

FRANCIS ALISON, COLONIAL EDUCATOR *

REV. THOMAS CLINTON PEARS, JR., L.H.D.

"I beg leave to introduce to you the Rev. Mr. Alison, a Person of great Ingenuity and Learning, a catholic Divine, and what is more an Honest Man."

So wrote Benjamin Franklin, under date of September 1, 1755, in a letter of introduction addressed to Joshua Babcock; and then proceeded to commend him still further:

"By entertaining this Gentleman with your accustomed Hospitality and Benevolence, you will Entertain one of the Nobility. I mean one of God's Nobility; for as to the King's, there are many of them not worth your notice."

Under the same date, Dr. Franklin, who had a happy knack at this sort of thing, wrote to the Rev. Jared Eliot, just as Alison and John Bartram, the famous botanist, were about to set off on a journey to New England:

I wrote to you yesterday, and now I write to you again. You will say, It can't rain, but it pours; for I not only send you manuscript but living letters. The former may be short, but the latter will be longer and yet more agreeable. Mr. Bartram I believe you will find to be at least twenty folio pages, large paper well filled, on the subjects of botany, fossils, husbandry, and the first creation. This Mr. Alison is as many more on agriculture, philosophy, your own catholic divinity, and various other parts of learning equally useful and engaging.

Although Francis Alison, according to the judgment of his contemporaries, was one of the outstanding figures of the Colonial period, he is to-day almost forgotten, even by those who have most reason to cherish his memory. Fortunately however, recent research

* An address delivered in Mitchell Hall, Nov. 23, 1943, by invitation of the trustees of the University and the trustees of Newark Academy, in commemoration of the bicentennial anniversary of the founding of the Academy, the parent institution of the University.

This was almost the last public appearance of Dr. Pears. For ten years prior to his sudden death, Dec. 26, at the age of 59, he had been Manager of the Department of History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Dr. Pears had in preparation a full-length biography of Francis Alison, in which the material of this address was to be incorporated. By permission of Mrs. Pears and through the good offices of Dr. Guy S. Klett, of the Presbyterian Department of History, the address is printed in this issue of DELAWARE NOTES.

has brought to light such a truly amazing quantity of fresh material for the reconstruction of his life, that there has gradually emerged a compelling personality, whose many-sidedness rivals that of Franklin himself.

Eminent as he was in various fields, it is to do him no injustice to confine our attention this evening to *Alison the Educator*; for he was first, last, and all the time, the instructor of youth. Nor shall we be far wrong in the belief that in placing our chief emphasis upon his service in what he himself has called "the desparate cause of promoting learning," we would have the stamp of his approval. For in answer to a letter from his friend, President Stiles of Yale, requesting him to enumerate his principal contributions to his day and generation, he replied, that what gave him most satisfaction on the review, was:

First, That at his arrival here [i.e. in America in 1735], there was not a College, nor even a good grammar School in the four [middle] Provinces, Maryland, Pennsylvania [then including Delaware], New Jersey, and New York; but on the other hand all that made any pretensions to learning were branded as letter-learned Pharisees; and [that] this desparate cause, of promoting learning in this Province, he undertook, encouraged by the Synod, who allowed him only twenty pounds per annum, and fifteen for an assistant; and obliged them to teach all *gratis*, that were pleased to accept of learning on these terms; and [that] in this the success was beyond their expectations; and roused a spirit in Philadelphia to erect an Academy, and then a College; and that since that time learning had become reputable, even amongst those that had given the nickname of letter-learned Pharisees, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

Your own distinguished historian, the late Professor George H. Ryden, has quoted Emerson as saying that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of *one man*." True as this aphorism is in the present case, it is equally true, in a very real sense, that both the University of Delaware and the University of Pennsylvania are the lengthened shadows of a *single institution*, the school opened by Alison at New London late in November in the year 1743.

In spite of its unique significance in the history of higher education in the Middle Colonies, no adequate account of the New London Academy has ever been written; yet none of our early schools is richer in contemporary source material with regard to its establishment and the manner in which it was conducted during its formative years.

