

Summer 1970

Reverend William Graham, Presbyterian minister and rector of Liberty Hall Academy

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REVEREND WILLIAM GRAHAM
PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER AND RECTOR OF
LIBERTY HALL ACADEMY

BY

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

*approved:
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July 23, '70*

JULY, 1970

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PREFACE

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Reverend William Graham, a Presbyterian Minister, became noted as an educator and minister in Virginia. His dedicated teaching and deep concern for education insured the creation and preservation of Liberty Hall Academy during and after the Revolution; and his devout ministry resulted in revivals which strengthened Presbyterianism in Virginia.

In addition to teaching and preaching, William Graham was also interested in the political affairs of the time. He was vitally concerned with the establishment of representative democracy. He felt that through the constitutions and laws which were then being adopted and enacted, individuals must have certain rights guaranteed to them and be assured the greatest amount of personal freedom and justice. Because of his interest in others and his services as an educator, minister and public spirited citizen, William Graham was respected and honored and should be remembered for his contributions to society.

I not only was encouraged to do this study of the life, interests and contributions of the Reverend William Graham by the late Dr. Ollinger Crenshaw, Professor of History at Washington and Lee University, but was also greatly aided by this scholarly and congenial man in my search for information and material on him. In conducting my research, I have used materials and works in the following libraries: the Duke

University Library, the University of Richmond Library, the Washington and Lee University Library, the Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Virginia, the Library of Congress, the Virginia State Library and the Virginia Historical Society Library. For his counsel and assistance in my research for this thesis and its preparation, I am very grateful to Dr. W. Harrison Daniel, Associate Professor of History, University of Richmond, who has been my advisor.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

On December 19, 1746, a son was born to Michael and Susanna Graham in Paxton, Pennsylvania. This son, their second child and first son, was named William.¹ Both Michael and Susanna Graham were born in Northern Ireland and had emigrated to America with their parents. It is not known when their parents emigrated to the colonies or where and when Michael Graham had first met Susanna Miller. He had married Susanna a few years after the death of his first wife. By his first wife, he had three children, two daughters and a son. However, the son died when he was young.²

Until her marriage to Michael Graham, Susanna Miller had lived with her father in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. She has been described as a kind, considerate and congenial

¹Edward Graham, "Memoir of Rev. William Graham," The Evangelical and Literary Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, IV, (1821), p. 75. (Most of the early material on William Graham's life has been obtained from this "Memoir" written by his brother, Edward.)

²Ibid., p. 75.

woman who exhibited a genuine goodness and piety. Within her was a great love of life, a deep reverence for God and a compassionate nature. Her religious views had been influenced by the Reverend John Roan, who was her pastor at the time of her marriage.³

The first two decades of William Graham's life were spent with his family at Paxton township on the Pennsylvania frontier. Because of the danger of Indian attacks, the settlers in Paxton built a fort. On at least one occasion, the Graham family was threatened by raiders. After hearing Indians near their home at night and feeling certain that they would soon be attacked, they escaped to the safety of the fort.⁴

As a youngster, William performed chores on his father's farm, and assumed added responsibilities as he grew older. The long hours of work on the farm did not permit him much time in which to attend school, so his formal education in these early years of his life was meager. He was very interested in learning, however, and read widely in the books made available to him. From infancy he was taught religious principles and the Christian beliefs by his mother and father, who were both Presbyterians. It was his mother, however, who mainly impressed upon him the importance of believing in God and of leading a virtuous, pious, benevolent and honorable life.⁵

³Ibid., p. 75

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁵Ibid., p. 77.

In adolescence, William developed into a strong and sprightly young man. He was eager to learn and soon gained the respect of his neighbors by the way in which he imitated others to perform certain tasks and the ardour with which he worked. For his age, he displayed an unusual degree of dexterity and capability which gained him the admiration and respect of the other young men of the area.⁶ At about the age of fifteen or sixteen, he became interested in attending social events and dancing or frolicking as it was then called. He delighted in dancing and because his parents did not approve of it, he would often secretly attend dances without their knowledge at night at the homes of different neighbors. However, his fondness for dancing was brief and he later came to regard it as a practice that had been devised for the destruction of the soul. He claimed that it was not the dancing itself that was harmful, or the time that one lost in doing it, but the effect that it had on the individual's mind.⁷ He felt that dancing was harmful to the mind because "The mind was almost entirely employed in thinking of the dances that were past, and in looking forward to the one that was next to come; and thus, all serious reflection was entirely excluded."⁸

At about the age of twenty-one, William was converted. Although the details of this experience cannot be established,

⁶Ibid., p. 78.

