to-do and was looked upon as a highly desirable charge.[14] Although the interests of the community have been somewhat inclined away from fishing and shipping, it still serves a considerable area and is quite a manufacturing center as well as a golfing and seaside resort. The parish church of Nisbet's time is gone, but on its site stands the present "Old Church," erected in 1791. This replacement edifice was altered in 1832 by the substitution of a tall, slender spire for its original shorter and more blunted steeple. The Town Council was responsible for the changing of the steeple and installation of a clock, and retaining control over that portion of the

church, has given the church the "privilege" of ascending to the point where the three church bells are located, one of which belongs to the parish while the others are the property of the town. Another "privilege" is that of using as a vestry the room immediately beneath the steeple, on what in Europe is called the first floor, and we call the second. Behind the church is a graveyard, quiet within its walls - deep in a green slumber. The Dominie is proud of the fact that he has preached to the Queen and to the Royal Family at their small Chapel at Crathie, near Balmoral, where he was a weekend guest of Her Majesty. The Stated Clerk of the Session, a lawyer and a member of a firm which has existed in Montrose for over three hundred years, bears the name and is undoubtedly related to the Ross who was asked by John Dickinson to request Nisbet's release from the local Presbytery so that he might take over the reins of Dickinson College.

To get on with the story, the Montrose Church wanted an assistant to its aged and infirmed pastor, and requested the Reverend Doctor Gillies, of Glasgow, to recommend a suitable candidate. He immediately gave them the name of Charles Nisbet. The church wanted Nisbet initially as assistant and ultimately as pastor, but this was not a routine thing, for Montrose being a Royal Burgh, the right of patronage which was exercised in the selection of a pastor, was in the Crown - at that time George III. The Town Council had the duty of taking the lead in measures to fill the pastoral vacancy, anticipatory though it might be. They proceeded to elect Charles Nisbet to be Assistant Pastor and Successor to the Reverend John Cooper, at a salary of Fifty Pounds per annum; promised to make application to the King as Patron of the First Minister's Charge "for his Royal signed Manual in Mr. Nisbet's favor, naming him both Assistant to and also Successor to him...at his death," and also promised to have him ordained. The Presentation by the Royal Patron was dated November 24, 1763 and Nisbet was ordained by the Presbytery of Brechin on May 17, 1764.[15]

Reverend Mr. Cooper's hold on life was apparently more firm than had been believed, for it was almost ten years before the Assistant became the Pastor.[16] His salary was set at the sum of one hundred and twenty pounds ($583.20) per annum and his tenure was for life.[17] By this time he was the head of a family, having married in June 1766, Anne Tweedy, daughter of Thomas Tweedy, Esquire, of Quarter, about 30 miles southeast of Edinburgh. Nisbet's brother, Andrew, had been a private tutor in the Tweedy home and Charles had met Anne while visiting his brother there.[18] At least three of the four children who were to come with their parents to America were born during Nisbet's days as an Assistant Pastor.

It is time to take a good look at the new Pastor. What kind of a man was he, mentally, physically and theologically? How did he respond to challenge? Was he well liked? Was he happy in his circumstances? These are searching questions and unfortunately the answers are not all going to be favorable. No man since the death of Christ has scored 100% upon complete and thorough examination, so we should not consider our intermediate and our final estimates of Nisbet as being upon the minus side.

He has been described as being a bit below medium height, slender and agile in his early life. He later claimed that in his youth he could easily keep pace with a horse and frequently, on a winter morning, walked twenty to thirty miles "before breakfast, without any painful effort." (Ed. "A slow horse and a late breakfast.") He became corpulent before reaching middle age, but remained agile, and his movements were quick. His health was generally good, although occasionally he was troubled by a disorder of the stomach. Mentally, he was a giant.[19] People often remarked of his prodigious memory - most of Homer's Illiad and Virgil's Aeneid he could repeat verbatim. His friend, Ashbel Green, said that "everything that he read or heard seemed to be fixed in his memory."[20] Samuel Miller, his biographer, who had spent much time with him reports that Nisbet "excelled in conversation and delighted in social intercourse." (In later years, John Dickinson came to enjoy discussions with Nisbet so much that they became the basis for an annual visit to Dickinson's home.)

When Nisbet entered the ministry, there was a division in the Church of Scotland. There were those who were orthodox in their belief and there were those who were considered moderate. (The "Old Side" vs. the "New Side.") The orthodox group, in the minority, were distinguished by adherence "to evangelical truth, and faithful preaching; and by their opposition to Patronage, especially to its abuses." They were ever on the watch for possible encroachment by civil authority upon the spiritual purity of the church, fearing that designing statesmen (politicians?) might attempt to use the church as their instrument in the pursuit of secular policy, all of this at the expense of true religion. The moderates, on the other hand, were not as firm in their doctrinal views; were less inclined toward the evangelical in their preachings and being friends of the system of patronage, were more inclined to be less opposed to plans of secular politicians.[21] Presbyterians of both sides reflected a political force, and the division was carried to America.

Nisbet from the very beginning was a strict Calvinist adhering faithfully to the Orthodox point of view. While he ultimately made a 180 degree turn in his political beliefs, he remained true to his religious orthodoxy to the end.[22]

We have mentioned Nisbet's unfortunate use of the weapon of sarcasm as a weakness. From the earliest days of his service of the Church, his speech, his preachings, and his writings (of which there is little other than letters to friends) were replete with satire. He seemed also to have an irrepressible urge to say something smart - to devastate an opponent by the exercise of his wit and to cap the clever remark of another by one more clever of his own. His delight in this was obvious, for it has been said that when he had a point to score his countenance would light up "bright and expressive, with an expression all its own."[23] After his death, Benjamin Rush wrote: "It (Nisbet's wit) was the bane of Dr. Nesbitt's (sic) conversation and letters. He seemed to live only to make people laugh or angry. It was, I believe, from viewing the unfortunate propensity to ill-timed and indiscriminate wit in Dr. Nesbitt when a young man that Dr. Witherspoon said he would almost as soon whip a boy for wit as for lying."[24] Rush should have known what he was talking about, for he

was often the target of some of Nisbet's sharpest and most penetrating barbs.

All of this was most unfortunate, for it created an impression of him as an ill-natured man, which he was not, being considered by those who knew him well a benevolent, kind and compassionate man. In social groups, particularly in his later years, his wit and his humor seemed to lose their satirical character, and he was remembered by many as having dominated their discussions with a ready, cheerful, flashing wit, interspersed with references to and quotations from the master writers and thinkers of the ages.

From the time of his arrival at Montrose to assume the duties of assistant to the pastor, Nisbet made friends from among the congregation of his church. The Countess of Leven and Melville (the former Matilda Nisbet - not a relative) was a close friend and correspondent for many years. Within ecclesiastical circles he became not only well known but influential. He was an outstanding member of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and participated in some of the most bitter struggles within that body, taking a firm stand as an advocate of the rights of the people against the encroachments of civil and ecclesiastical oppression.[25] Upon one occasion, he stood alone in both Presbytery and Synod against a proposal to annex one parish to another, and thus reduce the number of parishes within the Presbytery of Brechin, to which the Montrose church belonged. Having lost the fight in the "lower courts" the case was appealed to the General Assembly, where Nisbet's forceful arguments resulted in a reversal. Again, in a case involving the right of patronage, which had stemmed from the sale of the patronage of the parish of Marykirk to one Brymer, an innkeeper whose son was at the time a student of divinity, Nisbet took to the floor. The pastor of the church at Marykirk having died, Brymer, owner of the right of patronage, made a presentation to his son. The parishoners objected, took their case to the Presbytery, lost there, appealed to the Synod, lost once more and finally brought their case before the General Assembly. Here Nisbet spoke strongly and at length, but could not in this instance sway the members of that body. In later years, Nisbet reported that he had once been censured for quoting scripture before the General Assembly. Apparently he had done so in a manner tinged with his usual wit or sarcasm, hoping to score a point thereby.[26]

Nisbet apparently did not write out his sermons completely. He usually wrote their beginnings and from that point would proceed without notes. His voice was rather weak, not suitable for reaching all corners of a large room, sonorous in character and somewhat monotonous in tone.[27] They were full of theological meat and social and political comment, larded with his customary satire. Upon one occasion, the members of the Montrose Town Council appeared in a body, as usual, and in their accustomed place in the church. Soon after the sermon began the members of that group perceived that its content was not to be to their liking and arising in a body they left the church, accompanied by Nisbet's quotation "The wicked flee when no man pursueth."

Nisbet was not noted for his religious tolerance. He was most critical of John Wesley and his followers. He became embroiled, almost to the

point of being charged with treason, because of his support of Lord Gordon in 1780. Parliament, in an effort to add some support for the way in America, passed a bill in 1778 which removed many of the disabilities under which members of the Roman Catholic Church had labored. One which was removed was the prohibition against holding a post as an officer in the army of the Crown, officers being sorely needed. A number of Protestant organizations in Scotland objected strenuously to the bill and finally on June 2, 1779, some 50,000 people led by Lord Gordon assembled in London to petition for the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act. The crowd stormed into Parliament, with Gordon as their leader and prevented that body from carrying on the business of the assembly. Later, as was often the case, many people not at all interested in the subject for which the crowd originally had assembled joined the throng and before anyone could halt it, the assemblage became a rioting mob. Troops were finally called upon to restore order, but before it all ended 200 people had been shot dead and many had been wounded; 192 persons were arrested and 25 were eventually executed. At the height of the trouble, Lord Gordon quickly disclaimed any responsibility and disavowed the friends who had supported him. Among Gordon's papers, seized by the Crown during investigation of a possible charge of treason against Gordon, was a letter from Nisbet, evidencing strong support of Gordon's views. Gordon was not brought to trial nor was Nisbet, but there were some murmurings of "treason" in Nisbet's direction. Although not a part of our story, it is interesting to record that Gordon continued through his life to fight the Establishment without success, converted to Judaism and finally died in Newgate Prison, having been convicted of libel in 1787.[28]

Among reasonable Whigs, with whom Nisbet was numbered, there was considerable sympathy toward the American colonists in their resistance to the Crown, both before and during the Revolution. To these men the reactions of Lord North and George III to the acts and attitudes of their British brothers across the sea were abhorrent. Nisbet left no doubt as to how he stood on the question. He preached on it, he wrote letters about it and he discussed it at length with friends.[29] His old friend, Witherspoon, who left Scotland to become president of Princeton, had become completely "Americanized" and, although we have no letters which passed between them, it is but reasonable to assume that Nisbet was as much influenced by Witherspoon's views as he was by his own convictions, reinforced, of course, by his usual taste for a contest with constituted authority in support of the common man. As a result of his support of the colonists, Nisbet became the object of official and unofficial attention and skated on thin ice during the period of conflict. One favorable result of Nisbet's support of the colonial cause was the subsequent grant by Princeton University of the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1783, upon the recommendation of Witherspoon, based upon Nisbet's friendship for America.[30] (This degree was the only one which Nisbet ever held.) Another, and vastly more important one, was the influence his friendship for America had upon those seeking a President for Dickinson College.

The selection of Witherspoon for the position at Princeton was the result of efforts by Benjamin Rush, then a medical student at the University of Edinburgh and, later, perhaps the most famous American physician of his

time. Rush had graduated from Princeton, then known as the College of New Jersey, in 1760. The post at Princeton having become vacant through the death of its president, Rush then a student at Edinburgh University, was given authority to ask Witherspoon, a well-known divine and teacher, to accept the position. When first approached by Rush, Witherspoon declined the offer, influenced to a considerable degree by the reluctance of his wife to leave Scotland. When pressed by Rush, Witherspoon suggested that consideration be given to the selection of Charles Nisbet, his close friend and protege.[31] Apparently Nisbet and Rush had met and Rush had formed an estimate of Witherspoon's nominee, which prevented his consideration, for in a letter to Witherspoon in 1767, Rush spoke of Nisbet as a good choice for a professorship under Witherspoon, or under another, if Witherspoon should not come to America. Wrote he, "A gentleman of Nisbet's pregnant genius would soon ripen for the highest charge..."[32] Rush's persistence, aided by some smooth maneuvering which required quieting pressure to be exerted upon Mrs. Witherspoon by another lady, at Rush's request, finally resulted in an acceptance by Witherspoon, who departed for America. There he became perhaps the most famous of the Scottish educational imports of the time.

At this point we should take a good look at Benjamin Rush, for he is the man who was responsible, not only for the establishment of Dickinson College, but also for the selection and engagement of Charles Nisbet as its first head.

Benjamin Rush, the son of a farmer, was born in Byberry, near Philadelphia, educated at Nottingham School (now Academy) in Maryland and at the College of New Jersey. He served a medical apprenticeship, as was then the custom, with the famous Dr. John Redman and then proceeded to Edinburgh for his formal medical education. Upon completion of his studies at the University of Edinburgh, Rush went to London, where through the American painter, Benjamin West, he became acquainted with Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith and Wilkes, the political agitator. While in London, he was introduced by Benjamin Franklin to many other famous people of the time. In 1769 he returned to Philadelphia and began his medical practice. He was a member of the Continental Congress, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a Surgeon General of the Army. He was a man of strong likes and dislikes, and often of shifting loyalty. For example, when Washington was selected as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Rush was almost overcome with joy, but before the war ended he had become involved in the Conway Cabal, seeking to have Washington removed. After the conclusion of the Revolution he became Professor of Theory and Practise of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.[33] He remained in Philadelphia during the terrible yellow fever epidemic of 1793. (He was quite positive that he had the only effective method of combating that dreaded fever, although the application of that method - bleeding and purging - resulted in a dramatic rise in the death rate.)[34]

Rush became treasurer of the United States Mint, Vice President of the American Philosophical Society and was a friend of Thomas Jefferson. Nathaniel Burt, author of the very interesting "Perennial Philadelphians" writes of Rush, "Bitter controversialist -- and Mystical non-sectarian." (Rush shifted between

Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism, tipping his hat along the way in the direction of the Universalists.) "Odd and powerful personage, bigoted and tolerant, benign and fierce, mystical and doubting," he died in 1813 after "a long, various and generally acrimonious career."

So, we have now dealt at greater or lesser length with the three men who were involved in Charles Nisbet's movement to America: Nisbet himself; John Witherspoon, who first brought Nisbet to the attention of Rush; and Rush, the suave maker of promises and painter of glowing pictures, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Chapter II

Selection for Further Service

Carlisle, Pennsylvania is a pleasant town. It lies in the beautiful Cumberland Valley, that fertile area bounded northerly by Blue Mountain and on the south by South Mountain, beyond which the forces of the North and the South for three days struggled with fury at Gettysburg. Beginning at the West bank of the Susquehanna River, the valley inclines southerly, more and more, until finally it reaches the Potomac and then running almost due North and South, becomes the Valley of Virginia, the Shenandoah. Like the rest of Pennsylvania, the valley was originally proprietary, being at the disposition of the Penn family, and in making grants within that area, the Penns carefully place some of the incoming flood from Europe. The two groups most interested in the area were Scotch and the Protestants from the north of Ireland - the Scotch-Irish, and the Germans who came from the Palatinate. In allocating land in the valley, the Penns settled the Germans generally to the south of the Yellow Breeches Creek, and the Scotch and Scotch-Irish to the north thereof. Some assert this placement was to protect the German settlers from Indians to the north. With both groups came their churches, and while both groups were strongly Calvanistic, the church of those settled north of the Yellow Breeches was the Presbyterian, and it was heavily Scottish in its character.

Intertwined with Presbyterianism was what Charles Sellers has termed "that steady current of learning and love of learning -- flowing out from Scotland to Ireland and America." Learning came with the Presbyterian congregations.[35] First we find the pastor tutoring some of his young parishioners - then what was called a "grammar school" organized under the control of a church and later given approval by presbytery and synod. Such was the development of education in Carlisle, found there before the formal establishment of Cumberland County and the Borough of Carlisle.

Carlisle had its grammar school organized and operating for several years before acquiring land upon which to construct a building to house it in 1773. Its full time master was a young minister from Ireland, Henry Makinly. With the coming of the Revolution, Makinly went to war, as did his assistant, John Creigh, never to return to the grammar school. To start the school once more, the trustees brought one James Ross from Philadelphia to Carlisle. Within two years a building had been erected and the trustees then determined to apply to the Pennsylvania legislature for a charter. To present the bill they selected Colonel John Montgomery, a valiant soldier of the Revolution, temperate and conservative, yet forward-looking when his community and his church were concerned. He set out for Philadelphia, not only to submit his bill for a charter to the legislature, but also hoping to interest some of the wealthier people of Pennsylvania in the soon-to-be academy. So it was, during a pleasant summer evening upon the porch of the home of William Bingham, one of the rich-

est men in America,[36] that Montgomery brought up the subject. Among those present was Benjamin Rush.