To begin with, we have a documentary record of the steps which led to its founding, and the actual newspaper announcement of its

formal opening. We know the place, and even the building in which its first sessions were held, and where they continued while the school remained in New London. We have an attested account of the rules drawn up for its administration, and we are familiar with the names of those who were appointed as trustees from year to year. We know what provisions were made for its visitation, and for the examination of its students. We have a fairly comprehensive idea of its curriculum, and a detailed and first-hand description of the method of instruction adopted and consistently pursued. We are intimately acquainted with its master, and have recently learned the name of his first assistant. We know exactly how the school was supported, and we have an itemized account of receipts and expenditures for the first four and a half years, commencing with the opening of the school in the fall of 1743.¹ We are informed as to the number of students in attendance at the end of the first six months, and we know most of them by name. Finally, we have thoroughly authentic information with regard to its subsequent history as the Newark Academy, and of its gradual development into the present University of Delaware. And for *not one single item* of all this valuable information are we dependent either upon tradition or upon any secondary source.

In order to understand the origin of the New London Academy, we must first have some acquaintance with the history of the Presbyterian Church during the period immediately preceding its establishment. By the year 1739, the lines had been tightly drawn between the more conservative members of the Synod of Philadelphia, and the group under the leadership of the Tennents, commonly known as the Brunswick Brethren. The latter had become the enthusiastic champions of an aggressive evangelism; and in their zeal, had been guilty of certain indefensible practices which the Synod had felt compelled to condemn by formal action.

What must be understood at this point is, that *both groups were fully aware that the future lay with those who had supervision over the education of youth*. For the speedy accomplishment of this end, the Brunswick Brethren were prepared; the so-called 'Log-College' of William Tennent at Neshaminy having been opened about four years earlier. Indeed, at this juncture they were planning a campaign for its more adequate support, and for the enlargement of the scope of its program.

¹ A photostatic copy of this MS. financial report of the New London school, from its beginning in 1743 to 1748, was presented to the Memorial Library by Dr. Pears.

It was at the meeting of the Synod of 1739, that an overture from the Presbytery of Donegal was adopted, "for erecting a school, or seminary of learning." Certain preliminary steps were taken for carrying this resolution into effect; but the breaking out of the war between England and Spain determined them to lay aside the whole affair for the time; and the matter did not come before the Synod again until May 1743. In the meantime the unhappy schism between the Brunswick party and the majority of the Synod had taken place; and it is likewise to be noted that the school at Neshaminy had ceased to exist by 1742, with the retirement of William Tennent from all active participation in the affairs of the Church "by reason of his advanced age."

The Synod having accomplished nothing definite, it remained for the Presbytery of Donegal to initiate the steps which led to the actual establishment of the school. They proposed to the Presbyteries of Philadelphia and New Castle that representatives be appointed to a convention of ministers to meet at Mr. Samuel Evans' Meeting House in the Great Valley, on the third Wednesday of November, 1743. This convention was duly convened; and although it was decided that an affair of such importance should be referred to the Synod at its next meeting, they nevertheless adopted the following momentous resolution: "*that in the mean time a school be opened for the education of youth.*" Evidently no time was lost in carrying this resolution into effect; for within less than a fortnight from the date of the convention, the announcement appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* that a school had recently been opened in the house of the Rev. Mr. Alison at New London.²

When the Synod met the following May (1744), they approved of the action of the convention, adopted the already established school as their own, and drew up a set of rules and regulations for its administration.

These rules, which are recorded in the Minutes of the Synod, are of the utmost interest and importance. They provided, first, that "all persons who pleased might send their children and have them instructed *gratis* in the languages, philosophy, and divinity." That is, they provided for a *free, public* school, as is brought out again and again in all their future references to it.

² "We are informed that there is a Free-School opened at the House of Mr. Alison in Chester County, for the Promotion of Learning, where all Persons may be instructed in the Languages and some other Parts of Polite Literature, without any Expences for their Education" (*Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 24, 1743).

The words descriptive of the courses to be offered are likewise highly significant: the *languages*, *philosophy*, and *divinity*. These words, according to the technical usage of the day, indicated the establishment not only of a grammar school, but of a college and a seminary. And as a matter of fact, Ewing, writing many years later, asserted that "the same branches of learning, such as languages, mathematics, and philosophy" were taught in the New London School "from the beginning" as were even then (1774) taught in the College of New Jersey.