⁷Ibid., p. 78.

⁸Ibid., p. 78.

he became keenly aware of the importance of religious principles and concepts for his life. He now changed his religious beliefs and feelings and became a person of "deep and solemn convictions."⁹ The instructions of his mother and father concerning the professing of religious beliefs and the practicing of them in one's life became meaningful to him now. He realized that only through Christ could he achieve salvation. It was soon after his conversion that he decided to become a minister of the Gospel. This was the turning point of William's life and would determine its later course.¹⁰

To become a Presbyterian minister, as he desired, it would be necessary for him to receive college training and he did not have either the required academic preparation for college work or the money that he would need. His mother not only greatly encouraged him in his decision to become a minister but also influenced his father to provide as much financial support for his education as he could.

It is believed that William began his preparation for college in 1768 by first going to the home of the Rev. John Roan, who had been his mother's minister, to study the subjects that he needed to learn. After studying at Roan's, he attended a school at Marsherrick operated by a Mr. Finley. He remained here for evidently about a year

⁹Ibid., p. 78

¹⁰Ibid., p. 78.

until he was ready to enter the College of New Jersey in 1769. While at Mr. Finley's school, it is thought that he taught some in order to earn needed money.¹¹

At the College of New Jersey, he became noted for his seriousness, industry, piety and wisdom. He excelled in scholarship and was a very solemn, yet well-liked student.¹² In describing his nature and his self-discipline, a fellow student later wrote "Sage, deep studied, Mr. Graham... He retains, with Dignity, the inherent Gravity which he always supported in every Part of his Conduct while he was a Student at Nassau (Princeton). The Lines of Method (and) Discipline have been inscribed (and) are yet visible (and) legible upon his Countenance!"¹³

The respect and admiration that his fellow students had for him as well as his solemn nature are shown in the following incident. While studying for an examination, Henry Lee asked William if he could review the subject with him. At first William refused Lee's request because he felt that they would only start talking about some matters which would be unrelated to their studies and they would waste time. Finally, Graham agreed to let Lee study with him but only if their conversation would deal entirely with the subject that they were studying. On taking the exam, Lee

¹¹Ibid., p. 79

¹²Ibid., p. 150

¹³Robert Greenhalgh Albion and Leonidas Dodson editors, Philip Vickers Fithian's Journal, 1775-1776. Written on the Virginia-Pennsylvania Frontier and in the Army around New York, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1934), p. 170.

did exceptionally well. He returned to Graham and expressed his debt to him for what he had done and offered to pay him. Graham refused to accept any payment even though Lee continued to insist. Finally Lee went to his room and taking his "Belsham's Lectures on Natural Philosophy," he marked out his own name and wrote "William Graham." He then took the book to William's room and left it on his desk.¹⁴

The teaching of John Witherspoon, President of the College of New Jersey, influenced William not only to form certain ideas and views, but also inspired him with a desire for the study of moral philosophy.¹⁵ Graham was influenced to accept Witherspoon's belief that more could be learned in meditation and observation than in extensive reading.¹⁶ He must have also been influenced by Witherspoon's views on and enforcement of discipline in his teaching because in later years he resembled Witherspoon as a strict, rigid disciplinarian.¹⁷ It was, however, Witherspoon's interest in moral philosophy and lectures on this subject, that had the greatest lasting influence on him. He was inspired by

¹⁴Edward Graham, "Memoir...", pp. 150-151.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 398-399.

¹⁶Donald Robert Come, "The Influence of Princeton on Higher Education in the South before 1824," William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, II (October, 1945), p. 369.

¹⁷Archibald Alexander, "Address before the Alumni Association of Washington College, June 29, 1843"; Washington and Lee University, Historical Papers, II (Baltimore, John Murphy and Co., 1890), p. 135.