It was then that Rush came forward with not only the concept of Dickinson College, but also the thought of Charles Nisbet as its head. What prompted his thinking? The establishment of a college at Carlisle was not called for. Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania provided ample means of instruction for those desiring an education. As a matter of fact, these two colleges were not receiving such recognition or attendance as their capacities offered. The literary wants of the area did not require another college, nor did the resources of the country suffice to support one.[37] We have said that Rush was a complex man. Here we have an example of a product of the complicated thinking and planning of which Rush was capable. He would accomplish several things at one stroke if he could arrange for the establishment of a college in Carlisle.

Rush was, as we know, a graduate of Princeton. He was at this time a Presbyterian. He had been a member of the faculty of the College of Philadelphia, which had become the University of Pennsylvania, under a Pennsylvania charter, and as such, along with its trustees and the other members of the faculty, had been relieved of his duties upon the change. To re-enter the faculty he would have been required to take an oath of loyalty to the revolutionary government of Pennsylvania. This he was unwilling to do as he believed the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, upon which that government was based, to be a major stumbling block to progress in Pennsylvania. That constitution was one of the results of the swift and sweeping democratization of the country which began in 1775 with the change in the political philosophy of those making up the committees of correspondence throughout the states, and ultimately resulted in such changes as the disappearance of almost every sign of Proprietary government in Pennsylvania, the land office of the Penns finally being closed in December 1776. Their legal title to lands in Pennsylvania continued to be recognized but a unilateral settlement made by the state in 1779 was much less favorable than one would have expected under the old order of things. Those who opposed this democratization most strongly became Loyalists. Those who opposed it but were not willing to be classed as Loyalists were known as Moderate Men, and in Pennsylvania as Republicans. Among these Benjamin Rush was numbered.

The new state constitution was unambiguous as to its democracy, but implicit in its provisions were the roots of repression. Its test laws attempted to disenfranchise its opponents and it was the application of the test laws which made Rush's separation from the University of Pennsylvania a permanent one. Under the new constitution the control of the institution was wrested from the Episcopalians, moderate Presbyterians, Quakers and others who made up that group who became known as the Republican party. Its character was changed from that of an institution which received no support from government to one which was heavily endowed by the state, and its name, no longer the College of Philadelphia, became the University of Pennsylvania. One of the leaders in this change was Dr. Ewing, who became Provost of the University. Of him we shall learn more later. Rush, furious over the whole process of democratization and particularly upset because of the change that took place at the University, persuaded his political friends and associates that the

only solution was a radical one, the establishment of a second college in the interior of Pennsylvania, where the proper principles of morality, religion and politics would be inculcated in the minds of the young students.

The following extract from a letter of Rush to Rev. John King will illustrate vividly the heights of prose to which Rush could ascend when writing of a cherished project:

> "...Education upon the pious and liberal principles we propose will extract all acrid humors from our veins and fill them with the poet's 'milk of human kindness.' It will melt us into the common mass of peaceful citizens and make us better rulers, as well as better citizens in a republican government. ...I pass over the title it will give us (meaning 'Presbyterians' - ed.) to a just share of the power of the State. ...It will be a bond of union to our whole society. It will teach us all to accent Shiboleth alike. ...It will be a kind of Mount Zion to which all our tribes will look up, and which will prevent our being hereafter the wandering Arabs of America. ...It will give system and consistency to our society wherever extended, or scattered."[38]

We should not limit Rush'a objectives to those founded in politics and in animosities. He was a sincere advocate of education, particularly one provided à la Presbyterian, having absorbed the Scottish love of learning while at Edinburgh, and he was convinced that education was a proper business in the church. Charles Sellers believes that Rush's interest in education was part of his concept of what was needed to complete what the Revolution had begun---that the war was but the first act of a great drama and that following it was the necessity to secure stability and progress for all time by the establishment of schools in every county, colleges and a national university for the elite. Rush did not favor equal vote and influence for every man - he favored rule by an elite drawn from the whole, although his support for Jefferson in later years indicates a shifting from this position, characteristic of Rush, who always had difficulty in holding to a position. For example, he began life as an Episcopalian, became a New Side Presbyterian during his years at Nottingham Academy and at Princeton, later was a member of an Old Side Philadelphia Church which he left for the Episcopal faith and ultimately came back to Presbyterianism.[39]

Add all this to the fact that by this time Rush had become disenchanted with Princeton, his alma mater, and also to a great degree with Witherspoon. The establishment of Dickinson would be a well-deserved rebuke in that direction, as well as to the University of Pennsylvania and John Ewing.

Thus it was that Montgomery, who came to sell a grammar school, was himself sold the idea of a college in Carlisle - the first convert to the thinking of Benjamin Rush. Rush was not one to hold back once he had embarked upon a project. He approached William Bingham, his host at the time he had discussed the establishment of a college with Montgomery. Bingham pledged his support,

as did Robert Morris. Bingham's pledge was redeemed with cash, but that of Morris disappeared in the financial disaster which he later suffered. The next, and perhaps most important man whose support was sought was John Dickinson, the "penman of the Revolution," the writer of "Letters from A Farmer of Pennsylvania." Dickinson had been elected President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania and as a result had much influence with the General Assembly of that state. Armed with a pamphlet which he had written, "Hints for Establishing a College at Carlisle in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania," outlining his plan and stating its advantages, Rush began his campaign to persuade the legislature to issue a charter for this college in the west.

There was considerable opposition to his scheme. One of the leaders of the opposition was General Armstrong, of Carlisle, whose views were shared by many people of that town. Armstrong was a Princeton man, and opposition from that source could be expected. Rush, employing the guile of which he was always capable, disarmed Armstrong by placing him on the Board of Trustees of the college. James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and an able lawyer of Carlisle, was brought into the fold as a result of being asked by Rush to draft the proposed charter in company of John Dickinson. Denominational support was obtained by including thirteen clergymen among the trustees of the college. With all of this support, when the matter came before the legislature on September 9, 1783, an Act to establish the college was passed by a comfortable majority.

Eager to flatter John Dickinson because of his contributions, both promised and anticipated, Rush wanted to name the college "John and Mary's College," thus honoring both Dickinson and his wife, Mary. Dickinson would not allow this, either because the name was too like "William and Mary" in Williamsburg, Virginia, or because it brought back memories of royalty. Dickinson finally consented to allow the institution to be named "Dickinson College." Rush's hopes for financial support from Dickinson were realized. Not only did John Dickinson help the college by making grants to it of considerable acreage of land, he also gave to the college the very considerable remnant of his father-in-law's library - what remained after a fire had destroyed a portion of that valuable collection. The Isaac Norris books are still part of the college's extensive library.

At the first meetings of the Board of Trustees, held in Philadelphia, John Dickinson was elected President of the Board. The first meeting of the Board in Carlisle was held on April 17, 1784. At that meeting arrangements were made to take over the buildings of the Grammar School, its other assets and its teacher, Ross, who thus became the first member of the Dickinson College faculty. A seal was adopted, decision was made to sell the lands contributed by John Dickinson and William Bingham and a resolution was passed to obtain what was then known as "The Works," now Carlisle Barracks, as adequate quarters for the new college.

Then came the most momentous of all the decisions in the mind of Benjamin Rush, the one which would make his dreams come true. The Board elected Dr. Charles Nisbet, of Montrose Scotland, as Principal of Dickinson College.

Latent in Rush's mind for many years had been the recollection of Witherspoon's recommendation of Charles Nisbet as a substitute for him as a possible president of Princeton. Although there has been no absolute proof that Rush had met Nisbet during the days spent by the former as a student at Edinburgh University, there is a statement in a letter from Nisbet to Rush, written after the former had been notified of his selection for the post at Dickinson College, to the effect that there had been a slight acquaintance of Nisbet with Rush, so it does not require too great a stretch of the imagination to believe that they had met. Nisbet, of course, was well known in religious circles for the brand of Presbyterianism which was favored by Rush. He was an acknowledged scholar, another qualification of which Rush was aware. And last, and by no means least, was Nisbet's widely known support of the cause of the colonists during the Revolution. He, and many other reasonable Whigs, as we have seen, strongly opposed the government's stand versus the colonists, and this was well known in this country. As a matter of fact, it was a stand which appealed to Witherspoon, who had in the meantime become completely "Americanized." Witherspoon's friendship with Nisbet would, in Rush's mind, tend to lessen opposition to the new college from the direction of Princeton. All in all, Nisbet was the man, and after preparation of the Board at its first meeting, and after some manipulation of trustees, Rush had his way and Nisbet was elected at a salary of Two Hundred and Fifty Pounds Sterling ($1,215) per annum, a princely sum for that day, partially based upon an expectation that Nisbet, like Witherspoon, would excel as a fund-raiser. His salary began on the day of his embarkation for America, plus a house for him and his family.[40]

Chapter III

Mis-Representation and Curiosity

To make rabbit stew, one must first catch the rabbit. Nisbet, at first glance, would appear to be a difficult creature to snare. He was firmly established as pastor, with lifetime tenure, of one of the desirable charges offered by the Church of Scotland. He was a man with many influential friends, and a family consisting of his wife and four children. He was a man to be reckoned with within the General Assembly of the Church. What means could be utilized to persuade such a man to leave his comfortable home and depart for a new, strange and recently turbulent land?

Rush had a multitude of devices and techniques at his command when he sought after something. To begin with, it will be noticed that the post at Dickinson College was not designated as that of "President." Rather, it was "Principal." The latter term had meaning in Scotland, while the former was too general a term to convey what Rush desired Nisbet to understand about the position for which he was sought. "Principal" gave status.

Rush wrote many times to Nisbet, describing the college and his predictions for its future in the most glowing (and unrealistic) terms, mixed sometimes with falsehood, characteristic of Rush. He wrote of the many people crying for education, people whose longing for that blessing could only be satisfied by Nisbet! He wrote of the clergy of New York and Philadelphia being anxious for him to come to America. He spoke of the availability of ample funds, including $10,000 a year to be received from the Pennsylvania Legislature, and he conveyed to him the results of another of his adroit moves - the selection of Nisbet as assistant pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, with no pastoral duties, but with the opportunity to preach each Sabbath, at a salary of Fifty Pounds per annum. The Reverend Davidson was to assume the pastorate and would, in turn, be Nisbet's assistant at the college.[41]

Before coming to a decision, Nisbet discussed the offer with his friends. He wrote to Samuel Stanhope Smith, son-in-law of Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Princeton, asking many questions of him about the general nature and character of the people of America, their attitudes toward religion and whether they were public minded and aware of the necessity of working together for the common good. Smith's replies laid it pretty much on the line. He said that not only had the Revolution taken away the distinctions of rank found in Europe, but also the submissive signs of politeness which exist as a derivative of those distinctions. He said that in the country "the people are not rude, yet they have a manner that appears....to be rather forward and destitute of proper attention." He

told Nisbet that everyone seemed to carry with him the consciousness of being an independent citizen of an independent state and that "our equality in condition produces a similar equality in our sentiments and mode of behavior towards each other...which has the appearance of being rough and unpolished." He told Nisbet that members of the various religious denominations respected one another, and while he felt it was too soon after the conflict to state whether the citizens realized the necessity for concord in thought and action, he felt that there were few who would place the public interest after their own.[42]

Nisbet's good friend, Lady Leven, advised Nisbet not to go to America. She pointed out that Rush's "warm and lively temper" rendered him untrustworthy in affairs of this kind, and that the project of a college in Carlisle was "at best an ingested scheme." The sincerity of her advice is seen from the fact that she had not only known Rush for many years, but owed him an eternal debt of gratitude. Rush had found the body of her son Captain William Leslie, a British officer, on the field after the battle of Princeton. He had the body interred and a headstone placed upon the grave.[43]

Apparently Witherspoon, also, felt that Nisbet should not accept the offer. During the year 1784, the Princeton president visited Great Britain upon a fund raising mission for his college. After his departure, Rush wrote to Nisbet on April 19, 1784 as follows: "I am well informed that he (Witherspoon) said just before he embarked that you should not come to America if he could prevent." We do not know whether Witherspoon took any steps to persuade Nisbet to remain in Scotland, but we do know that Nisbet, aware that Witherspoon was to come to Britain, wrote to him, stating that he had a "thousand questions" to ask him. Unfortunately, answers to Nisbet-Witherspoon correspondence are not to be found, but there are indications that Witherspoon had been guardedly discouraging.[44]

Another effort was made to deter Nisbet. John Ewing, of Philadelphia, Provost of the new University of Pennsylvania, and antagonist of Rush, was apparently involved in this. One day in March 1784, he met with one James Tod, a Scottish schoolmaster and an acquaintance of Nisbet, at the Harp and Crown Tavern in Philadelphia. Tod was at this time teaching school in a room provided by Ewing. Although details of their private discussion are not available, we do know that Tod agreed to write to Nisbet, telling him of all the hazards surrounding the new college and warning him against coming to America. Nisbet sent a summary of the letter to Rush and asked for an explanation.[45] Rush was convinced that the Tod letter was dictated by Ewing, to whom he ascribed an ambition to control all education in Pennsylvania. On September 29, 1784, a long letter, signed by Dickinson but probably drafted by Rush, went back to Nisbet reassuring him of the vitality of the college and deploring the efforts of those who were attempting to destroy the great undertaking.

Suddenly, John Dickinson himself had a twinge of conscience. Having become alarmed at the prospect of great political changes, changes which might result in the revocation of the charter of the college, he wrote to Nisbet suggesting that Nisbet not come to America until Dickinson could assure him that

the prospect was much more favorable than at the time of his writing. He sent a copy to Rush, who responded in a typical Rush manner. He saw treachery. Dickinson had just given a large donation to Princeton. "Aha!" Dickinson, as governor of Pennsylvania, was an ex officio trustee of the University of Pennsylvania - Ewing's university. Rush hinted that Dickinson had obtained his high office by bribery. He threatened and pleaded, in turn, and Dickinson succumbed, agreeing to write a second letter as an antidote to the first. The trustees signed another letter, reinforcing his.[46]

While all this was taking place, Rush was writing most optimistic letters to Nisbet. The prospect for firm establishment of the college was unquestionable; ample funds would be available; the trustees included a number of men of considerable wealth, who would feel it a matter of honor to see to it that the Principal of the college should not have a want so long as he lived. In most of his letters, he included some reference to his own feeling toward Nisbet - at least what he wanted Nisbet to believe was his own feeling.[47] For example: "We have allotted a room in our house for your reception, which goes by the name of 'Dr. Nisbet's room.' My little folks often mention your name, especially my boys, who have been taught to consider you as their future master." (The boys later attended Princeton.)[48]

In the same letter, written on November 28, 1784, Rush touched upon a subject which had given Nisbet much concern. It had to do with conditions in Britain. In that letter Rush said:

> "...The factions, riots, and executions in London, and the bankruptcies, clamours and distresses of every part of England and Scotland, afford a most striking contrast to the order, industry and contentment which prevail in every part of this country."[49]

Nisbet was much concerned about the economic situation in Scotland. In his letters to Witherspoon, written at a time when his old friend was on his fund-raising visit to Britain, he dwelt often on that subject. Said he, in one letter:

> "...I hope you will not leave Great Britain before you take one peep more at poor Scotland.... The deadness of Trade and Manufacturers and the Rise of Rents and public Burdens has brought the lower Ranks to a State of the most abject Servitude and Poverty."[50]

He told Witherspoon that because he was known to have been a friend of the colonists during the war many people came to him, seeking his assistance in emigrating to America. In some cases he took action, as we find letters to various people in America recommending emigrants for employment. The situation in Scotland was an unhappy one. In another letter to Witherspoon, Nisbet makes reference to misery in the northern part of Scotland, where, because of two

seasons of poor crops there was much hunger, so that "great numbers in all probability will perish for hunger..." He was severely critical of the government's policy of discouraging emigration to any place other than Nova Scotia, and he was particularly bitter toward the people of Glasgow, who were charging exorbitant prices for passage to America. [51]

So now we come to the question - why did Nisbet, a man in his fiftieth year, all of them spent in Scotland, possessed of affectionate friends, holding a lifetime appointment as pastor of a comfortable charge, known and respected throughout Scotland as a scholar almost without parallel, a family man, with four children, and a man fearful of sea travel, consent to leave his homeland for a strange, untried land? The answer is a complex one. Nisbet, friend of the colonists, had formed an image of the people in America which appealed to him. They had fought against the Establishment, as he always had, and they had won. The new Nation needed leadership in the field of education. Nisbet would be such a leader, for did not Rush say so? He would continue to preach the Calvinistic doctrine which was his firm belief. He would escape from those who looked upon him almost as a traitor in politics and a sarcastic rebel against the constituted authority of the Church and he would leave behind him the economic distress of which he complained to Witherspoon. Rush had adroitly played upon all of these points, skillful persuader that he was, and Nisbet was willing to believe him, in spite of the warnings of his friends. But was this all?