The support of the school was to be provided by contributions from the churches of the three Presbyteries of which the Synod was composed.

Mr. Alison was chosen master, with the privilege of selecting his own assistant; the former being allowed twenty pounds, and the latter fifteen pounds, per annum.

Finally, trustees were appointed for the management of the school, and their duties were carefully specified. They were to inspect the master's diligence in and method of teaching; to consider and direct what authors were chiefly to be read in the several branches of learning; to visit the school at stated intervals; to examine the scholars from time to time as to their proficiency; and to be accountable to the Synod, making a yearly report of the state of the school and of their own proceedings.

These instructions were faithfully carried out; and it was under these regulations that the school operated from November 1743 to January 1752, or a little over eight years, when Alison removed to Philadelphia to become Rector of the recently founded Academy in that city.

It is about midway of this period that there belongs the earliest authentic document, with the exception of the ecclesiastical records, which still remains in existence. It is an itemized account, prepared for the Synod, of the contributions by individual churches for the support of the school, from its opening in November 1743, up to the date of the meeting of the Synod in May 1748. It contains such entries as the following: November, 1743. Elk River, £ 1 10 0, White Clay Creek, £ 1 15 0, Pencader, £ 1 7 6, &c.

The paper bears the simple heading, "School Acco^t." and shows the indebtedness of the Synod for 4½ years salary, at £ 35 per annum (i.e. £ 20 for the master and 15 for his assistant), as £ 157 10 0; to which is added 10 shillings for two *Virgils in usum Delphini*, making

a total of £ 158 0 0; on account of which the contributions from the churches had amounted to £ 137 2 0, leaving a balance due of £ 20 18 0.

If the amount of Alison's salary appears small according to the standards of our day, you may be sure it was not large even according to their standards. Which tempts me to cite another passage from his correspondence with President Stiles. After having informed him of the amount of his annual stipend in the service of the Churches of New London and Philadelphia over a period of many years, he concludes as follows: "These sums could not bear expenses to a man in a public station; but I thank God, I have ever lived above pinching poverty since I settled in America; and can leave a small matter to my children, which will be enough with honest industry; and without this, no estate is sufficient."

In addition to this priceless document, we are fortunate in having a number of contemporary descriptions of the school while it remained at New London. Some of these are contained in the correspondence of the Synod, not only in their Minutes, but in certain letters that have been discovered in the archives of the Synods of Holland in Amsterdam; while others occur either in the correspondence of Alison, himself, or in the memorials of him prepared by at least two of his earliest pupils.

Reserving the last mentioned for the time being, from these several sources we are enabled to present a composite picture, availing ourselves as much as possible of the actual phraseology of the originals:

At a time when learning was under heavy discouragement, and opportunities of education scarce in this and neighboring provinces; when, indeed, ignorance was not only like to overrun it, but to overspread all the Middle Colonies; when few men of learning were to be found either for public office or for the work of the ministry, but such as had been educated in Great Britain or Ireland; the Synod opened a school under the care of proper trustees, and placed it under the guidance of one of their own ministers whom they judged to have the proper capabilities for such a task.

The school was open to young men of all religious denominations, without distinction, who showed an inclination to improve themselves in learning; and instruction was given, without any charge, in the learned languages, philosophy, and the practical branches of mathematics.

This enterprise, it must be noted, was initiated and carried on with great difficulty; and was made possible only through the voluntary contributions of their own people. For the Quakers then had the most authority in the government; and as they were not much set on academies, it was obvious that they could not expect any public support.

At the end of the first six months, there were twelve pupils in attendance, and a much larger number was expected; for whose accommodation they hoped soon to be able to erect a building.

On the whole, in spite of all obstacles, their expectations had been more than answered; as the school had already produced many able and worthy men, a number of whom had entered the Gospel ministry.

The report that the scholars at the end of the first six months numbered only twelve, might not prove very impressive to a Dean of one of our modern universities; but if he were familiar, as we are, with the story of the *Ten Little Irish Lads*,³ he might have reason to change his mind. For it is much to be doubted whether among an entering class of several hundred he would be able to find ten to match the abilities and achievements of a class that contained three future signers of the Declaration of Independence, a member of the Constitutional Convention, the Secretary of the Continental Congress, the Surgeon General of the Army during the Revolution, the first Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, a Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, a United States Senator from Delaware, and a Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

That the New London Academy was the Synod's school, carried on under its supervision and supported by the contributions of the churches, is perfectly true, as is apparent from the foregoing narrative. But it was Alison, and Alison alone, who made it the first school of higher education, in the real meaning of that phrase, to be established in the Middle Colonies.