Witherspoon to study and explain all of the difficult points in this subject. At the end of one of his lectures, Witherspoon observed that there were difficulties in moral philosophy which could not be solved with the present state of human knowledge, but he felt that the time would come and probably not too far in the future when these difficulties would be removed and there would be as much certainty and insight in moral as in natural philosophy. At this, William felt his heart burn within him and hoped that he might live to see that day when he would be able to understand and explain the difficulties that were so great in this subject.¹⁸ By this and other statements of Witherspoon, he was encouraged to study this subject and in later years "the science... which engaged his attention more than all others, except theology, was the philosophy of the mind" or moral philosophy.¹⁹ Whereas Witherspoon considered it as a companion study to theology, he would look upon it as an introduction to the study of theology.²⁰

The teaching of Witherspoon not only inspired Graham to study and learn moral philosophy but it also cultivated within him other principles and concepts of the Common Sense or Scottish Realism philosophy. As the major

¹⁸ Edward Graham, "Memoir...", pp. 398-399.

¹⁹ Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 132.

²⁰ Donald Robert Come, "The Influence of Princeton...", p. 370.

proponent of this philosophy in America at this time, Witherspoon influenced most of his students to accept its views and tenets. This Common Sense philosophy opposed the idealism of George Berkeley and David Hume and favored the Scottish rationalistic and realistic philosophy of Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, Lord Kames (Henry Home) and others.²¹ Christian ethics and principles as well as concepts of morality and justice were professed in it. It viewed the world and the conditions that man face in it in a realistic rather than an idealistic manner. By using his common sense and being reasonable and realistic, man could better solve his social, economic and political problems and thus create both a better society and an improved world in which to live. Individualism and freedom of thought and action were also stressed as important parts of this philosophy.²²

In later years Graham would indicate in his beliefs and actions, the extent to which he had been influenced to accept this philosophy. His interest in the study and learning of moral philosophy never waned and he would later have his students copy and study Witherspoon's Lectures on Moral Philosophy.²³ He would seek to increase his knowledge

²¹Terence Martin, The Instructed Vision, Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction, (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 3

²²Ibid., pp. 3, 4, 6.

²³Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 131.

of man's nature and his understanding of the world around him mainly by common sense observation and meditation rather than by extensive reading.²⁴

He would form strong convictions as to the importance of religious beliefs, education, morality, justice and personal freedom and would deeply concern himself with the religious, social and political rights of his fellow man.

While at college, William taught part-time at the grammar school which was under the personal direction of Witherspoon to earn needed money for his educational expenses.²⁵ It was probably here that he fully realized Witherspoon's educational views as to the way in which students should be disciplined and instructed and became influenced by them.

It was during one of his college vacations that his mother suffered a stroke. She seemed to be recovering from the stroke and had regained her speech and was again able to walk when she suffered a second and fatal stroke. The death of his mother was a great shock to William and caused him much grief. He had a deep affection for her and she had through her religious teachings, pious and kind nature and Christian way of life greatly inspired him. His brother, Edward, said later that "scarcely ever was there a son, who

²⁴Donald Robert Come, "The Influence of Princeton...", p. 369.

²⁵Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 128.

felt a more affectionate regard for a Mother; and scarcely ever was there a Mother, who more deserved the respect and affection of a son."²⁶ In her life, she had shown a true kindness to others and unselfish service to them, a righteous and virtuous nature and a faith in God that made her loved by all who knew her. In later years, William stated that he had received more information respecting the nature of practical religion, from the conversation of his mother, than from all the books he had ever read on the subject, except the Bible.²⁷ A friend of William's later said in describing the love that he had for his mother; "To his Mother, Mr. Graham considered himself much indebted in reference to his eternal interests (and) always spoke of her instructions (and) example with the warmest filial gratitude."²⁸

William was able, because of his exceptional scholarship, to advance a whole year in his studies at Princeton. Because he had studied the subjects that he was to take in his senior year, he was permitted to retire from college until the examinations for his class would be given. He took the examinations at the appointed time and graduated in the year 1773.²⁹ There were other outstanding young men in his

²⁶ Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 151.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

²⁸ Graham Family Papers (MS in Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina), Matthew Lyle to Edward Graham, November 14, 1820.