There is in many of us a latent desire for adventure; a wish to visit new lands - to "see the elephants." Most of us get this out of our system during our earlier years, but every once in a while some man, "old enough to know better" casts himself loose from all that he has known and sets forth to explore the new scene. This seems to have been the case with Nisbet. He had no fears, for he had Rush's assurances of welcome and success. Why not take the opportunity offered? There was little risk, if he believed Rush, and believe him he apparently did, for he accepted the offer and, to use an old Irish expression, something which Nisbet would never have done, "taking his foot in his hand" he set out on his great adventure in what he described as the land of "Liberty and Plenty, where men's minds are free from the shackles of authority."[52]

Chapter IV

Disillusionment, Despair and Recovery

There appears to be no written record of the travel by the Nisbet family from their home in Montrose to their new home in America, but one cannot but sympathize with the good doctor, his wife and their four children, for it must have been an uncomfortable trip. The route taken by them required considerable overland travel on both sides of the Atlantic. Although Montrose was a seaport, sailings to America from there were extremely rare and impractical, whereas it was a much shorter voyage, and consequently a much cheaper one from Glasgow's port, Greenock, down the Clyde River from Glasgow. To reach Greenock one travelled by stage to Edinburgh, where Nisbet made some farewell calls, thence west to Glasgow by way of Hamilton, and then on to Greenock, a distance of approximately 150 miles.

At Greenock, the family embarked on April 23, 1785 for Philadelphia, a journey of 47 days, much too long for one who hated the sea as did Nisbet, in a ship named Alexander. Nisbet paid for the passage of 5½ persons, the young son, Alexander, constituting the one-half. Upon his arrival in Carlisle, Nisbet submitted his bill for expenses, Montrose to Philadelphia, in the sum of 123 pounds 5 shillings and 4 pence, about $600, little realizing the difficulty he was to experience in obtaining reimbursement. (Moral - always get a travel advance.)[53]

Upon their arrival at Philadelphia on June 9, the Nisbets were met by Benjamin Rush and taken to his home, where accommodations had been arranged for them, as Rush had promised. Shortly after their arrival Nisbet left the family at the Rush home and journeyed to Princeton to visit his old friend John Witherspoon. Nisbet remained in Philadelphia for the greater portion of three weeks during which time his family was entertained by Rush and visited by many who were interested in the new college of which he was to be the head, and in Nisbet as a learned man.[54] Among those who called was John Dickinson, to whom Nisbet was able to hand a letter of introduction from Nisbet's old friend, Lord Erskine. The letter not only spoke of the doctor but in a postscript referred to his eldest son, Thomas, most favorably, "...Mr. Nisbet's eldest son was reckoned one of the best scholars in Edinburgh University where he passed Master of Arts last week with great eclat." We shall learn more of Thomas later.[55]

While this was going on, Rush was busy writing letters to Carlisle. He wrote to Montgomery of his great delight in the selection of Nisbet, whom he described as "...the most disinterested man I ever met with. The more I see him the more I love and admire him." He reported to Montgomery that Dickinson was most taken with Nisbet, promising to endow scholarships and charging Rush not to

allow the doctor and his family to want for anything. In one of his letters to Montgomery, Rush gave rather careful instructions as to the reception which he wanted Nisbet to receive upon his arrival in Carlisle. He suggested that one of the best speakers of the College be on hand to welcome him; that the doctor should be met on the way to Carlisle and that the court house bell should be rung upon his entry.[56]

Three weeks of association with Nisbet had made Rush supremely happy. Nisbet had been well received by all who had visited him. He had preached in the local church and his sermons "had charmed everybody" wrote Rush. Nisbet was likewise most pleased with his reception, although more restrained in his indications of pleasure. He wrote the Earl of Buchan that he had found his prospects more favorable than he had anticipated. So, everything looked promising for the young college and its first President.

The Nisbets left Philadelphia on June 30, taking two days to reach Lancaster, where they remained for an additional day, probably due to the requests of local citizens who had known of his coming to America and were anxious to meet such a well known clergyman. Then on to York where another two days were spent, during which Nisbet preached in the local church. Leaving York, the family travelled to Carlisle by way of Boiling Springs, about six miles distant from Carlisle. They were met on July 4 at the Yellow Breeches Creek by a troop of light cavalry from Carlisle (probably commanded by Dr. Samuel McCoskry, a trustee of the college and within a few years to become a son-in-law of Nisbet) and conducted to Boiling Springs, where they were met by the leading citizens of Carlisle. All remained at Boiling Springs for lunch and then the whole entourage departed for Carlisle, arriving that afternoon.[57]

Quarters had been obtained for the Nisbets at what is now called "Carlisle Barracks," then known as "Washingtonburg" or "The Works." This was a military installation of some years' standing and it had been necessary for the trustees to expend a fair sum of money to put the house to be occupied by the Nisbets in proper shape. The roof required repair, windows required glazing, doors had to be re-hung and new hinges provided, book shelves had to be installed to accommodate the doctor's library, a fence had to be constructed around the garden, the house thoroughly cleaned and then whitewashed. Total expense - 3 pounds 18 shillings and 7 pence, evidence at 1785 standards of considerable work. For a few days the Nisbet family stayed with the Montgomerys in town and finally moved into the quarters at "The Works." It was then that Nisbet's troubles began.[58]

"The Works" was located approximately a mile easterly from the center of Carlisle. Originally occupied and fortified in a rather primitive manner by emplacements and entrenchments by Colonel Stanwix in 1757, it had been used by the British and later, under the name "Washingtonburg" by the Americans as a supply point and a troop assembly area. During the Revolution a number of structures had been erected as ordnance shops, quarters and warehouses, but immediately after the termination of hostilities it was allowed to deteriorate and when Nisbet arrived a considerable number of squatters were occupying some of the buildings. The trustees of the college had their eyes on "The Works," as the area was locally identified, as a future site for the college, and it

may be that they had this in mind when they rented quarters for the Nisbets at "The Works." Immediately upon his arrival, Nisbet visited the place and returned to Montgomery, one of the trustees with whom he was living for the first few days after his arrival, highly pleased with the quarters and with the area immediately surrounding it.[59]

On July 5, 1785, the day following his arrival, Nisbet took the oath of office as Principal of Dickinson College, omitting from it that portion which would have described him as having been a "faithful citizen and subject of this or any of the United States before his arrival in America" and entered upon his duties.[60] He visited the schoolhouse - a small brick building of two rooms, one above the other, fronting on a narrow, unpaved lane, known as Liberty Alley, situated on the north end of a 60 by 240 feet lot, back to Pomfret Street, known as lot no. 219. In that building, instruction was to be given not only to the students of the college but also to the students of the Grammar School, the predecessor and necessary adjunct of the college. Roger Taney, later Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, a student at the college during its early days, described it as "a small, shabby one, fronting on a dirty alley, but with a large, open lot in the rear where we often amused ourselves playing bandy." At the schoolhouse he found James Ross, a teacher of Greek and Latin to youngsters and teenagers, who, with Davidson was to assist Nisbet in the instruction of the students of both Grammar School and college. One may imagine the feeling of extreme disappointment which Nisbet must have felt upon viewing this, the wonderful building of Rush's description. How much upset he must have been to learn that the promised funds were not to be available. He immediately learned that a teacher of grammar was not on hand and one cannot but share his dismay when he learned that he was not to attend meetings of the Board of Trustees of the college.[61]

It was shortly after their arrival that the entire family began to feel the strain of the long voyage by sea and the arduous travel by land. It was one of the hottest Julys on record, and one might imagine the tortures suffered by the family of Scots, clad undoubtedly in clothing of a weight designed for the climate of their old home on the coast of the North Sea. To make matters worse, "The Works" was bounded on the north by a mill pond, owned by Major James Wilson, whose old mill structure still remains, now converted into apartments, and from that body of water there were daily mists which drifted past the dwelling of the Nisbets. We know now that it is not the mist which causes fever. Rather it is the mosquito which brings malaria, but in those times the blame was placed upon the "Miasmic cloud arising from the surface of the water." Considering this situation, coupled with his great disappointment at what he had found at the college, it is small wonder that on July 18 Nisbet wrote to Rush that Mrs. Nisbet and the children desired to return to Scotland; that she was suffering from toothache and rheumatism; that she and the children not only feared the ague, but were suffering from the "desiderium patriae or maladie du pais so fatal to the Swiss." A few days later he wrote again to Rush, telling him what he felt was wrong at the college. Ross and Robert Johnson, teacher of mathematics, had classes much too large for proper instruction. Davidson had not yet been confirmed as a member of the

faculty; Nisbet said that he was sorely needed, and that in addition there should be a professor of "Natural Philosophy" his term for what we would call "science." He stressed the need for money and for the acquisition of "The Works."[62]

On August 9 there was to be a meeting of the Board of Trustees in Carlisle. Rush appeared for the meeting. By this time all of the Nisbet family had succumbed to fever and ague. Malaria had probably taken hold. This was not viewed by the local people or by Rush as anything out of the ordinary, for recent arrivals from across the sea often suffered in this manner. Rush, undoubtedly a bit upset by the desire of Mrs. Nisbet to return to Scotland (thus putting her in a class with Mrs. Witherspoon, whose reluctance to leave Scotland Rush had been forced to contend with some years before), and in all probability somewhat ashamed to face the man whom he had so grossly misled, did not visit Nisbet upon his arrival. The following day he received a plaintive note from Nisbet rebuking him for not coming to see him. This missive was dated "Tomb of Dickinson College," August 10th, 1785.

Writers who have dealt with this episode say that Rush, angered by this rebuke, again failed to visit Nisbet. This apparently was not the case, for in a letter written by Nisbet to Rush, dated August 18, of which we shall read more a bit later, Nisbet complained to Rush that he could not sleep well at night "...which is the case mostly since you left us." This seems to disprove the generally accepted view of Rush's reaction to the letter from the grave.

At the meeting on August 9, Nisbet was ill and could not attend. This was the second consecutive meeting of the Board at which he was not in attendance, the first one having been held while he was with Rush in Philadelphia, prior to arriving in Carlisle. As has been indicated, the Charter of the College did not place the Principal on the Board of Trustees. It has been suggested by Charles Sellers that if Nisbet had been a Witherspoon, he would have remedied that situation in some way so that he would be welcome at Board meetings. But Nisbet was not a Witherspoon and he was not a well man, and thus was established a pattern for relations between the head of the institution and the Board of Trustees which was to continue for many years.[63]

The meeting was to establish the curriculum and complete the organization of the college - things which called for the advice of a learned, capable man to assist a Board of Trustees with practically not one of its membership except Rush having had any experience in teaching. The trustees went determinedly ahead, convinced of their ability to deal with such problems as existed, feeling neither concern for the plight of Nisbet nor need of his advice. They felt it was their duty to administer the college and that it was the duty of the faculty (including Nisbet) to submit to their decisions. This attitude was to be a source of irritation and complaint by Nisbet until his dying day.

And Nisbet thought his dying day was fast approaching. He was, in fact, in the poorest of health. Apparently the fever and the ague of which he complained were not the causes of what actually became a most serious physical state. Those were but advanced symptons. At times he lost his memory - that

fabulous attribute of which he was most proud. His mind wandered. He suffered great pain and his jaw trembled. His illness would have been identified during the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries as "nervous prostration." And such it was. [64]

The realization by Nisbet of the true state of things which he had to face - that Rush's statements and predictions were almost completely devoid of truth - that the college was established in the meanest of buildings - that Carlisle, itself, was but a frontier settlement - and the fact that the trustees of the college had no intention of consulting him as to the conduct or operation of the college, all combined to lay him low. Imagine the comparison which he must have made with his former status. In Scotland he had filled an important place as a pastor and had been influential in church circles generally; he had a great number of influential friends, by whom he was respected and beloved and he had ample means to satisfy his literary and pious tastes. In America he was friendless among uneducated people; he was expected to make the college a success without adequate facilities, staff and funds, and to do it without setting its objectives or controlling its operations. Small wonder that he became ill.

On August 18 Nisbet wrote to Rush. It was a despairing letter, full of self-pity and regret for having left the security of Scotland, and telling Rush of his decision to return to the homeland. In part, the letter read as follows:

> "I find that this climate disagrees with me, & that I can not live or enjoy health in it. I have been too late in leaving my Country, to be able to accommodate myself to another... we have been mistaken. I blame nobody, but I feel such a daily decay that I despair of enjoying health in this Continent, & pray God only to spare me & my poor wife & family, that we may be able to sail for Scotland early in the Spring ...Perhaps I was too vain of the Opportunity that was offered me of disseminating right Notions and sound Doctrine over a large Country. This made me slight of the Advice of many of my friends, and the Tears of my affectionate Parishioners...Besides, I cannot bear to see my children pining to Death before my eyes, and their flesh melting from their Bones by the action of the Sun...I have not mentioned the matter to any of them here (ed. the trustees), but leave you to break it to them...(He then writes of the fact that it will be inconsistent of him to leave, after having stated positively to Rush that he had come to stay, but goes on, thus) But when I see my Wife mouldering to a Skeleton, & my eldest Son, whom you have seen so athletic, lying groaning and motionless on his Couch, my Soul is wrung within me, & I can no longer think of exposing myself & those who are do dear to me, to so severe a Trial..." [65]

In this letter Nisbet says that although he dreads the coming of winter, he feels that his return to Scotland should be delayed until Spring. From other sources we find that he had learned that the only ship which would be available was one skippered by an Irish captain, and Nisbet was unwilling to sail under an Irish captain. He had heard, also, that the Alexander, the ship which had brought him and his family to America, and whose captain undoubtedly was Scottish, was to arrive in Philadelphia in the spring, and he suggested that Rush not break the news of his leaving until they had learned of the scheduled date of the Alexander's departure for Greenock. He expressed his willingness to make an attempt to carry out his duties until his departure, asking if it would be of service for him to go to New York. He apparently thought of tying such a trip to a visit to Princeton to attend Commencement at that institution.

Prior to his departure from Montrose, he had apparently tried to work out some sort of an arrangement by which, if the American venture turned out to be unsatisfactory, he could come back to the sheltering arms of the Brechin Presbytery. At about the time Nisbet penned the letter of August 18 to Rush he wrote also to the Presbytery of Brechin, asking whether it would accept him upon his return to Scotland. His plan did not work out. The reply of the Presbytery was cool and rather formal - wishing him "prosperity and success in your present usefull and honourable station."[66] This action by the Presbytery was followed on October 5, 1785 by its declaration that his church at Montrose was vacant because Nisbet had "absented himself from his charge by a visit to America."

Nisbet's condition did not improve and on October 18, 1785, he submitted to the Trustees a letter of resignation, giving as the reason the poor health of his family and himself. At the time he had still not been paid 125 pounds salary and the expenses of his trip from Montrose, a strong warning of financial problems to come.[67]

The winter weather came on, the weather which Nisbet had dreaded, but instead of having a harmful effect it, together with the reply from the Presbytery, cooled him off. He felt better, he still dreaded the prospect of another sea voyage and before the winter was over he was making efforts to be reinstated. He wrote on January 9 to Rush that the cold weather had actually had a beneficial effect upon his health and that although he still suffered somewhat from his complaints, he was much better than when he had written to him in August of the preceding year. He told Rush that "the good people here ...continue to urge me to stay among them, not considering, that since my resignation, it is quite optional to the Trustees to restore me, or not, on the former terms....I have almost recovered my health, and have hopes of being able to do something before I die." On January 30, having received no reply from Rush, he again wrote - he had informed Rush of the recovery of his health, his affairs were in the "greatest uncertainty," and he sought Rush's advice.

Nisbet was in a most awkward position. Davidson had taken over, temporarily, and Nisbet knew that there were influences at work which could

prevent his being re-hired. He could not predict whether the Trustees would take him back and if they did whether the salary terms would be the same, as there was considerable feeling among the Trustees that when a new Principal was elected at their May meeting the salary should be much less than the 250 pounds which Nisbet was to have received. He commented on this in his letter of the 30th thus:

> "I was drawn from an honorable and secure station...on the faith of men of whom I had the most favorable opinion, and I am now in danger of having the salary lowered....I wanted only to live as I did formerly, and, as I have found by long experience and exact calculation that the necessities of life cost more than twice as much here as in Scotland, it would be greatly distressing to my family to have less support than what was stipulated in the first bargain. I have been used from my infancy to frugal living, and expected no other here, but I think it would be hard to reduce me below my former situation."

Rush's reply was prompt, and in it he suggested a reduction of salary from $1,200 (250 pounds) to $800. Nisbet took a dim view of this and complained about it to many of his friends, and as word of his complaints and comments quickly came to Rush's ears, Rush's dislike for Nisbet began to become more solid. He in turn complained, likened Nisbet to a priest in a temple who could not kindle a fire until he had been paid. "What a melancholy sight. The clergy in this country have not so learned Christ." One can but wonder how much of Rush's expression of his views concerning Nisbet was actually due to resentment over the fact that Nisbet had exposed him as one who had made false statements about his prospects and who had led him down the garden path to despair.