Perhaps we can both save time, and present a far more vivid picture of this famous institution, by quoting in full the description of it which occurs in the course of the "character" of Alison, or, as we would call it, the biographical sketch, printed in the *Pennsylvania Journal* shortly after his death. The anonymous writer is none other than Dr. Matthew Wilson of Lewes, one of his first pupils at New London, and later associated with Alexander McDowell in the conduct of the school, upon Alison's removal to Philadelphia.

Having discussed at some length Dr. Alison's genius, his wit, his great and accurate learning, his interest in public affairs, his predominating influence in the judicatories of the Church, &c., &c., Wilson proceeds as follows:

The most important part of the Doctor's character, is yet to be mentioned; his indefatigable labours and assiduous application in promoting a liberal educa-

³ See the article with this title by Dr. Pears in *The University News* for June, 1943.

tion, and good learning in America. Many men of learning had before come over to America, and some had made some feeble, unsuccessful attempts to teach youth here; but it must be owned by all, they had not Dr. Alison's talents, resolution, perseverance, or success.

It is certain he was the first who introduced real learning, not only in Latin and Greek, with great exactness; but also diffused the knowledge of all the liberal arts and sciences, which enlarge and improve the mind; not only through Pennsylvania, but in all the neighboring States; so that almost all men of real learning in these parts of the world, who are natives of the country, were either taught by him, or his pupils, or their scholars; as not only the Honourable the Secretary of Congress, and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, Dr. Ewing, George Reed, Esq., &c., &c. But many who have filled with honour the first places in the Churches, Colleges, and Republic, Army, Law, and Medicine, of whom, many of the finest talents have withdrawn from our world before their venerable master.

He first opened a seat of learning in New London, Chester County, of great and deserved renown in those days, (I think it cannot want much of 40 years since) on the most generous and broad bottom, for all denominations of christians equally; which was visited, examined, and encouraged by the Synod of Philadelphia, sometimes every year, until Colleges were erected, where youth resorted from all the cities, provinces, and colonies around.

His public spirit was coextended with his life; not only anxious to promote his own Seminary of learning, he sent such of his pupils, as he could recommend, to teach public school wherever he could influence; also to be assistants to other teachers, then beginning the important task; and be tutors in other schools and colleges, when erected, who thought themselves happy to get some of his pupils to put masters and scholars, on the Doctor's most correct and successful methods of teaching.

From Dr. Alison the love of learning 'caught a happy contagion of his virtue;' spread through the new world, and founded all the colleges and academies around; which I hope the rage of war will never extinguish.

Permit me to offer a few hints, respecting his first synodical Seminary, which may be improved by all other teachers of youth.

In his first Seminary, though he had often great numbers under his care, and frequently two or more assistants, yet his own attention to every class, and every student, seemed nevertheless unremitted.

The great Mr. Locke, and many since, have objected against losing 'several years in getting a critical knowledge of the dead languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, while our own tongue is neglected, &c.' But had Mr. Locke known so happy a plan of teaching as Dr. Alison's, he would have found no time was lost. For while the Latin and Greek were in teaching, we were not only taught the English grammar by comparing it with the Latin, with the principles, difficulties, beauties and defects of our mother tongue; but also we were taught to write and speak correct English. Nay, while the English, Latin, and Greek grammars were accurately taught and exemplified in every lesson in our classes, every part part of the Belles Lettres, as the Pantheon or heathen mythology, rhetoric and figures, geography and maps, chronology and Grey's *Memoria Tribunica*, Kennett's *Roman* and Potter's *Greek* Antiquities and ancient cus-

toms; Vertot's *Roman Revolutions* and other history (which we were not only obliged to read, but answer any questions out of them he chose to interrogate); and besides all these, characters, actions, morals, and events were taught and explained by him in every lesson.