²⁹ Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 128.

graduating class of twenty-nine and in later years fourteen of them would become clergymen, four presidents of colleges and three governors of states.³⁰

Upon graduation from college, William returned to his father's home for a while and then went to the home of the Reverend John Roan to study theology. Roan lived on a farm, as did many other country ministers and relied upon the farm to help provide for the support of his family. However, as a farmer, Roan was quite incompetent. When his tools and implements needed to be repaired, he was unable to fix them and he would either be delayed in performing his farm work or unable to do it at all. William used the knowledge that he had gained from working on his father's farm and his dexterity in performing tasks and repairing implements to provide much valuable help to this man. In helping Roan, William, even though he did not realize it, greatly helped himself. He was so diligent in the study of his theology "that without the relaxation and exercise which these services afforded, his health would probably have been greatly injured."³¹

³⁰William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia Historical and Biographical, (First Series), New edition with index, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), pp. 440-441.

³¹Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 152.

After about a year of studying theology at the home of Roan, William was encouraged by Samuel Stanhope Smith, a friend of his from college, to come to Virginia and accept a teaching position. He accepted his friend's advice and moved south to Virginia in the fall of 1774.³²

³²Ibid., p. 254.

CHAPTER II

EARLY YEARS OF TEACHING AND MINISTRY

As early as October, 1771, Hanover Presbytery in Virginia had expressed an interest in establishing a seminary of learning somewhere within its bounds.¹ In 1774, the presbytery reconsidered this need for a school and with the help of the Reverend Samuel Stanhope Smith was able to obtain a qualified and capable teacher who could administer and operate their school.

Smith, a graduate of the College of New Jersey, had come to Virginia evidently early in 1774 as a frontier missionary under the auspices of the Presbytery of New Castle in New York.² He was soon admired as an effective minister and gained the respect of the Presbyterian leaders in the colony. When he learned of Hanover Presbytery's interest in

¹Minutes of Hanover Presbytery (MS in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Virginia), October, 1771.

²Edward Graham, "Memoir of Reverend William Graham," The Evangelical and Literary Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, IV (1821), pp. 253, 254.

establishing a school, he recommended William Graham as the teacher. He had known Graham in college and felt that he was well qualified for such a position. Writing to Graham, Smith told him about Hanover Presbytery's interest in forming a school and how it desired to employ him as a teacher. He encouraged him to come to Virginia and accept this position. Smith's encouragement convinced Graham to take the teaching position, and in the fall of 1774 he left Roan's home in Pennsylvania for Augusta County, Virginia.³

At its October, 1774, meeting at Cub Creek, Hanover Presbytery resolved

The consideration of a school for the liberal education of youth, judged to be of great and immediate importance. We do, therefore, agree to establish and patronize a public school, which shall be confined to the County of Augusta. At present, it shall be managed by Mr. William Graham, a gentleman properly recommended to this Presbytery and under the inspection of the Rev. Mr. John Brown.⁴

This school was located at Mt. Pleasant on the ridge near Fairfield in what is now Rockbridge County. It had been established in 1749 as Augusta Academy by Robert Alexander who had an M.A. degree from Trinity College in Dublin. He was succeeded as principal by the Reverend John Brown who was pastor of the church near the school.⁵ The presbytery at this same meeting directed its ministers to take special subscriptions for the support of the school.⁶

³Ibid.

⁴Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, October, 1774.

⁵Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, (Richmond, Virginia, John Knox Press, 1963), I, p. 80.

⁶Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, October 1774.

Graham at this time was twenty-eight years of age, slightly over medium height and had dark eyes and a slender, delicate frame.⁷ He was an effective teacher and soon was admired and acclaimed. Many of his students were full grown young men, who, like himself, had started their formal educations after they reached manhood. Students came to his school not only from the surrounding county but some, learning of the school and Graham's excellent teaching, also came from considerable distances.⁸

Even though he had accepted the teaching position at Augusta Academy and took a great interest in his teaching, Graham still intended to become a minister. In April, 1775, when Hanover Presbytery met at Timber Ridge Church, he offered himself as a candidate for the ministry. The minutes of presbytery on April 13 state,

William Graham having offered himself on trials for the gospel ministry, produced sufficient testimonials of his good standing in the churches, where he lived to the Northward, and particularly from the churches, where he was best known, and having been interrogated on his views for the gospel ministry, and also on his acquaintance with practical piety, and on these points having satisfied the Presbytery, he is continued on trials.⁹

On the following day, after delivering a discourse and an exegesis before the presbytery, he was assigned topics for a discourse and a sermon to be delivered to the presbytery at its meeting in June.