While this exchange of correspondence was taking place, Nisbet wrote to Armstrong, Acting President of the Board of Trustees, on February 2nd, telling him that he had recovered his health, and that his resignation had been recommended so that the Trustees might select a successor, Nisbet at the time having nothing but "death or incompetency in view and wishing only to convey (his) family back to their relations." He then suggested that as no successor had yet been appointed, the Trustees be sounded out as to whether they would like to have him in his former capacity. Armstrong wrote to the Trustees, individually, stating that the Trustees who resided in Carlisle had already met, informally, and without exception taken the view that Dr. Nisbet should be reappointed, "alleging that no principal either of honor or good policy could justify a refusal of it."[68]

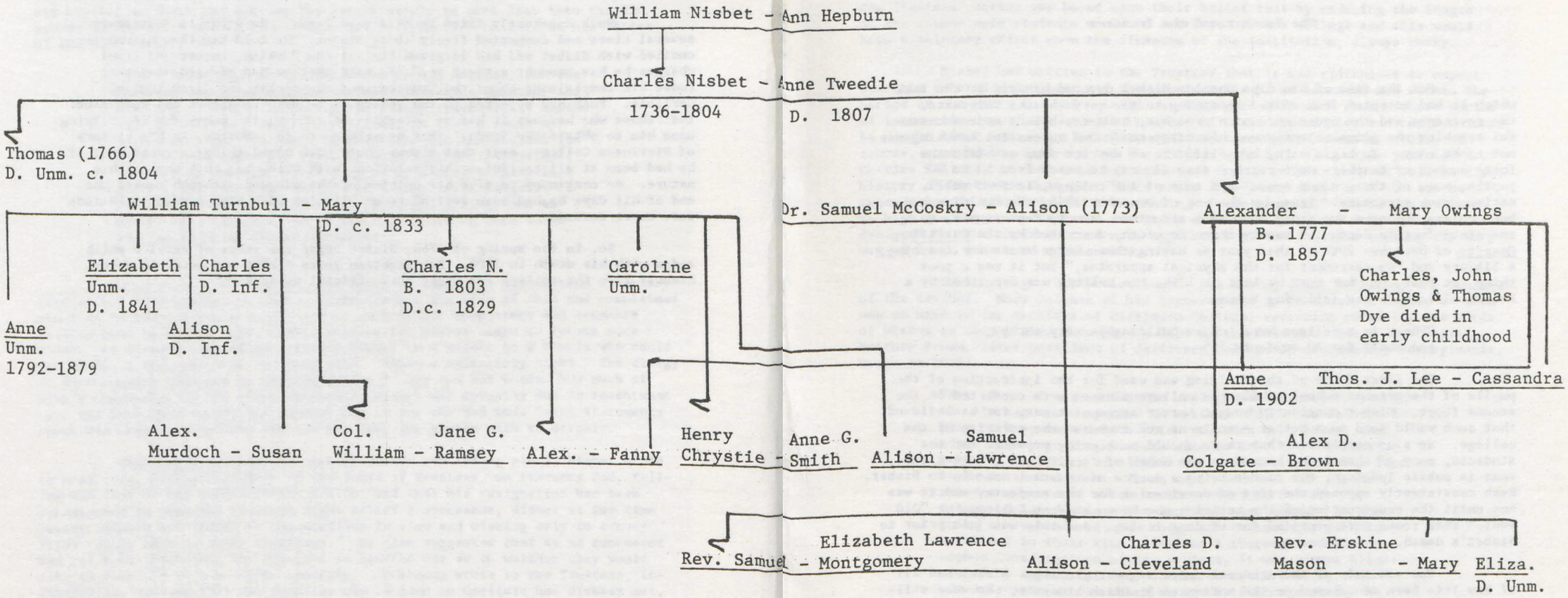
The Trustees met on May 9, 1786. Rush, Dickinson and Montgomery were against reappointment, favoring the election of Davidson. (Dickinson felt that a man who could not rule his family could not govern a college.) Armstrong and the rest of the Carlisle Trustees favored Nisbet. There was barely a quorum at the meeting, but at its conclusion Nisbet had been unanimously elected Principal

of the college. Although there was objection to the amount on the part of some, his salary was re-established at the former rate, 250 pounds sterling per annum.

Rush apparently tried to be a good loser. He wrote to Montgomery several times and commented freely about Nisbet. He told him that he was reconciled with Nisbet and had forgiven him all the "unkind, unjust and cruel charges he has brought against me." He said that he had advised Nisbet to cease his complaining about the Trustees and the sickly and dirty town of Carlisle. Rush had objected to the salary to be paid to Nisbet and complained that those who had set it had no intention of raising the money for it, relying upon him to obtain the funds. This he refused to do. Morgan, in his history of Dickinson College, says that Nisbet could have eased things a great deal if he had been at all tactful in his relations with Rush, but such was not his nature. He continued to give his opinion of the man and although toward the end of his days he had some sort of reconciliation with him, cordial relations were never resumed.

So, in the spring of 1786, Nisbet began the years of service which ended with his death in 1804. For eighteen years Nisbet was never to absent himself from the college for other than official reasons.[69]

CHARLES NISBET GENEAOLOGY



Chapter V

The Teacher and the Trustees

For the rest of his days Charles Nisbet devoted himself to the task which he had accepted from afar. Retaining to the very end the interests, the reverence, and the conscience of a preacher, he nevertheless made successful teaching the prime objective of his existence. But successful teaching was not to be easy. To begin with, how difficult it was for four men (for the total number of teachers soon reached that figure) to teach from 50 to 70 pupils, some of the grammar school and some of the college, in that small, native brick structure. True, by the end of December 1786, the building had been enlarged from a two story, two room structure, twenty feet square, to one sixty feet in depth and twenty-three in width, described by the Carlisle Gazette of December 20th of that year as having three large rooms for teaching, a library and "an apartment for the physical apparatus," but it was a poor thing, at best.[70] But even as late as 1794, the college was described by a French visitor in the following terms:

> "There is a college here, whose building is very shabby, and small for 70 students."[71]

The first floor of the building was used for the instruction of the pupils of the grammar school, while the college classes were conducted on the second floor. Nisbet constantly sought better accommodations, for he believed that such would lead to a better enrollment and increase the prestige of the college. He also complained that there should be housing provided for the students, many of them being housed in the homes of faculty and trustees and some in public lodgings, the latter being a source of constant concern to Nisbet. Rush consistently opposed the idea of dormitories for the students, and it was not until the construction of the building now known as West College, or "Old West," that rooms were provided for student living. And this was just prior to Nisbet's death.

The attitude of the students posed a great problem. Nisbet had all of his life been accustomed to the motivated Scottish students, who were willing to suffer privation while they struggled to earn the education which would make it possible for them to rise above their fellows and establish themselves in that class which welcomed teachers, preachers and men of the other learned professions. But in America things were so different. Here there was pretty much a classless society, and the possession of a degree from a college or a university was not considered necessary for advancement or success. Further, students were encouraged to excel in oratory rather than in knowledge. If Benjamin Rush had his way, no Latin or Greek would be taught. Finally, the students wanted to get their learning in a hurry. In this they had little success until several years after Nisbet began his teaching career. On November 7, 1798, Nisbet arrived at the school building and found it empty of

students. The students had struck, demanding a one year course. The Trustees yielded and for three years Nisbet and his associates labored in what he termed "literary quackery." In addition to being under pressure from the students, the Trustees' action was based upon their belief that by reducing the length of the course more students would be attracted to the college and this would have a salutary effect upon the finances of the institution, always shaky.

Nisbet had written to the Trustees that it was ridiculous to expect students to read and digest all the requirements of an educated man within the period of one year, and had pointed out that graduates with such a short period of instruction would not have the respect of their communities and would neither be sought after nor be qualified to fill important posts therein. This, of course, soon became apparent and the college went back to a three year course. Charles Sellers, in that mild but effective manner of his, puts it well in his history of Dickinson College: "This early experience shows well the tie between academic standards and the standing of the alumnus." Those who believe in high grading, pass/fail and credit/no credit courses, and other innovations designed to make their courses more attractive to the students seeking the easy way may well take heed of his words. [72]

Nisbet taught by "prelection" - the taking down, verbatim, the lecture of the teacher. Many volumes of his lectures are to be found, a number of them now on hand in the archives of Dickinson College, recording carefully the words of wisdom as they passed through the lips of the teacher. One of his pupils, Matthew Brown, later president of Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, wrote in 1840:

> "His plan of instruction in college was by Lectures, which the classes were expected to write in full. He delivered them with so much deliberation and with such pauses that, after some practice, we were able to take down the whole. I have a full copy of all his lectures taken from his lips as he delivered them. There were, however, few classes, all the members of which would consent to sustain the labour of doing this. His lectures were thought by some to be too voluminous; but they were exceedingly rich and excellent in their kind. Besides a thorough and philosophic investigation of his subject, it was always illustrated by appropriate anecdotes, characterized by that wit and vivacity for which he was so distinguished. He seldom finished a lecture without some exhilarating anecdote, and some brilliant flashes of wit and humor, electrifying the whole class."[73]

He was apparently the only member of the faculty who utilized this method of instruction, and in 1792 the students began to complain of this method as requiring too much labor. The Trustees met, considered the objections and supinely took the easy way out, as too many teachers, administrators and trustees are wont to do, and prelection was abolished. There were no more copies made of

Nisbet's lectures. [74]

Before leaving this subject, it should be of some interest to the reader to learn of one student's report of the regard in which Nisbet was held by his young pupils, and how they often passed over his political comments, with which the lectures were often seasoned. Nisbet made no bones about giving his views of the American system of government, its fallibilities and in his mind, its impermanence. Roger B. Taney, later to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, had come up from Calvert County, Maryland to attend Dickinson College. He wrote:

> "These opinions (of Nisbet) were monstrous heresies in our eyes. But we heard them in good humor, without offending him by any mark of disapprobation in his presence. We supposed they were the necessary consequence of his birth and education in Scotland. Yet many, I believe the majority of the class, would not write down these portions of his lectures; and, if the opinions had been expressed by any other professor, the class would probably have openly rebelled." [75]

It was Nisbet's belief that a good teacher must know his pupils. Not for him was the classroom a separate compartment of life. His contacts with serious students continued beyond the formal instruction in the crowded room. In his address to the students at the beginning of the college year, in 1786, one of the few Nisbet writings ever published, he made this clear:

> "In order to discover the genius and capacity of students, and to suggest useful hints for conducting their studies and regulating their conduct, I am convinced that private acqaintance and conversation are of great use. It will therefore be agreeable to me to receive visits from all of the students, as often as their studies and mine will permit, and to suggest to them what may be useful, as well as to resolve their doubts and difficulties, being determined to act as the private preceptor, as well as the public instructor of every student, without exception or respect of persons, who comes to this seminary in quest of useful knowledge." [76]

Firm in dedication to his new profession, Nisbet thus retained what was perhaps the chief advantage of the old tutorial system, the personal contact with students.

Roger Taney took advantage of this. His father had written to Nisbet, asking him to keep an eye on the young man, and as a consequence Nisbet took a greater interest in him than in the usual student. Taney spent many evenings during his three years at Dickinson in the home of the good doctor, "talking with and listening to the brilliant conversation of a man

of rare intellect and learning, who had the capacity of imparting unobtrusively to immature students much of the richness of his own culture." One may assume that it was from Nisbet that Taney learned of the aristocracy of learning, and the belief that government should be in the hands of those capable by virtue of education, culture and intellect, of administering it for the greater good of the people. Taney tied these beliefs into the landed aristocracy background from which he came, and the result was his ultimate leadership of the Federal party.

Nisbet lectured on logic, mental and moral philosophy, and belles lettres - quite an area, and in addition, at the request of some of the students who had the Christian ministry as their ultimate objective, he prepared and delivered a course of 418 lectures on systematic theology and 22 lectures on pastoral theology. His course on systematic theology was the first of its kind ever prepared and delivered in the United States. The class consisted, initially, of eight or nine young men. The first lecture on systematic theology was given on October 31, 1788 and the last was delivered on January 5, 1791. Two or three of the starters dropped by the wayside, but those remaining had been so impressed by the instruction that they requested Nisbet to prepare and present the course on pastoral theology. Nisbet included little that was new in these lectures on theology, contenting himself pretty much with presentation of the views of well known theologians, and for that reason refused to allow them to be published.77

Samuel Miller, author of A Memoir of the Rev. Charles Nisbet, D.D., Late President of Dickinson College, the only published work on the life of Dr. Nisbet, had completed his undergraduate studies and then came to Carlisle apparently for the purpose of attending the Nisbet lectures on theology. By the time he arrived in Carlisle, the series had been completed, never to be given again. Miller remained in Carlisle for some months, however, spending much time after the completion of the day's classes at the Nisbet home, learning theology from Nisbet in that manner. His book is replete with comments by Miller based upon his daily visits, where he listened intently to the wit, wisdom and personal philosophy of his mentor. Miller later became a prominent Presbyterian clergyman and ultimately became a member of the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary, where he taught for many years. In 1808, having been elected to the presidency of Dickinson College in spite of the fact that he had informed Benjamin Rush that he would not accept the post, he formally declined the post. Miller's work on Nisbet is an invaluable source of material, filled with letters from Nisbet to his friends and from them to him, and many comments by Miller on Nisbet's teaching, his wit and his flowing, pleasant conversation.

In the classroom Nisbet usually restrained his sarcasm, reserving it, insofar as his students were concerned, for those instances where it was richly deserved, and then "with telling effect." Although his pupils were seldom the targets of the sarcastic tongue of their mentor, it is not to be supposed that the other members of the faculty were not objects of his barbs.78

The teaching methods of Davidson differed greatly from those of Nisbet. Davidson taught by rote, not by reason. Davidson was the true pastor of the Presbyterian Church, although Nisbet shared preaching opportunities with him, and Davidson had early become the one who was chiefly concerned with the administration of the college. It is, therefore, easy to imagine the references which would arise easily to the tongue of Nisbet, when an opportunity arose to criticize other members of the faculty, particularly Davidson. Rush complained of this, and in commenting that he understood that Nisbet was making himself popular with the students at the expense of the professors, wrote: "My only hopes now are that God will change his heart or take him from us."[79]

His lectures were made the basis for a written examination, called a compendium, which consisted of a series of questions to which the students were required to write their answers. While the correct answer was always to be desired, Nisbet was ready to give credit for an incorrect response, provided the reasoning was logical and valid. He followed the philosophy of all worthwhile teachers, believing that it was his duty to teach his pupils to think, to reason and to come up with logical conclusions or opinions.[80]

Nisbet emphasized the basic virtues. Read these excerpts from one of his lectures on Moral Philosophy:

> "Sincerity or the love of truth is the companion of innocence, dignity and true greatness of mind. ...Prudence will indeed direct that we should not express all our thoughts, or communicate them to everybody; but sincerity will by no means permit that we should tell what is not true, or even that we should conceal the truth to the injury of another. ...Men will set a mark on those whom they have once detected in lying and dissimulation and will make it a rule never to believe them. Hence lyars meet with no credit even when they tell the truth. ...The strict performance of a promise or a contract belongs to truth as well as justice, as it is only on presumption of their speaking truth that we make any contracts with men or trust their promises in any instance. ...Vicious habits commonly begin in little matters. Want of punctuality and delay of performance of promises degenerate by degrees into downright perfidy and knavery.
>
> The last quality which constitutes virtue or moral perfection, is fortitude or strength of mind. ...Courage or strength of mind is absolutely necessary to keep us close to the path of virtue and to enable us to perservere in the pursuit of moral excellence. ..." [81]

He larded his lectures with Latin quotations. He referred constantly to the works of the world's greatest writers. Allusions were made to the beauties of art and architecture. The great poets were quoted. All of this was woven into the lectures. The inquiring student could not avoid a liberal

education if he paid strict attention to the words of the master. Charles Sellers says that he was fond of the use of variant words to fix their meanings in the minds of the boys whom he taught. He would have been overjoyed, although he would have despised him as an orator and a leader of the establishment, had he lived to hear Churchill's speech to the British people after Dunkirk, when he spoke of what would be required of them in the event the Germans made an attempt to invade the Island. He warned that if such an attempt should be made "we must move quickly and rapidly." Thus did he define in a manner which would have pleased Nisbet the need for immediate reaction and speedy supportive action.