As knowledge and composition, or writing and speaking, are the two greatest ends of a liberal education, we received the greatest advantage from his critical examination every morning of our themes, English and Latin, epistles, English and Latin, descriptions in verse, and especially our abstracts or abridgements of a paper from the *Spectator* or *Guardian* (the best standards of our language), substantially contracted into one of our exercises.

When languages were accurately taught (i.e. when they had completed the grammar school stage), we entered on a course of philosophy, instrumental, natural, and moral; in all which, the Doctor contented not himself with giving only lectures; he also examined us daily, and obliged us to write abridgements for ourselves, of the greatest utility.

When we came to read *Juvenal*, our declamations began, which we wrote and delivered from memory. And after *logic*, our syllogistic disputations.

From this too short and defective character, it is plain Dr. Alison was the principal father of learning and learned men; and like Prometheus, Cadmus, or even Apollo of old, deserves perpetual remembrance, as one of the greatest benefactors, on whose urn every grateful Son of Science will drop a tear.

For fear that this may seem but the pardonable exaggeration of the merits of a dearly beloved and deeply venerated teacher, seen through the mists of a memory of long years of close association, it behooves us to check his appraisal of the value of Alison's services, by consulting the judgment of others who were equally familiar with the facts, and fully competent in the premises.

With this end in view, and recalling that it was remarked in the beginning, that "according to the judgment of his contemporaries, he was one of the outstanding figures of the Colonial period;" let us suppose that half a dozen such witnesses, men whose names are still a household word, have gathered some time after Alison's departure from the scene of his earthly labors, and are taking part in that convenient literary device known as a symposium:

Benjamin Franklin opens it, as he opened this address:

Dr. Alison was "a person of great ingenuity and learning, well skilled in the languages, and my particular friend."

President Stiles of Yale:

I, too, "have had a long and intimate acquaintance with him. He was without doubt the greatest classical scholar in America, especially in Greek. He was not great in Mathematics, and Philosophy (i.e. Natural Philosophy), and Astronomy. But in Ethics, History, and in General Reading he was a great literary character."

Bishop William White:

Permit me to add, sir, that "in addition to his unquestioned ability in his department, he was a man of sterling integrity, [and] singularly liberal minded."

Provost William Smith, of the College of Philadelphia:

"I thought Dr. Alison qualified for any position in any college." We all know how "long he was employed in the education of youth in this province; and many of those who now make a considerable figure in it, have been bred under him. He was one of the first persons in this country, who, foreseeing the ignorance into which it was like to fall, set up a regular school of education in it; and so sensible were that learned and respectable body, the University of Glasgow, of his pious and faithful labors for the propagation of useful knowledge in these untutored parts, that they honored him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity, sent him without any solicitation on his part, and even without his knowledge."

President Stiles:

That is true, sir. I once wrote and asked him to send me a copy of his diploma, and I still recall certain phrases:

"Not only because of the saintliness of his character and true Christian piety, *tum ingenium, eruditionem ac literarum sacrarum peritiam*: but also his genius, erudition, and knowledge of sacred letters."

We ourselves at Yale, when conferring upon him an honorary degree, used these words: "*Eruditio eximia virtusque conspicua*: his extraordinary erudition and conspicuous virtue."

The Rev. Jacob Duché, Rector of Christ Church:

Dr. Smith has already spoken of his "labors for the propagation of useful knowledge in these untutored parts." His point is well taken; for "he has the honor of being among the first that introduced science into this heretofore untutored wilderness."

Dr. John Ewing, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania:

Perhaps I can sum up what you have all said, and at the same time give expression to my own estimate of the value of his services:

"It was his solicitude to promote the public happiness by the diffusion of religious liberty and learning through the once untutored wilds of America, that induced him to open a public school in New London some 36 years ago, at which time there was scarcely a shadow of learning in the middle States; and he generally instructed all that came to him without fee or reward; accounting himself amply paid by the propagation of that spirit of inquiry, that thirst of learning, and those generous and public spirited attempts to found and establish colleges in the States which we now see."