⁷Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1911), p. 127.

⁸Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 254.

⁹Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, April 13, 1775.

At this April meeting, the presbytery was mainly concerned with the affairs of Augusta Academy. It asserted that "the Presbytery, as guardians and directors, take this opportunity to declare their resolution to do their best endeavor to establish it on the most catholic plan that circumstances will permit..."¹⁰ Members of the presbytery visited the academy to observe Graham's teaching. They were favorably impressed with the proficiency of the students, in the Latin and Greek language, and pronouncing orations.¹¹ In describing the presbytery's declaration that Augusta Academy would be operated on a "catholic plan," Dr. Henry Ruffner in his history of Washington College stated that since this academy was the first institution above the rank of common school to be established in the Valley, it would not be restricted to Presbyterians but would be operated by the presbytery to provide liberal education to members of all denominations from all the surrounding country. "They meant, no doubt, as in duty they were bound to give a religious and moral education to the pupils of this academy; but not to manage it with the secretarian view of making Presbyterians of all who might resort to it."¹²

Through his teaching, William Graham continued to attract students to the school. His method of teaching, the

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Dr. Henry Ruffner, "Early History of Washington College," Washington and Lee University Historical Papers, (Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1890), Vol. 1, p. 14.

respect that his students had for him and the disciplined way in which they conducted themselves, studied and presented their recitations has been described by Dr. Samuel Campbell. A former student of Graham's, Campbell in later years recalled his first visit to the academy.

I happened at Mount Pleasant during Mr. Graham's superintendence. It was noon, the hour of recreation. Here was seen a large assemblage of fine, cheerful, vigorous looking youth, apparently from ten to twenty years of age. They were mostly engaged in feats of strength, speed or agility; each emulous to surpass his fellows in those exercises, for which youth of their age generally possess a strong predilection. Presently the sound of a horn summoned all to the business of the afternoon. The sports were dropped as by magic. Now you may see them seated singly or in pairs, or in small groups, with book in hand, conning over their afternoon's lesson. One portion resorted immediately to the hall, and, ranging themselves before the preceptor in semi-circular order, handed him an open book containing their recitation. He seemed not to look into the book, and presently closed it; thinking, as I supposed, that he knew as well as the book.... It was observable that, during the recitation, the preceptor gave no instruction, corrected no errors, made no remarks of any kind. He seemed to sit merely as a silent witness of the performance. The class itself resembled one of those self-regulating machines of which I have heard. Each member stood ready, by trapping and turning down, to correct the mishaps and mistakes of his fellows:.... During this recitation, an incipient smile of approbation was more than once observed on the countenance of the preceptor, maugre his native gravity and reserve. This happened when small boys, by their superior scholarship, raised themselves above those who were full grown. This class having gone through, several others, in regular order, presented themselves before the teacher and passed the ordeal. The business of the afternoon was closed by a devotional exercise.... The systematic order of the place struck my attention. A signal called the whole school together; a signal announced the hour of recitation; each class was summoned to its recitation by a signal.

These signals were obeyed without delay-and without noise. The students might pursue their studies in the hall or the open air as pleased them best. Talking or reading aloud was not permitted in the hall, except to the class reciting. The dignity of the preceptor, and his well known fitness for the station, gave him respectability, and he was respected. Before this day I had thought the course pursued in this Latin school resembled the common English schools with which I had been acquainted. But I now saw that the order and discipline of the former were essentially different from the noise, confusion and turmoil of the latter.¹³

At its October, 1775, meeting which was held at Rockfish, Hanover Presbytery completed its examination of William Graham and he was licensed as a minister of the gospel. In June, he had given a sermon and was examined concerning his knowledge of natural philosophy. He delivered a sermon and was examined as to his knowledge of and views concerning science and theology. On October 26, he acknowledged that the Westminster Confession of Faith both embodied and expressed his religious views and Christian beliefs and that it would be a basis for his ministry. After then promising to be a subject of Hanover Presbytery, he was licensed by the Moderator to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

At this October meeting, the presbytery also agreed that Graham should continue to administer Augusta Academy and Mr. John Montgomery, a graduate of the College of New Jersey, was employed as his assistant. The different ministers of the presbytery were instructed to continue to take subscriptions for the support of the school and Graham was

¹³Samuel Campbell, "Washington College, Lexington, Virginia," The Southern Literary Messenger, IV, (1838), pp. 361, 362.