The students were drawn to Nisbet by his learning and his wit, but their final appreciation of the man was one of admiration for his constant irreverance for constituted authority. To them he was constantly at odds with the Establishment. He was an old man who thought and believed as they did and as a consequence they loved and revered him. His disappointment and disillusionment with America, with Carlisle, with the Trustees of the college, his family problems, his absolute horror of what he considered to be the downward course of American government, his distaste for those who differed with him on religious and political matters, all made him a bitter man with few friends, but in spite of his cynicism and rancour they respected him for his honesty, his steadfastness and his unconquerable spirit. His true greatness is measured by the caliber of the men who received their educations under him; eminent clergymen, lawyers and leaders in all walks of life.[82]

While his pupils and their proper education were the primary interests of Nisbet as a teacher, the Trustees of the college were the bane of his existence. As has been pointed out earlier in this account, Nisbet, as Principal of the college, under the terms of its charter was not numbered among the Trustees nor was there official sanction of any participation by the Principal in the determination of college policy or even in the administration of the institution. It may have been successfully argued by a more adroit and less pugnacious man that the Principal should have a great deal to say about administration, and perhaps even with the determination of policy, but two opportunities to get these points across early in the game had been lost. Nisbet might have attended the meeting of the Trustees which was held in Carlisle in June 1785, but both he and Rush begged off, as Nisbet had just arrived in Philadelphia and was spending three weeks at the home of Rush, meeting and being entertained by many people of consequence.

Nisbet believed at that time that he would have a great deal to say about the administration of the college, for near the close of a letter written to his friend, the Earl of Buchan on June 13, 1785, reporting on his trip and upon conditions and attitudes of the people of America, he wrote: "In regard to my own affairs, my prospects are more encouraging than I expected...No regulations are as yet established, and the whole will be left to my discretion." However, by the time the next meeting of the Trustees was held in Carlisle, he was too ill to attend. It was at this meeting that the Trustees attended to all of the details remaining to be settled referred to in Chapter IV. It is most interesting to note that the Board of Trustees, almost completely devoid of anyone experienced in teaching or having had the educational advantages which

had been offered to Nisbet at the University of Edinburgh, proceeded to make decisions which called for considerable experience or at least knowledge of the existing theories of education. It was as though they had said to themselves: "We realize that we have engaged Nisbet as the head of our college, but after all, he is but a preacher, and we have not only many preachers on our board but also have many men better qualified by worldly experience than Nisbet to make the practical decisions necessary for the provision of a good education and for the proper operation of a college. Further, the Charter of the college makes no provision for him as a member of our Board."

It is not to say that the Trustees were malignant men, for they were not. It is true that as is invariably the case with such groups, local conditions and problems of religion, politics and economics had considerable influence upon the decision making process, for support of an educational system is necessary if it is to succeed and continue to exist. The Board of Trustees had a local bias for it was heavily loaded with members from Carlisle and the surrounding countryside and Philadelphia members found it most difficult to attend. Two of them, William Bingham and James Wilson, never attended a meeting.

Nisbet was not the kind of man to submit quietly to domination, but as was also his nature, he avoided confrontation, contenting himself with damnation and condemnation of the Board in letters to his friends and acquaintances and occasionally in letters to the Board itself. In a letter to his friend, Jedediah Morse, he typically complained of "that disgraceful subjugation to arbitrary trustees" that "threatens to ruin all our seminaries, or to render them entirely useless..." [83] Many of his complaints, contained in letters to friends in Philadelphia were relayed to Rush, who did not take them kindly. In one of his many letters to John Montgomery, his fellow trustee, Rush wrote: "If the trustees act with spirit and keep Dr. Nisbet from being their master, all will end well." [84]

Shortly after this Nisbet wrote to Richard Wistar, in Philadelphia, regarding a shipment of books from Scotland addressed to Nisbet in care of Wistar. (Quite often friends and acquaintances of Nisbet in Scotland would make such shipments, knowing that the college of which he was the Principal could make good use of them. The shipments were usually addressed to Nisbet, not to the college. Hence the letter from Nisbet replying to Wistar's request for payment of shipment charges.) In his reply Nisbet suggested that if money were due Wistar make application to Rush, Hill or Wilson (all trustees) in Philadelphia and then exercising that sarcastic wit which we are aware he possessed, he wrote:

> "...and if you can make them pay for anything your Roman Catholic Neighbors may worship you for a Saint, as you may then be truly said to have performed a miracle." [85]

His dislike for the Trustees continued throughout the remainder of his life. He wrote longingly to his friend Addison in western Pennsylvania of the difference between teaching in America and in Scotland "where nobody meddles

with the business of teaching except the masters." He complained, and properly, of policies which resulted in shortening the course to one year; to the regulations for government of the college which for the most part were almost impossible to enforce and in many cases most ridiculous in their requirements; and finally he complained in many ways of their lack of financial responsibility toward him. [86]

In the last connection there is one interesting feature. Nisbet wrote to the Trustees in 1802 and again in 1803, complaining of their failure to pay him what was owed for his services. In these letters he said that his resignation in 1785 was extorted from him in his time of distress and under a promise to pay for his return to Scotland:

> "Can they deny that by their emissaries they obliged me to sign a resignation of my office, when I had small hopes of life, on condition that the trustees would furnish me with a sum of money sufficient to convey me and my family to the nearest port of Scotland." [87]

He went on to say that this money had not been paid. So much time had elapsed since the days of 1785 that one suspects that Nisbet, whose memory had begun to fail him, had completely forgotten his aversion to shipping out with an Irish skipper and the fact that he and his family had soon recovered from their illnesses. By this time Nisbet was nearing the end of his allotted span of years and his fulminations against the trustees did not reflect the full and complete state of facts as they existed back in 1785, nor did they take into consideration that Nisbet probably would not have returned to Scotland even if the return fare had been offered him. By the time he had been re-engaged as Principal he had pretty definitely decided to remain in America. To view Nisbet as he would have viewed another, one might well say that he had more opportunity for happiness in America than he would have had in Scotland, for there were many more things wrong in the new land than in the old; much to be rebellious about; in writing, in preaching and in teaching.

A few more lines should suffice to wind up this discussion of Nisbet's running battle with academic authority. In 1801 the college was in hard times. The student body had fallen off - much of this due, according to Rush, to the terrible things Nisbet was saying about Carlisle and the college, and Nisbet had apparently been asked to take a reduction in salary. On December 9th of that year, Nisbet wrote to the Trustees discussing the decline in enrollment, due chiefly according to him to the one year course, and referred to a rumor that the college was going to close and he was to return to Scotland. He suggested that the Trustees advertise the untruth of the rumor. (This was done.) In that letter he wrote:

> "As the time will soon expire when I must declare whether I would serve at the reduced salary, I hereby intimate that I will serve. I can submit to injustice but I can never approve it. I make no observation on the conduct of the Trustees. The impartial Public will pronounce their judgment on it without fear." [88]

Interlaced with Nisbet's complaints about and his letters to the Trustees is the change in his relationship with Rush. The Philadelphia doctor had been entranced with his paragon for just a few weeks. Disillusionment then set in, coincident with the illness of the Nisbet family. Some remorse must have crept into the mind of Rush as he recalled the tremendous and prosperous future which he had forecast to Nisbet, and remorse often is reflected by dislike. Nisbet did criticize America, its new infant institutions, its politicians, Carlisle and it mud, the lack of desire for sound education, and he did it in all directions and by all means except personal confrontation. But Rush was not a constant man. We know of his shifting in attitude concerning George Washington. His dissatisfaction with Witherspoon we have recorded. Even the religious faith of his youth could not exert a firm hold on him. So, we have a prime situation for dissatisfaction and unhappiness, each with the other.

Although there had been bitterness and unhappiness on both sides in 1785 and 1786, just a few months after he had been re-engaged as Principal of the college, Nisbet was in Philadelphia and in the company of Rush visited Benjamin Franklin, an indication that things had cooled off. As a matter of fact, Nisbet had asked Hill, Trustee of Philadelphia, to make up the dispute between Rush and Nisbet. Apparently this had succeeded, although Rush's reaction to Hill's effort was to write a letter to Nisbet forgiving "all the unkind, unjust, and cruel charges..." he had brought against Rush, and advising Nisbet to be more cautious in complaining of the Trustees and of Carlisle in letters to his friends. A year later, Nisbet had again erupted, this time about his unpaid salary. So Rush sent to Montgomery a draft for 104 pounds, six pence, to be paid to him. This seems to have calmed things for a while.

For the next few years there appears to have been little open hostility between the two men, although we must concede that Nisbet did not follow Rush's advice to cease his complaining about all things which Rush held dear. Things went bad again, for in the early part of 1790 Rush complained to Armstrong, Trustee and friend of Nisbet, that Nisbet had been in Philadelphia and had failed to call upon him. Armstrong replied that Nisbet had committed this breach of etiquette because Rush had ignored him on the street and as a result he felt it would be fruitless to call upon him. Nisbet complained to the bookseller, Young, one of his favorite correspondents in Philadelphia, that many of his letters to friends in Europe had been "intercepted by the malice of a vile personal enemy." Of course, he meant Rush.[89] Rush complained that Nisbet was attempting to injure his reputation. Armstrong couldn't agree for, he said, he had heard naught about such attempts in Carlisle, where surely Nisbet would have spoken his mind, although he could not say what Nisbet's response would be if while in Philadelphia he was questioned about the college. All in all, he wrote:

> "Few men of today have had greater provocation to temerity of expression than we have given him, & that you and all his acquaintances know to be the main, if not the only foible of the man. This temerity and strength of expression...does sometimes appear when it ought to be restrained."

Armstrong felt that they had "provoked from Nisbet the imperfection we now censure."[90]

Rush was one of the first, if not the first American physician to engage in research into the problems of mental illness, and made his findings public. Apparently Nisbet learned of Rush's interest in the subject and of his intention to make his views known, for he made the following typically Nisbetian comment in a letter to his friend, William Young the bookseller, in November 1791:

> "I hear that your friend Dr. Rush is soon to publish an Essay in order to prove that those Diseases that arise from the Possession of the Devils, are still prevalent in this country, and if he only give a faithful narrative of his own Case, he will convince many People that the Devil continues to possess and govern many men at this day..."[91]

Apparently the year 1791 was a period when the feelings of both Rush and Nisbet, one against the other, reached a peak.

Rush and Nisbet, both prolific letter writers, had not spared each other and this must have given Rush some pause, for in a letter to Montgomery of June 6, 1801, he added a postscript asking Montgomery to return to him or to burn all of his letters which contained any remarks concerning Nisbet or anyone else. Rush had, just the year before, obtained a verdict of five thousand dollars as the result of a libel suit which he had brought against William Cobbett, who had published articles derogating Rush's ability as a physician. Rush's receipt of such a great award of damages must have given him concern lest someone might be able to turn the same trick upon him.

And so it went until Nisbet was no more, with occasional periods of respite from hostility followed by renewals of the fray. Nisbet disliked Rush for his unfulfilled promises, for his politics, for his views on education and for his failure to abide by the beliefs of the Old Side Presbyterianism. Rush returned that dislike with mutuality. He could not stand Nisbet's complaining, he blamed the decline in the fortunes of the college upon Nisbet's constant harping upon the poor conditions of things in Carlisle and at the college and, of course, he disagreed with the teacher in both politics and religion. Two men too much alike.

Charles Sellers has written at some length about Nisbet and his running fight with the Trustees, including the more personal conflict with Rush, and come to this conclusion:

> "To his Trustees Nisbet was a perennial calamity, but, measured by the success of his students in after life, his performance as a teacher was superb, his presence at the college its one sure title to fame."[92]

Chapter VI

Revolution, Whiskey and Politics

During the years in America Nisbet was a bitter man. Nothing in America seemed to have come up to his expectations or to the promises and predictions of Benjamin Rush. He had family problems, difficulties with his Trustees, continual shortages in payment of his salaries from both the college and the church and an almost complete lack of rapport with the citizens of Carlisle. He felt abandoned by his fellow clergymen. Read this:

> "None of the clergy visit me, and the prejudices and ignorance of my neighbors renders them no company for me. I live in the company of my books and in the exercise of my Duty...."

Thus he wrote in 1791 to his friend, Charles Wallace, in Edinburgh. One may visualize the rigid Scot, marching vigorously to meet his students, almost his only source of joy, scarcely looking to the right or left, lest he be forced to acknowledge the presence of the local citizenry, most of whom he despised.

He was an omnivorous reader. His correspondence with friends and acquaintances was tremendous. He wrote long letters to William Young, the Philadelphia book-seller, many of them replete with apology for his inability at the time of writing to pay Young for books and writing materials which he had purchased from him, always laying the blame upon the failure of the Trustees to meet their financial obligation to him. Many letters are to be found addressed to his friend, Addison, a co-passenger with the Nisbets on the Alexander, who had gone to western Pennsylvania as a preacher, became interested in Washington College, then shifted to the legal profession and became a member of the judiciary. He kept in touch with Samuel Smith, Witherspoon's son-in-law at Princeton; with Jedidiah Morse, of New York, another preacher of note, and many others. He continued his correspondence with Lady Leven, the Earl of Buchan, and Charles Wallace and the Rev. John Erskine, both of Edinburgh. To all of them he voiced his thoughts and views about America and of the world in general. He dealt with politics, religion, and education. His letters are marvels of clarity of thought and of penmanship. He kept his quill sharp and his mind agile.

His letters show his complete familiarity with world and national affairs, although his responses were not always unconditioned by his personal inclinations. The French Revolution absolutely horrified him and he was most firm and steadfast in damning it. He saw from the first that it was anti-religious in character. He agreed with Edmund Burke,

"....who saw rising across the channel the embodiment of all that he hated - a Revolution founded on scorn of the past, and threatening with ruin the whole social fabric which the past had reared; the ordered structure of classes and ranks crumbling before a doctrine of social equality; a State rudely demolished and reconstituted; a Church and a nobility swept away in a night."[93]

Nisbet's biographer, Samuel Miller, wrote that he had himself looked initially with favor upon the French Revolution as a means of lessening the power of the Pope and in a letter to Nisbet had told him that. Nisbet replied that if it was a desirable thing to "pull down the Pope and set up the Devil, it must be confessed that a glorious revolution was going on in France." Miller goes on to say that Nisbet displayed an uncanny capacity to foretell the course of that Revolution, predicting coming events even when they appeared to be in opposition of existing appearances. Says Miller: "At the time when the Constituent Assembly had decreed that France should remain a monarchy, and the people were enthusiastically swearing fealty to their king, Nisbet wrote to me, as near as I can recollect, in these words: 'Poor Louis, he will have a sham trial and a real execution.'" Ashbel Green said that Nisbet gave credit for his predictions of things to come to the prophecies of Nostradamus, a copy of which he owned and which he diligently studied.[94]

In connection with the French Revolution, Nisbet had a tale to tell concerning a dream which he attributed to his wife - that she had visited the habitation of the Devil, who responded to her knocking himself, opening the door. She asked the Devil why he did not have some imp or understrapper open the door for him. "Woman," said the Deel, 'Na the're gone to France to fight for liberty and equality." This was his response to a request from the congregation of the Carlisle Church to voice his opinion of the Revolution.[95]

He spoke out against the French Revolution many times in his correspondence, in his sermons and in his teaching, but in his opposition he was in the minority. The American people looked back at the assistance rendered by the French in their struggle against the British Crown and thought of the French Revolution as being the equivalent of theirs - a fight against tyranny and oppression. As a consequence, not only did the people, generally, wish the French Revolution well - many of them thought it would be a good time to join with the French in another war with England. As we have learned, Nisbet never feared to speak his mind, and speak it he did. He pointed out the patriotic and honest basis for the American Revolution, begun and fought by true patriots who based their struggle upon sound religious and political principles. In contrast, he maintained, the French Revolution was begun by atheists, and although there had been many abuses and considerable oppression by the French Kings, the real motivation by the revolutionary leaders "was not patriotism, but a hatred of all religion, biased selfishness, disregard of moral obligations and principles of sound government."[96]

None of this went down too well in Carlisle, where a considerable majority of the citizens viewed the French Revolution with approval. They joined similar thinking citizens of Philadelphia in sending cargoes of flour

to France, and just to rub it in, the Carlisle Gazette published Tom Paine's Rights of Man under his very nose. Although the old man had many other dislikes, Tom Paine ranked amongst the leaders in Nisbet's category of scoundrels.[97]

Immediately upon his arrival in Carlisle, Nisbet began to change some of his political philosophy. He continued to hold that there is a group who should govern and there is the great majority who should be governed. His crusade in Britain in favor of the colonists had not been one which was undertaken to destroy that division, but rather one to overcome the cavalier methods used by the Crown to subdue the rebellious subjects. He had always fought for the common man, but for the common man in his proper place. His fight against the Establishment was not one to destroy it, but to insure that the Establishment respected the rights of the people governed by it. When he got to America he found that the people were the Establishment. This troubled him, for he considered the people of America to be completely unfit, by virtue of their crudity, lack of education and liberal tendencies to govern themselves. What one author has called his "early parlor radicalism" gave way in the face of the excesses of the French Revolution and the crudeness of the American System. Nisbet began to show a deep hostility to all levelling tendencies.[98]

He feared no one, so long as he could express his defiance from the pulpit, or from the academic platform or by the written word, so he finally got into trouble. The Congress had levied an excise tax on the distillation of whiskey, a favorite product of Pennsylvanians, who engaged in such activity for two reasons. First, they liked to drink whiskey, and second, it was easier to transport and consequently to sell the product of the grain rather than the grain itself. It seems that everyone had a still and practically everyone drank the product, but no one wanted to pay a tax on it. The widespread opposition to the tax in Pennsylvania, particularly in western Pennsylvania, resulted in the "Whiskey Rebellion." The situation became so serious that the government sent troops under General Washington to quell the rebellion, and it was in Carlisle that Washington reviewed those troops as they departed for the western part of the state.