As Dr. Wilson has well said: "From Dr. Alison the love of learning, 'caught a happy contagion of his virtue.' For to the spreading influence of those numerous gentlemen who received the first rudiments of their education from him, we cannot but attribute, in a great measure, those pleasing prospects which we now entertain of seeing the sacred lamp of science

burning with a brighter flame, and scattering its invigorating rays over the unexplored deserts of this extensive continent, until the whole world be involved in the united blaze of knowledge, liberty, and religion. In short, he was a burning and a shining light, and one of the brightest luminaries that ever shone on this western world."

It is not enough, however, *if* we are to execute a living likeness of *Alison the Educator*, to confine ourselves to these formal appraisals of his service in "the desperate cause of promoting learning." He was anything but "the absent-minded professor," living a life of detachment from the contemporary scene, the high priest of science for science' sake. Two high purposes were in the background of all his thinking, and directed all his activities, two simple old-time virtues: the love of country and the love of God.

Even in the early days of the New London Academy, according to the reminiscences of one of his early students: "He never failed to implant the love of civil and religious liberty in every heart of his pupils." Warm hearted, ardent in temperament, and short in temper with ignorance, hypocrisy, laziness, and vice, many anecdotes are told of him which reveal under the rather stern exterior, the man of flesh and blood, who served the cause of education because he was convinced that education would serve the cause of country and of God.

His zeal for educating youth for this dual service was not confined to the classroom; it accompanied him into the pulpit and on the public rostrum; drove him into politics; was ever present with him on the floor of the Synod; dominated his contributions to the press; and is everywhere reflected in his correspondence.

That he made enemies, goes without saying; but there is no question that most of the boys who passed through his classes continued throughout their lives to entertain for him the deepest veneration and the warmest regard. Two examples have already been given in the memorials of Drs. Ewing and Wilson; but there are two further incidents that will illustrate even better the impression made upon his students by his fairness and firmness, which were mingled, as in every inspired teacher, in almost equal degrees.

The first is the case of a young Freshman, who had not been very long in college, but who had already learned from his fellow students something of the Doctor's character. Edward Burd, the son of the famous Colonel Burd of the French and Indian Wars, is writing home to sister Sarah; and in the course of describing his new experiences says:

"I have now been two weeks in College, laboring for Dr. Alison's [good] opinion which when once granted, will not be easily lost."

The second also occurs in the course of a letter. Samuel Hanson, of the Class of 1771 of the College of Philadelphia, is writing to William Tilghman, who in a recent letter had informed him about a number of their fellow students. Hanson, somewhat in the manner of an Old Grad, records some of his reminiscences of their college days; and, referring to Dr. Alison, writes: "I shall always esteem the old Doctor as I ought. Horace must have had him in his eye when he wrote his *justum et tenacem propositi virum*, &c. I should like to see the old Gentleman exceedingly." The reference is to the third Ode of Horace, in the Third Book of the *Songs*, and reads as follows:

"The man that's just and resolute of mood
No craze of people's perverse vote can shake;
Nor frown of threat'ning monarch make
To quit a purposed good.

"As soon would th' unquiet lord of Hardia's surge,
Roaring Sou'-Wester, shake him; or Jove's stroke
Of Fire. If wide Creation broke,
Upon its crumbling verge

"He'd stand undaunted."

Truly, a well-merited and graceful tribute!

And now, even at the risk of trying your patience, I feel that I cannot conclude without discussing briefly Alison's part in the re-organization of the Newark Academy. By the year 1769, it was apparent that he was far from satisfied either with the College of New Jersey or with his own College of Philadelphia, in regard to their ability to render the most effective service in the education of youth. He therefore turned once more to the old Academy, and entered upon a plan with some of his early pupils in the New London School, and certain other influential persons, to enlarge its usefulness. He was instrumental in organizing a Board of Trustees, of which he himself was elected President, and which office he retained until his death. It was he who secured the charter from the Proprietaries. And it was he who penned the appeal "To All Pious and Charitable Christians in Great Britain and Ireland," when two of his New London pupils set off on their expedition to solicit funds. And it was he who brought out most clearly the advantages of the delightful village of Newark as the ideal location for such an institution.