¹⁴Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, October 26, 1775.

authorized to spend 150 pounds (about the equivalent of \$420 today) for books and apparatus to be used in the school. Now that its teacher at Augusta Academy was also one of its ministers, the presbytery stated "Mr. William Graham is appointed to supply two Sabbaths at Timber Ridge, two at Hall's Meeting-House, two on the south side of James River, five in the Pastures, one at Brown's Meeting House, one at North Mountain, and the rest of his time at (his) discretion, until our next meeting of Presbytery."¹⁵

In his ministry, Graham became a teacher of theology. He was orthodox in his Christian beliefs and theological views in that he believed that he should only preach the Christian gospel as it was described in the scriptures. His basic religious views as well as his ideas on how he and other ministers should perform their service to God were later included in a report to Lexington Presbytery which stated in part:

That our private preparations for the pulpit consist chiefly in prayer, self-examination, and a practical study of the Scriptures.

That we endeavour always to enter on our public ministrations with a deep sense of the presence of God, and the awful importance of eternal judgment, in which we and our hearers must shortly share; and that we have no other object in view, but to recommend the gospel as the only means of escape for condemned perishing sinners. That an active persevering zeal, in preaching and exhorting in season

¹⁵Ibid., October 27, 1775.

and out of season, be a leading trait in the character of a Presbyterian clergyman. In fine let us endeavour to know nothing, in our official character, but Christ and him crucified.¹⁶

He was instructive and evangelical in his presentations and though his delivery was usually rather feeble and meek, when he became excited about a point in a sermon his voice would become penetrating and he became a dynamic and impressive orator.¹⁷ The depth of his reasoning, the clarity with which he explained the points in his sermons and the warmth of his manner soon made him a respected and esteemed minister.¹⁸

At the May, 1776, meeting of Hanover Presbytery at Timber Ridge Church, Graham received and accepted a call to serve the congregation of Timber Ridge and Hall's Meeting-House. The presbytery again visited Augusta Academy and highly approved "of the proficiency of the students and the diligence and abilities of the teachers."¹⁹ Graham reported that he had purchased books and apparatus to be used in the school. On May 6, the presbytery decided to move its school from Mt. Pleasant to Timber Ridge and Graham was made Rector.

¹⁶Minutes of Lexington Presbytery, April 29, 1793, (also in William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical, (First Series), New Edition with index, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 487.

¹⁷Archibald Alexander, "Address before the Alumni Association of Washington College, June 29, 1843," Washington and Lee University Historical Papers, (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1890), no. 2, pp. 133, 134.

¹⁸Edward Graham, "Memoir....," p. 254.

¹⁹Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, May 3, 1776.

It stated

as this congregation of Timber Ridge appears to us to be a convenient place, and they have obtained a minister, whom we judge qualified (Graham); and Capt. Alexander Stewart and Mr. Samuel Houston, each offering to give forty acres of land, for the purpose, convenient to the place of publick worship; and the neighbours offering to build a hewed log-house, twenty-eight by twenty-four feet, one story and a half high, besides their subscriptions...we agree that the Augusta Academy shall be placed on Timber Ridge, upon those lands; and we choose Mr. William Graham rector, and Mr. John Montgomery, his assistant.²⁰

The presbytery then appointed twenty-four trustees with Graham as an ex officio member. Five of the twenty-four were Presbyterian ministers, the others were elders and laymen of the Presbyterian Church.²¹ At the first meeting of the executive committee of the board of trustees, of which Graham was a member, on May 13, 1776, the school was named Liberty Hall Academy.²² This name was probably chosen for the school because Liberty Hall was the name of the country home of the family of the Reverend John Brown in county Limerick, Ireland.²³

In 1776, William Graham married Miss Mary Kerr of Carlisle, Pennsylvania.²⁴ It is not known when or where he

²⁰Ibid., May 6, 1776.

²¹Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, p. 130.

²²Minutes of Board of Trustees of Liberty Hall Academy (MS Washington and Lee University Library, Lexington, Virginia), May 13, 1776.

²³Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, p. 130.