At the height of the excitement over the tax, many of the people of Carlisle being opponents of the tax, Nisbet and Davidson, the two preachers of the Presbyterian Church, decided that they should do something to quiet things down. So, on a Sunday morning Davidson gave one of his soothing sermons, mildly reproving, but not so much as to call forth active resentment. Not so Nisbet. He had his turn in the afternoon and he went to his task with a will. He preached from I Thessalonians, iv. 11: "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." He pointed out that not all men were suited to govern, some being more fitted to work with their hands, and that all should listen to and obey the directives of their governors.

Nisbet's sermon did not sit at all well with his listeners and a few days later, when some of the insurrectionists appeared in Carlisle to erect a "Whiskey" or "Liberty" pole, it was feared that a mob might attack Nisbet at his home. They were talked out of it by some who informed the angry crowd that one of Nisbet's daughters was ill and that to attack Nisbet's dwelling would be brutal rather than patriotic. Thus Nisbet narrowly avoided a personal confrontation of the worst kind.[99]

This experience must have still be in his mind when he wrote to his daughter, Mary, in 1799:

> "The Hessian Fly has begun to attack the Rye, which threatens us with a Famine of Whiskey. And if this is taken away, what have we more? Whiskey is the Sinews of Politics and the fountain of Republican Zeal, Insurrection and Patriotism." [100]

Mary's husband, William Turnbull, was the owner of a distillery in the Pittsburgh area and during the height of the troubles over the excise tax, Nisbet lamented that Turnbull was making no use of it, being on the horns of a dilemma. If he failed to pay the tax the government would seize his goods and if he did pay it the people of the locality might burn his distillery and his house. It appears that Nisbet was a bit mixed up because of the family relationship. This has happened to better men than Nisbet. [101]

It was natural for Nisbet to be a Federalist and as such he was much in favor of adoption of the Constitution, espousing it from the pulpit in Carlisle as he had opposed oppression of the American colonists from the pulpit in Montrose. He extolled it to his students, and pointed out to them the opportunities it offered for public service. In his address to the students upon their return from vacation in October 1787, he said:

> "We have already had a large trial of illiterate and unexperienced governors and legislators, and the great and manifold difficulties into which their folly has plunged us, if properly considered may excite the people to be more desirous of men of letters and knowledge in the offices of government. Extremes often succeed one another, and if the fondness of the people for learning prove as strong as their antipathy has been hitherto, young men of parts and cultivated Understanding will have the fairest hopes of being elected into offices of government.
>
> Besides, as a Federal government is proposed, and may probably take place, letters and knowledge will be undoubtedly necessary in those, who are to share its Dignities, which will open a higher object for the ambition of youth than they have hitherto. The legislative and Executive offices in a particular state are indeed in themselves honorable, but they have been shared of late by so many weak men and fools, that a person of honor and virtue can scarcely think them worthy of his ambition.
>
> To have a share in conducting the Counsels, or promoting the happiness of a large, united and rising empire, is surely an object capable of exciting the ambition of all who have any, and such an object the federal government holds up to every young man without distinction, who by learning and experience shall qualify himself for it."

"The Equestrian and Senatorial Dignities among the Romans required a certain amount of wealth, in order to be capable of obtaining them but the plan of federal government now proposed requires capacity and reputation only in those who are to be chosen into the offices of government..." [102]

It is difficult for us, at our long range, to comprehend the fierceness of the opposition to the new Constitution by many in Carlisle and elsewhere. Montgomery, in one of his letters to Rush, wrote that the "Antis have draped the effigy of Dr. Nisbet, notwithstanding the old gentleman is praying for them, that they may be cured of ignorance and savage manners. This he does every Sunday, as it is uncertain what lengths these people may proceed." [103] And they almost went too far. When news of the final ratification of the new Constitution reached Carlisle supporters gathered for a celebration, with bonfires and perhaps some firewater. Opponents appeared, a riot developed and Major James Wilson, one of the local Federalists, would probably have lost his life if an old Revolutionary soldier had not protected him.

Although a supporter of the form of government, Nisbet was a staunch opponent of those who soon appeared to take over its control. He had little liking for Washington; little more for John Adams, but his dislike of Jefferson was considerable - "By the way," he wrote to Samuel Miller, "I have just heard with sorrow that he (Thomas Jefferson) has been chosen President of the United States and Burr, Vice President. God grant us patience to endure their tyranny." Nisbet's feeling of aversion for the Republican leaders headed by Jefferson was as much based upon his religious principles as upon his politics. He linked Jefferson with Tom Paine, Joseph Priestley, the refugee chemist and Unitarian preacher, Thomas Cooper, Benjamin Rush, the French Revolution, and all who favored close relations with the French, including Joel Barlow, Jefferson's minister to France. [104]

Jefferson had never affiliated with any church, although in his earlier days he had rendered assistance to various churches and upon occasion would attend services in one of them. The Unitarian controversy in New England interested him and he once predicted "there is not a young man living who will not die a Unitarian." [105] He was strongly opposed to organized religions and saw truth in all of the major faiths. Joseph Priestley, who fled religious persecution in England and came via France to this country, was a Socinian, believing in God but denying the divinity of Christ and consequently of the Trinity. He did not accept the Virgin Birth, or the divine inspiration of the Scriptures (although he accepted them as chronicles of their times), but strangely enough accepted the Miracles. He did not believe in resurrection of the soul, but preached there would be resurrection of the body and a second coming of Christ. He became the leader in Unitarian belief in this country. and according to one of Jefferson's biographers, Peterson, although much of his theology was "unacceptable to the secular-minded Jefferson, he fully entered into the spirit of his return to primitive Christianity. And Priestley, who championed Jefferson's political cause, recognized in him a religious friend as well." [106]

Nisbet paid his respects to Priestley many times and in no uncertain fashion. In one of his many letters to William Young he complained that the Deistic Unitarians, led by Priestley were, like Paine, undermining true religion in this "Poor, infatuated and sinful land." Of Jefferson, he wrote to Samuel Miller: "The Democrats of America have discovered that it is for the interests of Christianity to elect a President who is indifferent whether there is one God, or twenty Gods, or no God at all."[107]

Jefferson had spent considerable time in France as Minister to that country, his sojourn there having included the early days of the French Revolution, during which time he not only witnessed many of the developments in that dramatic upheaval, but had served as an advisor to the early leaders of the movement. When he returned to this country in 1789 he was most optimistic as to that Revolution's future. He had witnessed and participated in the American Revolution and felt that a similar movement was underway in France - that there was the beginning of a new era. He wrote, "I have so much confidence in the good sense of man and his qualifications for self-government, that I am never afraid of the issue where reason is left free to exercise her force...."[108]

One may readily understand why Nisbet so strongly opposed those who had adopted the term "Republican" for their group. They were led by the people whom he detested, not only for their politics, but for their religious beliefs - Jefferson for his opposition to organized religion and belief in good in all faiths; Paine for his anti-religious writings; Rush for his failure to abide closely to the strict Calvanism of his forbearers; Cooper for his adherence to Priestley and his seditious utterings.[109] All of these men were supporters of the French Revolution, that abomination based upon atheism, whose final developments had been predicted by Nisbet. The strength of the Republicans, resulting in Jefferson's election to the Presidency was ample proof to Nisbet that the American institutions could not stand. The supporter of the common man - the constant opponent of the Government as representing the Establishment, had made a 180 degree turn.

This is not to say that Nisbet believed the structure of the government was wrong. His point was that those who controlled it were unfit and that the people themselves were either hoodwinked or careless about the exercise of government. As a result, those who should govern did not get the opportunity. James H. Smylie, who has made a deep study of Nisbet's correspondence and lectures feels that Nisbet believed that "the sovereign people were fickle, that they did not know what was really good for the public, that they often cried out for liberty and equality but were basically intolerant." The "arrogant pretensions of the sovereign people" bothered him. He did not realize that in constructing a government which would be humane in governing men that it was necessary to make all power ultimately dependent upon the people. The party system, slowly developing, was to make it possible for the sovereign people to select their governing officials. Nisbet disliked the party system, but failed to realize that it was the evolution of that system which made

possible the peaceful transfer of power from Adams to Jefferson, whom he feared.

Nisbet believed in government by a paternalistic and conscientious few, whose high morality and ability to govern would make a success of any government, regardless of its form. Read this excerpt from one of the lectures in his course on Moral Philosophy:

> "But wherever virtue prevails and is generally practised, a nation may live happy under any form of govt. whatsoever; and on the other hand, wherever vice prevails, and is not punished, nor reckoned disgraceful, all forms of government will contribute equally to render the citizens miserable."

Smylie has summed up rather neatly Nisbet's educational objective:

> "Nisbet's lectures on a variety of subjects --- show hov he was trying to make his students public men full of public spirit." 110

Chapter VII

Life Outside Academe and a Summary

We have gone somewhat into depth about Charles Nisbet's early life, his trials and tribulations under the college Trustees, his running fight with Benjamin Rush, his relations with his pupils and his political and religious views. It is time that we look at Nisbet as the head of a family; as a resident of a community still near the frontier; as a preacher. Who were his friends in this new land? Did he participate in community activities? Was he as active in church affairs as he had been in Scotland? There was much more to the man than appeared as he moved with rapid steps between home and classroom, austerely looking straight before him. Beneath that severe surface was a kind, benevolent father and a true lover of his fellow man.

To begin. Nisbet and his family lived in the quarters at the "Works" for about eight years, apparently finding them quite comfortable, although he did complain of the foul air of the marsh, a feature of the area which made the future acquisition of the old military post a matter of some controversy among the Trustees.[111] (The Congress ultimately determined not to sell the area to the college, feeling that it would still be required as a point of military concentration for future Indian wars.) Nisbet often found the muddy roads and streets between his quarters and the college to be well-nigh impassible. There appears to have been some effort made to move the Nisbets into better, or at least more convenient quarters, for Rush wrote to John Dickinson in 1787 that the citizens of Carlisle had purchased and given to the college for Nisbet's use, "a neat and commodious stone house," but there is no record that Nisbet ever lived in such quarters.[112] In 1793 the Trustees did move him into other quarters, small, but near the shops, church, and college. Nisbet found that this was most pleasing to his wife. But as for himself, he viewed the motives of the Trustees in moving him as unfriendly, as he was contented at the "Works." "The Trustees moved us from the Works -- under cover of friendship, but they let the heat of June, July, August and September be past," (the move was made in October 1793) "that the foul air of the marsh might have an opportunity of working its proper effects on us in the first place, which sets the nature of their friendship in a proper light." He was a difficult man to please. Apparently Nisbet had hopes about this time of moving into a house which had been the home of General Irvine, at the corner of High and Bedford Streets, where now stands the First Lutheran Church, but there is no record of this having taken place.[113]

Soon after his arrival in Carlisle, Nisbet became interested in acquiring real estate. On March 22, 1787, he obtained from one Timothy Shaw Lot 41 on West South Street in Carlisle. This lot, at approximately the center of the block on the north side of South Street, lies between Pitt and West Streets. In August of the same year he obtained from one Hugh Kennedy a deed to Lot 33 on Main (High) Street. This lot was adjacent to another which he

had acquired although there are no official records of other acquisitions in this area. These lots were on the south side of High Street, across from the original campus of the college, now known as the John Dickinson Campus. He later purchased another lot adjoining, according to a college historian. The title to Lot 33 must have been somewhat questionable, for in 1800 Nisbet obtained a special warranty deed from the proprietors, John Penn and Robert Penn, covering that lot. On the High Street property Nisbet erected a modest house which he occupied prior to his death. He must have made an effort to obtain another parcel of land in Carlisle, for there is the record of a notification to him that title to Lot 169 was claimed as property of John and Richard Penn. One suspects that Nisbet brought a fair nest egg with him from the old country. [114]

Nisbet took an active interest in affairs of the community. Just two years after his arrival, on the Fourth of July, 1787, he acted as the Community Preacher, for which service he received a vote of thanks from those in charge of the observance of the anniversary. Nisbet's old friend, the Earl of Buchan, had enjoined him to establish a neighborhood library in Carlisle. This he did, being a prominent member of the Carlisle Library Company. Within a couple of years after his arrival, Nisbet and Davidson were appointed, along with some other prominent citizens, to provide schools for those too poor to do so for their own children.[115] About the same time Nisbet headed the managers of a school established for the education of children of slaves.[116]

We recall Rush's plan to have Nisbet act as an assistant to Davidson at the Carlisle Presbyterian Church. This came to pass. The Minutes of that church record state that "on October 8th, 1787, it was agreed to and voted by the Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Carlisle, that sixty pounds per annum be paid to Doctor Nisbet. Commencing the 1st day of June 1786..." [117] It was not until 1815 that the Carlisle Presbyterian Church agreed to pay arrearages in Nisbet's salary, and then only after suit by his estate. In addition to performing preaching services at the Carlisle church, Nisbet served at other places. Wrote he to Charles Wallace in Edinburgh in 1797"

> "I thank God that I am in good health, and am sometimes able to go and preach the Gospel among the mountains at some distance from this place during the summer." [118]

He continued to preach without notes, as had been his custom in Scotland. It is regrettable that this was his custom, for those who heard him reported most favorably upon the content of his sermons. In a local publication, "The First Church," we find a description of his preaching.

> "His preaching was instructive, striking and deeply interesting to the thoughtful. He spoke memoriter, his voice was thin and he made but little gesture, but he poured forth a flood of precious truth, good sense and unaffected piety." [119]

Ashbel Green wrote that Nisbet's voice was articulate but not powerful enough to reach the remote parts of a full church without a "painful listening."[120]

James Hamilton, a local resident, wrote of Nisbet's preaching as a part of his recollections after a long life. He characterized Nibet's voice as "monotonous," and said that while delivering long and meaningful prayers, Nisbet continuously cast his eyes about the seated congregation.

He often visited Philadelphia during the annual meetings of the General Assembly of the church, but more for the purpose of meeting old friends and relaxing from his labors at the college, than for attending the sessions of that body. Upon one such occasion he was asked by John Mitchell Mason, later to become a president of Dickinson College, whether he attended the sessions for the purpose of listening to the proceedings. Nisbet replied that he went for the purpose of hearing and sometimes came out of the sessions for the benefit of not hearing. When Mason asked which was of the greatest benefit, the old man replied, "Mon, it's hard to strike the balance."[121]

Among Nisbet's responsibilities as head of the college were the obtaining of financial support and the recruiting of students. In neither of these was he particularly successful, not nearly so successful as Davidson. His weakness in these essential functions is understandable, for a salesman cannot be successful unless he is himself completely sold. Nisbet was too aware of the deficiencies of the college in terms of facilities, number of instructors, the interference of Trustees, the inadequacy for several years of the one year course and the general unwillingness of students to apply themselves to their studies. His conscience evidently interfered with his sales talks. Further, he found it difficult to overcome the existing and rather widely held concept that an educated man is one who can deliver himself of some resounding oratory. He travelled a great deal, however, in pusuit of funds and students, his journeys taking him to New York, Philadelphia and to the western part of Pennsylvania. He invariably travelled by horseback, his favorite mode and one which was for the most part necessary, for the construction of adequate roads was just beginning. [122]

In making his trips he was quite successful in tacking on to his mission some activities in which he was himself interested. In New York, in November 1786 he mixed with persons of high authority, the President of the Continental Congress and Representatives from most of the states ("Some of them are decent sensible men..."). He preached to two large congregations upon that occasion and was keenly observant of the fine houses in New York. As to the people of that city, he remarked that they were "gay and luxurious in the extreme, though not much attentive to religion, or paying their debts."[123]

John Dickinson had always felt kindly toward Nisbet. It is true that when Nisbet's name came up for consideration as his own replacement, Dickinson had said that a man who could not control his family could not control a college, but it is submitted that this was a thought placed in his mind by Rush,

who somewhere had heard something about Mrs. Nisbet which placed her, in his mind, in the same category as Mrs. Witherspoon, a wife who objected to the movement from Scotland to America. A rather strongly worded letter written by Thomas Nisbet to Rush at the time of the illness of the family shortly after their arrival in Carlisle had added fuel to Rush's dislike of the Nisbet family. At the very outset of Nisbet's career in Carlisle, Dickinson made arrangements for the support of Mrs. Nisbet in the event something happened to her husband. This was accomplished by a letter which Dickinson wrote shortly after Nisbet had left Philadelphia where Dickinson had met him and had been considerably impressed. In the letter he said that he was giving to the college some land in North Middleton Township and that one proviso in the gift called for income to be paid to Mrs. Nisbet from it if she should survive her husband, up to Fifty Pounds per annum.[124] The encumbrance bothered the Trustees and they later requested Dickinson to remove it. John Armstrong wrote to Dickinson about this and said that it was his thought that if the Trustees could make punctual payment of Nisbet's salary he would probably not object. He spoke of Nisbet's "Assiduity in the college---but as to his salary, sorry I am to tell you, he is too frequently left to his last shilling." Apparently Dickinson did not remove the encumbrance.[125]

In the spring of 1792 Nisbet paid a visit to Dickinson then residing in Wilmington, Delaware, an affluent, enlightened, retired statesman. On the first evening after his arrival, Nisbet got into a discussion with those present on the effect of the study of the physical sciences upon religion, or "the tendency of a long continued investigation of the wonders of nature to produce a forgetfulness of the Creator and Governor of the world." After a rich, full and intelligent discussion of the subject, Dickinson was so pleased that he invited Nisbet to pay him an annual visit, and when Nisbet returned to Carlisle he discovered that Dickinson had deposited five hundred dollars in Philadelphia banks to defray the expenses of such visits. The visits were made for several years, being well received.[126]

In 1970 Mary Nisbet, the eldest daughter, married a widower, William Turnbull, a merchant of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Turnbull, a native of Scotland, was at that time resident in Pittsburgh and it was undoubtedly due to his movement between that city and Philadelphia where he had commercial interests that he passed through Carlisle and met Mary Nisbet. The marriage was a happy and most fruitful one.[127]

In 1795 the other daughter, Alison, became the second wife of Dr. Samuel McCoskry of Carlisle. McCoskry was a well known physician, a minor political figure and a Trustee of the college from its beginning until his death in 1818.[128] This marriage was also a success. The youngest son, Alexander, attended Dickinson College and upon graduation studied law, ultimately moving to Baltimore, where he married a lady named Mary Cockey Owings, of a good Maryland family. Alexander became a judge and a civic leader, as well as a railroad president.