The story is told in his own words, in a letter to President Stiles, in which he asks him to furnish the two emissaries with a letter of

introduction to his friends in England. The letter is dated, October 22, 1773, and does not appear in the invaluable *Itineraries and Correspondence* of Ezra Stiles, published by the Yale University Press. Much water has passed under the bridge since 1743; and this document is another illustration of Alison's statesmanlike vision, and of his ability to keep abreast of the times:

Revd. & Dr. Sr.,

I am requested to give you this trouble by the Trustees of a Seminary of Learning that has subsisted with great reputation since 1743, but under some difficulties. You know the state of our Country, & particularly of this Province, whose Inhabitants increase beyond some of the other Colonies, by the great accession of strangers, as well as by the native inhabitants. A due attention is to be had to their morals, learning, religion, & virtue.

In 1769 our Land Office was opened to sell land lately purchased from the Indians; since that time, we have three new Counties erected; & the Lands are filling with new Inhabitants every day. In West-Morland, a new County, that includes Pitsburg, there is by the latest computation five thousand families, which would make fifty congregations, allowing an hundred families to make a congregation, which is a pretty reasonable number, where the land is not yet half settled with Inhabitants.

But whence will Ministers be found to supply all our vacant congregations, when there is not one Minister in that, nor in the other two New Counties? There are above two hundred vacant congregations under the care of our Synod, exclusive of these New Counties, & many other New Settlements in [New] York Government. But I see no way to supply their wants.

We have, it is true, three New Colleges lately erected in New York, New Jersey, & Pennsylvania; but these are not a sufficient number; & learning is grown exceeding expensive in them all; and few farmers are or will ever be able to give their sons a learned education in these cities; besides parents feel that their children when there, by bad example are prompted to live above their abilities, & future incomes; & for this reason, after all their pains, they decline to go into the ministry. And farmers' sons must furnish ministers & magistrates for all our frontier Inhabitants; or they must sink into Ignorance, licentiousness, & all their hurtful consequences.

Our Academy at New Ark, for which I now write you, is in an healthful and a plentiful country, a few miles from New Castle on Delaware. The Inhabitants are few, frugal, & Industrious; & there is cheap accommodations to be had & few Temptations to luxury.

It has answered our most sanguine expectations, & produced a number of able & learned men, that make a good figure in their different stations in life; and has merited the publick attention so far as to obtain letters of incorporation to enable Trustees of distinction & Learning to receive donations, & to carry it to a greater degree of usefulness. There is there now a professor of Mathematics & Philosophy; a Rector & two tutors.

There is no college in the Government on Delaware, where it is erected; nor in Maryland, which is the next Province; nor in a wide extended country of about 300 miles to Pitsburg on the Ohio.

Our Synod about two years ago, recommended it to all the Congregations in their bounds, to make Contributions for it; but as they had contributed largely to the Colleges in this City, & Princetown; & still were burdened with taxes for the late War, & had to build places of worship, & court-houses, & bridges; & to open a communication with these new counties, & are daily called to do many things absolutely necessary in a new Country,—all that we could expect, did not answer our necessities; and as the opulent cities of New York & Philadelphia were obliged to apply to Britain for assistance to complete their funds for their Colleges, we are encouraged to follow their example.

We doubt not, but all that will consider how necessary it is to soften the tempers of such wide multitudes, by Religion & Science, will lend us a helping hand. For this Purpose we have determined to send the Reverend Mr. John Ewing, & Dr. Hugh Williamson, both of this City, to Britain & Ireland, to solicit Benefactions for this purpose; and as you have an extensive Correspondence in both England & Scotland, we earnestly request you to recommend these Gentlemen, & their undertaking to their notice.

Your letter to Britain will oblige a very respectable body of men, and lay new obligations on your real friend & humble servant.

Fra: Alison.

P.S. Old Mr. Allen of this city, & one of his sons, and gentlemen of distinction, & the most learned ministers in our Province & the Government of Delaware, are Trustees in our letters of incorporation.

And so at length we come to the end of our discussion of *Alison the Educator*, drawing near now to the end of his long and busy life, and turning once again to his first love, the New London Academy,—transported to be sure, and revived to meet the changing conditions of a new day; but with the original purpose of preparing the youth of the rapidly expanding colonies for the service of Church and State.

How can we better close—here, at least, in Newark, the seat of the University of Delaware, the consummation of his first and latest dream—than by repeating the words of his successor at New London:

“He has left behind him an enduring name.”