The oldest child, Thomas, aged 19 upon the Nisbets' arrival, developed into the greatest cross which Nisbet had to bear. Holder of the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Edinburgh, athletic and full of promise upon the family's arrival in America, it was not long before he became a great trial. Tom, as we shall call him, was an intelligent young man, educated far above those whom he found his peers in the frontier town and the product of a home where standards of education, morality, religion and conduct were much higher than the average in the community. It may have been the result of boredom or perhaps of rebellion against his background and the rigid requirements of his Scottish parents but whatever the cause, Tom fell among low companions. It seems, according to his father, that Tom was a most inquisitive young man; one who had to master everything which interested him in the least. He became interested in military drills and tactics and in the course of their study grew to know many of the local members of the militia and made companions of them. The result was that he became addicted to strong drink as early as 1787.[129]

Nisbet tried everything in his efforts to rescue him. He encouraged him in the study of law and later wrote proudly to a friend that his son's commonplace book (a product of his legal studies) was the largest in the state. Nisbet's new son-in-law, William Turnbull, took part in the efforts to redeem the young man.[130] From time to time Turnbull would take Tom with him on his travels, particularly to Philadelphia. However, all of this was to no avail. Tom would not forsake the bottle. In desperation, Nisbet took up the matter of his son's salvation with his friend, William Young, the Philadelphia bookseller, who agreed to give Tom employment. So off to Philadelphia he went during the winter of 1794, on "a trial with you for a quarter tho' I hope he will make no difficulty of continuing. It will be good for him to be employed and he is able enough to work hard on occasion and ought not to be excused from it. ...I hope he will avoid evil company..."[131] There were other young men working with Young, and with one of them Tom became quite friendly. Nisbet discovered that the two were making wild plans to depart for the South Seas. This was nipped in the bud, but by the end of the next June, Tom had left Young, complaining that he had been forced to sleep in the same room with seven others.[132]

What next? Perhaps another friend might be able to help. The Nisbets' fellow passenger on the Alexander, Alexander Addison, who had given up the ministry in western Pennsylvania, had taken to the law and had become a judge. Addison might be the man to set Tom straight, so arrangements were made and, although Tom managed to miss the ride for which he was originally scheduled, he took a later one and came under Addison's care in August 1797, arriving at about the same time as a letter from Nisbet, telling Addison how to handle Tom, something which Nisbet could not do himself.[133] We find a later letter in which the father poured out his heart to his friend:

> "My heart bleeds to think that I have a son of one and thirty years of Age, on whom I have bestowed a good Education, & more money than all my other children have cost me, twice told, & that yet after all, he is no more able to do anything for himself than an Infant of a year old."[134]

Tom was, of course, the cause of much unhappiness on the part of his mother, worrying about whether he was properly clothed, upset because of his failure to write, and concerned about his very apparent lack of desire to pursue his studies further. Nisbet wrote that his health had become impaired by worry. Small wonder.[135] Not only was Tom destroying himself and degrading his family in the eyes of their friends and in the eyes of Nisbet's students, he was also a severe drain upon the family assets. Nisbet constantly sent money to Addison for use in payment of Tom's bills. The whole thing finally became too much for the judge, who suggested that Tom be moved from him and installed in a house in the town. Nisbet agreed to this and wrote that he could "not think of taking him into my house again, and a Place of Confinement must be sought for him, if he has not entirely lost his reason." Things must have come to a pretty pass by this time, as there are several references to "loss of reason..." Things went on for a while and finally Nisbet told Addison to send him back to Carlisle, enclosing $160 to pay Tom's debts and expenses to Carlisle. Nisbet was to pay out much more before the total cost of Tom's stay in western Pennsylvania was satisfied.[136]

The rest of the tale may now be viewed with both humor and sorrow. Tom returned to Carlisle in December 1798, bleeding from the nose as a result of "the severity of his trip." He seemed to have recovered somewhat, drinking nothing but wine and sometimes some cider with his meals, but Nisbet thought that he was somewhat "mixed up." The old gentleman then hit upon a perfect solution. Let him enter the Navy (British). Through the influence of a British consul in New York, arrangements were made for the problem to be passed to the Admiral in command at Halifax, Nova Scotia. Off Tom went for Philadelphia, where his brother-in-law, William Turnbull, provided him with clothing and everything needed for passage by packet from New York to Halifax. Taking no chances, Turnbull accompanied Tom to New York, the latter carrying with him letters to Admiral Van Deput from the British Minister and from the British Consul. Turnbull had planned to see Tom aboard the packet, but became ill the night before it was to depart and Tom took the opportunity to engage in one last fling. The following day Turnbull took him to the ship and then left, probably in a hurry. Tom was evidently still drunk, for he immediately fell into the hold, landing upon a crate of bottles (of all things, how appropriate) and cracked his head. It required eleven hours of labor by the ship's surgeon before the bleeding could be stopped. He was in miserable shape when he arrived in Halifax and presented his letters to the Admiral, having three wounds in his head and one in his back and, according to his father, probably still intoxicated. This must have shocked the Admiral if indeed Tom got that far with his letters.

Tom thus failed to qualify for the British Navy and departed for Boston where he happened to meet Dr. Jedediah Morse, who, out of the kindness of his heart, gave him money to get him to New York. He got to New York, tried to get in touch with Rev. Samuel Miller, Nisbet's biographer of 1840, but fortunately for Miller's pocketbook could not find him, so instead of returning to Carlisle by way of Philadelphia, Tom decided to take the opportunity to visit the Genesee county, going up the Hudson to Albany and up the Genesee River to Geneva. He spent about a week there and then headed home, finally coming down the Susquehanna River by canoe to Clark's Ferry, about fifteen miles up

the river from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. There he met a friend of Nisbet's, one Dr. McNaughton, who started off with Tom to Carlisle to deliver him to his father. Reaching a tavern about seven miles from Carlisle, Tom refused to go further, so McNaughton left him there. He finally got back to Carlisle, in rather poor condition, undoubtedly. Nisbet terminated this tale, told to Addison, as follows: "If I could purchase a passage to Scotland, I believe I would go back---for I cannot endure to live in disgrace." [137]

The following year Tom was to be found in the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, probably taking the cure. He came back to Carlisle for a while, but a few months later he was sent again to the institution, probably to the facility which had been founded by Benjamin Rush to care for those of disturbed mind. An ironic turn of events.

All we know further of Tom is that he died shortly after his father, still unmarried. One cannot help but speculate whether Tom's life would have been different had he remained in Scotland. Transplanting almost mature children often has unforseen and unpleasant results.

Although teaching was his mission, and he devoted himself to it wholeheartedly, religion remained the paramount consideration of his life. It was a strict Calvinistic religion, rigid, demanding and uncompromising. It was uncharitable and was tolerant of no other standards, beliefs or creeds. As far back as 1770, Nisbet entered into the attack mounted by the Presbyterian clergy of Scotland against John Wesley, less with the unction of charity than of the zeal of a partisan and his intense dislike for Wesley and his followers remained with him throughout his life. It was said that "in his pulpit supplications he was in the habit of praying, 'The Lord have mercy on the poor ignorant Methodists'." [138]

He was sometimes rather wild in his denunciations of the Methodists. Writing to Addison in 1801, he mentioned a gathering in Kentucky of approximately 18,000 Methodists, who remained together for several weeks. He suggested that living in the wide and commodious woods "it is supposed by some Persons...that they lie in Pairs, and have a Right of Chusing their Bedfellows without Censure or Observation." The death of Wesley did not soften Nisbet. Observing in a letter to William Young that after Wesley's death a circular letter to the Methodist congregations had reported that Wesley had been buried in his gown and bands, wrote Nisbet, " which was of as great use to him as the habit of St. Francis is to those pious Catholics who order their Bodies to be buried in it, that they may be mistaken for Monks in the other World." Thus he paid tribute to both the Methodists and to the members of the Third Order of St. Francis. [139]

Nisbet, as we have seen, considered the French Revolution to be based upon atheism and therefore an abomination. He could see traces of its influence everywhere. For example, after having seen the plans for the new capital to be established in Washington, he complained to Witherspoon that the place reminded him of the New Jerusalem - there being no space reserved for a Temple. He had found no provision for a church structure in the entire plan. [140]

He was also intolerant of people from other lands. His antipathy toward the Irish, which we have seen as a reason for his failure to leave this country soon after his arrival, continued. In another of his many letters to William Young, in 1800, he mentioned that seven wagon loads of "United Irishmen" had recently arrived in Carlisle, with additional parties arriving on foot daily. After describing these poor souls as "vermin," hardly a view to be taken by a Christian minister, he wrote, "I am sorry to hear that none of them intend to leave this place." [141] He was a bit more charitable in his description of the German settlers of Pennsylvania. Crediting them with "National frugality and industry" which made them the most thriving inhabitants of the state, he said that their "ignorance and superstition are much against them."[142]

The presence of so great a number of negro slaves in America worried Nisbet a great deal. He was acutely aware of the revolt of the slaves on the Island of San Domingo, and greatly feared that something similar might take place in this country. He was not what one would have later termed an Abolitionist, but he was not in favor of the involuntary servitude to which the blacks were subject, notwithstanding that his son-in-law Dr. McCoskry, was a slave-holder.

As Nisbet approached the end of his days, he became more and more concerned about the failure of the Trustees of the College to pay the arrearages of his salary. He wrote of this many times to various friends, and from time to time considered bringing suit against the college to collect what was due him. One may imagine his ire when the Trustees decided to erect a new structure on seven acres of land situated on High or Main Street, in Carlisle, across from Nisbet's home. To finance the construction, the Trustees disposed of securities which had been producing income towards the payment of salaries of the faculty. The building was almost completed and was partially in use when, on February 3, 1803, it caught fire and burned to the ground. Nisbet sarcastically wrote that the Trustees had for some time desired to make their college more and more like Princeton, and that fire had gone a long way towards that goal, for Nassau Hall had also burned. To Addison he wrote that the Trustees had cheated him out of $2,620 owed him and had also reduced his salary by more than eighty pounds sterling in order to finance the structure. "Woe unto him that buildeth his House by Unrighteousness, and his Chambers by wrong." [143] Nisbet's upbraidings and future financial problems did not deter the Trustees from rebuilding. They immediately got in touch with Latrobe, the architect who designed a new building for them without charge, a building which still stands - a limestone monument to their vision and perseverence - "Old West," honored in song and in the memories of all Dickinsonians, many of whom have carved their initials on the old stone steps.

We come now to the last days of the unhappy man. For some time he had been in rather poor health, and on New Year's Day, 1804, he contracted a cold which grew worse, ultimately turning into pneumonia, from which he died on January 18, whispering with his last breath, "Holy, Holy, Holy." [144]

Towards the end of his days, Nisbet was asked by many to write of his life and of his views, but he steadfastly refused. He declined to write a Will

and died intestate. His estate was not a considerable one, at least it was not large in immediately realizable assets. He left a library of approximately 1,400 volumes, which some years later was given by his personal representatives to the Princeton Theological Seminary, with the New Brunswick Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church designated as Trustee, to insure that the library would never be put to uses contrary to the beliefs of Charles Nisbet.[145]

The inventory of Nisbet's estate is an interesting one. It follows:

Personalty	$ 990.30
Due from the Trustees	5,593.37
Due from the Presbyterian Church	1,206.20
2 Shares, 8% stock "of the States"	1,900.00
Cash in Edinburgh	114.67
Cash in hands of A. Nisbet	440.00
Total	$10,244.54 [146]

It was not until suit had been instituted against both the college and the Presbyterian Church of Carlisle that settlement was finally made. The church settlement, we have seen, was made in 1815 and that by the college at about the same time. Some of the real estate was sold many years later by his daughter, Alison Nisbet McCoskry, to whom the other heirs had conveyed their interests, but the records of the local court house give no indication of what disposition was made of the balance of his real property.[147]

There were lamentations and eulogies, most of them printed in the local newspaper. Davidson himself delivered a lengthy one at the funeral service. Of permanent character there is a monument, in what is now called "The Old Cemetery" of Carlisle, erected not by the Trustees, but by Alexander Nisbet, the youngest son. It marks the grave of the old teacher and his wife, who followed him in death by a few short years, passing away on May 12, 1807. There is on the monument a lengthy tribute in Latin, believed to have been composed by John Mitchell Mason, who held the post of President of the college from 1821 to 1824.[148]

It is now time for a summing up. What was Nisbet? Did he accomplish anything while serving the causes of religion and education? Let us deal with the unfavorable aspects of the man first. He was dogmatic, rather "happy with himself," as the saying goes, intolerant of those who differed with him on politics and religion, sarcastic to a serious fault, constantly kicking against the pricks and to use the words of his old friend, the Earl of Buchan, "very controversial where situated"...whose letters were "tainted by a turbulent, querulous spirit."[149]

On the other hand, he was devoted to his God, his religion, his family and his Church. Next to this devotion came his dedication to the cause of proper education of the young, the only hope, he believed, for the new nation. A study of but a few of his lectures will impress the reader as to the dedication with which he presented the learning and the thinking of the ages of his young pupils, hoping to direct their thinking into proper channels. His caustic criticism of the American people, their government and their institutions

was but a natural reaction to his disappointment and his disillusionment. He felt that he was not able to realize his high hopes. He was not a popular man, but with the Trustees of the college, "unwillingly yoked together," carried the college through a difficult period. He left in the minds of his students the impression of unyielding devotion to the great Truths and did much to raise the standard of education in the new country. We may excuse many of his complaints and actions by pointing out that he had spent almost fifty years of his life in a European atmosphere, and being at least as inflexible as any man of that age, found it most difficult to make proper allowances for the struggles of a young country, just become independent and struggling to establish its national aims and policies.

Let us close the story of this eminent and devoted man with the words of "The First Church," a publication of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle - his church:

> "Fifty years in high places in Scotland had not fitted him to endure the trials of the Pioneer. He made no concealments, expressed his sentiments of all subjects with the simplicity of a child, was habitually disinterested, was nervously timid, had no taste nor fitness for resisting injuries, his wit was without reserve, and so his attacks on popular prejudices and iniquitous actions often called forth resentment. But his perfect honesty and integrity outlived all resentment." [150]

APPENDIX I

Some readers may be interested in learning more of "The Works." Carlisle, founded in 1751, had for some time been the oupost of the civilized world. Beyond the town, to the west, there was little but an occasional fort, strung out as a chain to what is now Pittsburgh, where the French had established Fort Duquesne, later Fort Pitt, after the defeat of the French in the French and Indian Wars. In 1756, although a wooden fort had been constructed in the center of the town, there was really no adequate defense against a serious attack by the Indians, allied to the French, and urgent requests were made for armed assistance. Regular troops did not arrive until May 30, 1757, when Colonel John Stanwix arrived with a force consisting of one battalion of the Royal Americans and 1,900 Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia Provincial troops. Stanwix had planned to move immediately upon Fort Duquesne and the Ohio Valley, but the reports he received upon his arrival in Carlisle led him to believe that an attack by French and Indians was imminent. He thereupon established a system of entrenchments and breastworks just to the east of Carlisle. From this base Stanwix sent out many parties to protect farmers in their fields, and to conduct reconnaissance missions, for he still feared attack. Upon orders from high authority he was forced to deplete his garrison by sending troops to Wyoming, a few miles up the Susquehanna River from Wilkes-Barre, and to South Carolina to reinforce Colonel Bouquet.

In 1758 General Forbes was given command of all troops in this area, with order to proceed with such offensive operations as might be judged most expedient. Forbes energetically proceeded with his task. He prepared the roads to the west for passage by wagons and cannon. He widened the road from Harris' Ferry, now Harrisburg, to Carlisle and he constructed a depot for the storage of three months provisions for 6,000 men. This was the first of several supply establishments erected at Carlisle during the 18th century. During the same period and for many years afterwards that military base was the point from which various expeditions embarked to the west.

From 1764, when the British and Provincial troops under Brigadier General Bouquet had finally conquered the Indians and returned to Carlisle with hundreds of rescued captives of the Indians, there was little or no activity of military character at the depot until in 1769 when the Colonial Government established an armory there for the manufacture of muskets, pikes, ramrods and small ammunition.

Early in the Revolutionary War, a supply depot was established in the area, and in 1776, Washington decided that he wanted to establish a regiment of Artillery Artificers, who would now be deemed Ordnance troops, some of the regiment to be assigned to tactical units and the balance, augmented by civilian workers, to be stationed at two "laboratories." One of these two fixed installations Washington wanted to establish at York, but Congress decided that it should be established at Carlisle. This was a rather reasonable decision for

Congress to make, for the Carlisle area had among its population many wheelwrights, carpenters, iron workers, blacksmiths and gunsmiths, all experienced as a result of the work done in prior years at the same place. In addition, there were several buildings in existence suitable for use. Ultimately what had begun as Stanwix's system of trenches and breastworks became one of the most important supply installations of the Army during the Revolution and was known as "Washingtonburg."

After the Revolution all activity ceased and the place was cared for by a military agent appointed to watch over supplies which remained there. It was during this period that Benjamin Rush conceived his idea of a college in Carlisle and from the very beginning he, and others of the board of Trustees, had in mind the acquisition of "The Works" or "Washingtonburg" as a future site for Dickinson College. It was probably with this in mind that the quarters provided for the Nisbet family were on the old army post, as a sort of a "foot-in-the-door." The hopes of the Trustees were finally dashed, after several years of political effort, by the decision of Congress in 1787 not to pass a resolution which would have granted the area to the college. It is thought probable that threats of Indian wars on the western frontier and the requirement for a base for punitive expeditions as a result of such outbreaks were behind the failure of Congress to give up the installation.

For many years "The Works," finally known as Carlisle Barracks, served as a recruiting and training installation, and as a point from which expeditions would embark. Before the Civil War it became a cavalry post, and many of the officers who were stationed there served in the Union and the Confederate Armies. The supply function of Carlisle Barracks was an important one during the Civil War period, great numbers of horses being procured from the surrounding area for use by the cavalry and artillery. Many recruits were trained for service there as well.

On June 27, Lt. General Richard E. Ewell, one of Lee's corps commanders occupied Carlisle, placing his troops there and at the Barracks, the military tenants of which having fled to Harrisburg. The occupation of Carlisle was a peaceful one. Ewell placed requisitions for supplies upon the town, but kept his troops well in hand. Many of the officers of the rebel army, including Ewell himself, had been stationed at Carlisle Barracks and had become acquainted with residents of the community, and some of the troops had been students at Dickinson College. As a result, there was visiting with old friends in the town and, although some of the troops were quartered on the campus of the college, former students of the institution had a restraining influence upon their fellows. As a result, although there was a considerable quantity of captured whiskey available, which was immediately put to good use, there were no incidents involving the townspeople.

There was one memorable event which took place at Carlisle Barracks. Just a few days prior to the entry of the Southern troops into Carlisle, the Confederate Congress had adopted a national flag. On June 21st the new flag was flown over Castle Thunder, the Conferate political prison in Richmond.

One banner, made by Richmond ladies, was forwarded by General Lee to Ewell who had succeeded to the command of Stonewall Jackson's Corps, as a tribute to Jackson. Ewell passed it down to Rodes, his favorite Division Commander, commanding under him the forces at Carlisle and on June 29, with all of the Confederate troops in Carlisle drawn up on the parade ground of Carlisle Barracks, the new flag was unfurled by the 32nd North Carolina Regiment - the first time hoisted by a troop unit, and the furthest point north it ever reached.

That same day Ewell received word from Lee to move toward Gettysburg, and he left Carlisle and the Barracks in short order. Soon after his departure, New York militia troops under the command of Major General W. F. Smith, entered the town. On July 1, the wandering J.E.B. Stuart, searching for Ewell, reached the edge of town, called upon it to surrender, and being met with a refusal by Smith, proceeded to shell the town and burned the Barracks. Fitzhugh Lee, years later wrote that he was pleased that before any considerable damage had been done by him, Stuart was ordered to Gettysburg, as he had made many friends in Carlisle while stationed at Carlisle Barracks. Stuart, himself, had been a student at the Cavalry School.

Carlisle Barracks continued to be used, although rebuilding was slow. Wounded came for hospitalization and recuperation. Conscripts were received there and then forwarded to troop units. At the end of the war the garrison settled down to normal peacetime duties and it was not until the troubles with the western Indians became a matter of concern that the Barracks became more active. Trained cavalrymen and their mounts were in demand and Carlisle Barracks supplied both. In 1871 the garrison was moved to St. Louis and the Barracks reverted to caretaker status for most of the period between that date and September 1879, when the post was transferred to the Interior Department for use as an Indian School.

The Indian School had as its students young Indians and Eskimos, both boys and girls, who were brought there directly from their reservations. It had a student body of 1,000 at its peak, and was successful in training the young students in most of the trades, farming, homemaking and many of the fine arts. The school continued to operate until September 1, 1918, when the area was transferred back to the Army by the Department of the Interior. Since then it has served the Army in many ways. First, as a general hospital, which furnished care to returned wounded of World War I; then as the U. S. Army Medical Field Service School, which functioned until it was transferred in 1946 to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. Since that date it served as the home of several schools operated by the Army and finally, in 1951, became the home of the Army War College, the highest educational institution operated by that service. Students are selected for that school from among the most promising of all of the Armed Services, from the State Department and other governmental agencies, with the greatest percentage coming, of course, from the Army. Its graduates have distinguished themselves over the years, and many of them, in retirement, have returned to Carlisle to live.

NOTES

Abbreviations: DCA Dickinson College Archives
DL The Darlington Library, University of Pittsburgh

[1]Sidney Lee, ed. Dictionary of National Biography. (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1895), Vol. 41, p. 70.

[2]Parochial Record of Yester. County of Haddington, Scotland. New Register House. (Edinburgh, Scotland), Department of the Register-General of Scotland.

[3]Samuel Miller. Memoir of the Rev. Charles Nisbet, D.D. (New York: Robert Carter, 1840), p. 14.

[4]Parochial Register of Yester.

[5]Samuel Miller, pp. 15 and 16.

[6]Herbert F. Thompson, Jr. "The University of Edinburgh in Charles Nisbet's Day." Dickinson Alumnus (December 1960): 11.

[7]Samuel Miller, p. 17.

[8]Thompson, p. 32.

[9]Miller, p. 308.

[10]Ibid., p. 18.

[11]Francis H. Groome, ed. Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, New Ed. (London: n.d.), Vol. 6, p. 502.

[12]Miller, pp. 17-18.

[13]Ibid., p. 18.

[14]Charles Coleman Sellers. Dickinson College: A History. (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 64.

[15]Miller, pp. 19-22.

[16]Ibid., p. 24.

[17]James Henry Morgan. Dickinson College, The History of One Hundred and Fifty Years, 1783-1933. (Carlisle PA: Dickinson College, 1933), p. 44.

[18]Miller, p. 25.

[19]Ibid., p. 299.

[20]Ibid., p. 313. In Miller, pp. 306-317 there are several descriptions of the mental powers and physical characteristics of Nisbet.

[21]Miller, p. 21.

[22]Ibid., p. 36.

[23]Sellers, p. 124.

[24]Benjamin Rush to James Rush, December 22, 1809, quoted in L. H. Butterfield, ed., Letters of Benjamin Rush. 2 vols. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), Vol. 2, p. 1029.

[25]Michael Krause. "Charles Nisbet and Samuel Stanhope Smith, Two Eighteenth Century Educators." Princeton University Chronicle, 1 (November 1944), p. 18.

[26]Miller, p. 30 ff.

[27]Ibid., p. 316.

[28]S. J. M. Low & F. S. Pulling, eds. Dictionary of English History. New Ed., Rev. (Cassell & Company: London, Toronto and Melbourne, 1928).

[29]Miller, p. 72.

[30]Ibid., p. 98.

[31]Sellers, p. 30.

[32]Butterfield, Rush Letters, Vol. 1, p. 46.

[33]Nathaniel Burt. The Perennial Philadelphians. (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1963), pp. 105-107.

[34]Sellers, p. 32.

[35]Ibid., p. 3

[36]Ibid., p. 63.

[37]Miller, pp. 101-102.

[38]Rush to John King, April 2, 1783, in "Presbyterians and the American Revolution," Journal of Presbyterian History. 52 (Winter 1974): 455.

[39]Sellers, p. 53.

[40]Morgan, p. 27.

[41]Miller, p. 115.

[42]Krause, pp. 26-31.

[43]Miller, pp. 104 and 109.

[44]Butterfield, Rush Letters, 1: 324.

[45]Sellers, p. 65.

[46]Ibid., p. 69.

[47]Miller, p. 117.

[48]Ibid., p. 118.

[49]Ibid., p. 117.

[50]Nisbet to John Witherspoon, March 16, 1784. DCA.

[51]Nisbet to Witherspoon, April 3, 1784. DCA.

[52]James H. Smylie. "Charles Nisbet: Second Thoughts on a Revolutionary Generation." Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. 98, (April 1974), p. 191.

[53]Charles Nisbet - Statement of expenses incurred in moving with his family from Montrose to Philadelphia. DCA.

[54]Miller, p. 132.

[55]Lord Elgin to John Dickinson, Edinburgh, March 31, 1785. DCA.

[56]Morgan, p. 34.

[57]Nisbet to Rush, July 18, 1785. DCA.

[58]Various statements, bills, etc., covering this work are to be found in DCA.

[59]Morgan, p. 76.

[60]Ibid., p. 36.

[61]Morgan, pp. 111-113.

[62]Nisbet to Rush, July 18, 1785. DCA.

[63]Sellers, p. 81.

[64]Ibid., p. 87.

[65]Nisbet to Rush, August 18, 1785. DCA

[66]Sellers, p. 86.

[67]Nisbet to Board of Trustees of Dickinson College, October 18, 1785. DCA

[68]John Armstrong to "Gentlemen," February 10, 1786. DCA.

[69]James Duncan. "Reminiscence of Dr. Charles Nisbet of Dickinson College." Journal of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. 5 (1881): 103.

[70]Morgan, pp. 78-79.

[71]Rayner, Wickersham Kelsey, ed. Cazenova's Journal, 1794. (Haverford PA: Pennsylvania Press, 1922), p. 35.

[72]Sellers, p. 123.

[73]Miller, p. 320.

[74]Morgan, p. 136.

[75]Carl Brent Swisher. Roger B. Taney. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1935), p. 18.

[76]Charles Nisbet. "An Address to the Students of Dickinson College by the Rev. Charles Nisbet, D.D., on his Re-election to the Office of Principal of Dickinson College." (Carlisle PA: Kline and Reynolds, 1786), p. 12.

[77]Dictionary of National Biography, 14:515.
Samuel Miller writes at length upon this subject. He had come to Carlisle to attend Nisbet's lectures on theology, but the course had been completed before his arrival. He remained in Carlisle, spending most of his time with Nisbet getting to know, understand and respect the teacher. (See also, Rev. Charles Collins' biographical sketch of Nisbet in The Ladies Repository (December 1853): 531.

[78]Sellers, p. 98.

[79]Miller, p. 137.

[80]Dumas Malone, ed. Dictionary of American Biography. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1946), 15:526.

[81]Quotation from students' notes. DCA.

[82]Morgan, p. 48

[83]James A. Bonar. "We Have Aimed Honestly at Doing Good." Boyd Lee Spahr Lectures in Early Americana. (Carlisle PA: Dickinson College), 4:86.

[84]Butterfield, Rush Letters, 1:410-411.

[85]Nisbet to Richard Wistar, November 29, 1788. DCA.

[86]Nisbet to Alexander Addison, February 23, 1797. DL.

[87]Nisbet to Board of Trustees, November 8, 1803. DCA.

[88]Nisbet to Board of Trustees, December 9, 1801. DCA.

[89]Nisbet to William Young, January 8, 1790. DCA.

[90]Nisbet to Rush, February 18, 1790. DCA.

[91]Nisbet to Young, November 23, 1791. DCA.

[92]Sellers, p. 23.

[93]J. R. Green. A Short History of the English People. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), p. 764.

[94]Miller, pp. 310-311.

[95]Bernard C. Steiner. "Some Correspondence of Dr. James McHenry." Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. 29:326.

[96]Miller, p. 240.

[97]Smylie, p. 197.

[98]Carl B. Swisher. Roger B. Taney. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1936), p. 18.

[99]Miller, p. 228.

[100]Nisbet to Mary Turnbull, May 13, 1799. DCA.

[101]Nisbet to Young, December 6, 1792. DCA.

[102]DCA.

[103]Morgan, pp. 152-153.

[104]Morgan, p. 68.

[105]Merrill D. Peterson. Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 960.

[106]Ibid., p. 958.

[107]Miller, p. 270.

[108]Peterson, p. 385.

[109]Ibid., p. 626.

[110]Smylie, p. 203.

[111]Letter, January 16, 1788, on behalf of the Trustees of Dickinson College to a Committee of Congress. DCA.

[112]Butterfield, Rush Letters, 1:416.

[113]Nisbet to Addison, October 29, 1793. DL.

[114]Records of the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, Carlisle PA.

[115]Morgan, p. 153.

[116]Sellers, p. 132.

[117]Minutes of the First Presbyterian Church of Carlisle PA. DCA.

[118]"Nisbet to Charles Wallace, August 19, 1791." Bulletin of the New York Public Library (July 1897), p. 183.

[119]"Charles Nisbet, D.D.," First Church. (Carlisle PA: August 1884):1.

[120]Miller, p. 315.

[121]Ibid., p. 343.

[122]Ibid., p. 227.

[123]Miller, p. 169.

[124]John Dickinson to Trustees of Dickinson College, July 25, 1785. DCA.

[125]John Armstrong to John Dickinson, on behalf of the Trustees of Dickinson College, January 10, 1787. DCA.

[126]Miller, p. 226.

[127]Ibid., p. 208

[128]Ibid., p. 247.

[129]Nisbet to Jedadiah Morse, October 24, 1799. DCA.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Nisbet to Young, November 14, 1794. DCA.

[132]Nisbet to Young, June 25, 1796. DCA.
(In a later letter Nisbet hinted that Thomas had some scheme to go to the East Indies. DCA.)

[133]Nisbet to Addision, August 12, 1797. DL.

[134]Nisbet to Addison, September 9, 1797. DL.

[135]Nisbet to Addison, October 30, 1797. DL.

[136]Nisbet to Addison, November 19, 1798. DL.

[137]Nisbet to Addison, November 9, 1799. DL.

[138]Charles Collins. "Rev. Charles Nisbet, D.D., First President of Dickinson College." The Ladies Repository. 13 (December 1853): 530 and 532.

[139]Nisbet to Young, October 1, 1791. DCA.

[140]Miller, p. 231.

[141]Nisbet to Young, August 21, 1800. DCA.

[142]Miller, p. 144.

[143]Nisbet to Addison, February 23, 1803. DL.

[144]Sellers, p. 131.

[145]Minutes of the Directors of Princeton Theological Seminary, Vol. 3, 1827-1849, pp. 316-363. Archives of Princeton Theological Seminary, Speer Library, Princeton NJ.

[146]Inventory of the Personal Estate of Charles Nisbet, taken from records of the Register of Wills of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, Carlisle PA. DCA.

[147]Miller, pp. 287 and 288.

[148]Ibid., p. 298.

[149]Memorandum by Earl of Buchan, written on outside cover of letter, Nisbet to Buchan, March 20, 1790. DCA.

[150]"Charles Nisbet, D.D." The First Church. Carlisle PA, 1 (August 1884): 1.

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