²⁴Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 255.

met her or how long they had known each other before they were married. Early in 1777, William and his new wife moved to the rector's house at Timber Ridge where Liberty Hall Academy was now established.

For a while after the school was moved to Timber Ridge, it continued to attract students from all parts of the Valley. However, as the Revolutionary War was being fought, it was not long before fewer older boys came to the school as they were either needed at home or entered the army. Many of the older students also left the school for military service and Graham did not attempt to restrain them as he was an ardent patriot who encouraged support for the Revolution both in his teaching and ministry.²⁵ Graham felt that the Revolution was a religious as well as a political revolution and that by achieving their political independence, the colonists could also secure for themselves religious freedom.²⁶ Religious freedom to him was the right of an individual to worship God as he desired without being subject to the authority of an established church such as the Anglican Church.

²⁵William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical, (First Series), New edition with index, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 450.

²⁶Ibid., p. 451.

When the government of Virginia called for volunteers to form militia companies so that troops could be supplied to the Colonial Army, several companies were mustered near the Academy. Graham addressed the men at one of these meetings and attempted to inspire them with patriotism and the zeal to fight for their country and the principles of the Revolution. Disappointed at their lack of patriotism, when only a few men volunteered, he stepped forward himself. The other men now realized that Graham, even though he was a minister, was willing to fight in this war for his country's independence and political rights for himself and his fellow man. Within a few minutes enough men had volunteered to form the company. When the officers were elected, he was chosen Captain. His company, however, was never involved in military action because orders were later issued that these volunteer militia companies were not to be used in the regular army. His company was later disbanded.²⁷

As the Revolutionary War continued more and more hardships faced the colonists because of the demands that it made of them and the economic instability that it produced. These conditions greatly affected the operation and financial support of Liberty Hall Academy. The school, as a result of the war, had lost students as many of the older young men who would have come to the school earlier were now in the army and others left the school for military service. Many

²⁷Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 256, 257.

families were at this time financially unable to send their sons to the school. In addition to this declining number of students, the school was unable, because of the economic depression of the time, and the devaluation of paper money to fully meet its expenses. Graham's salary as rector and minister was greatly diminished in both amount and value because of this economic depression.²⁸ In order to provide for the support of his family, he, in 1779, bought a farm on the North River near the town of Lexington which had been established as the county seat of Rockbridge County in 1777. The trustees gave him permission to move his family to this farm but they desired that he return to the Academy for two or three days each week. For a while, Graham regularly returned to the Academy and performed his duties as Rector, but the needs of his family and the work that he had to do on the farm to provide for their support forced him to stop teaching at Timber Ridge. He was determined that the school should be preserved, however, and continued instruction at his home near Lexington where most of his students came. Some of them boarded with him and the others with different neighbors. The materials and supplies from Timber Ridge were brought to his home and through funds that he solicited, he maintained Liberty Hall Academy here during the final years of the Revolutionary War.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., p. 257.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 257, 258.

Soon after he stopped teaching at Timber Ridge in 1779, he took a journey as far north as Boston. On this trip, which was taken at Hanover Presbytery's direction and expense, Graham preached in many churches and solicited subscriptions for the support of Liberty Hall Academy. His sermons expressed his orthodox Christian beliefs and doctrines. When he was questioned by some of the northern clergy, who were using new books to explain religious views and theology, as to where the clergy in Virginia obtained their divinity, he answered "From the Bible."³⁰ He differed from most of the northern clergy, who read their sermons, by not reading his or even using notes and this appealed to most who heard him. He was definitely opposed to the idea of reading sermons. He felt that sermons should be carefully written, reviewed, corrected and studied but not memorized for thoughts which come to the minister while he is delivering his sermon should be expressed.³¹ One of the churches at which he preached on this trip and where he sought funds for Liberty Hall Academy was at Allentown, Pennsylvania. This church's records state that on

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Graham Family Papers, (MS in Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina), Matthew Lyle to Edward Graham, November 14, 1820.

July 28, 1779, application was made to this congregation from Liberty Hall College...for the charitable benefactions; and in consequence the congregation raised a collection amounting to 50 pounds, ten shillings and 16 pence for the use of said college.³²

This trip of Graham's did not, however, bring a large amount of subscriptions for the support of the school as economic conditions were bad throughout the colonies.

In 1781, during the final year of the Revolutionary War, Graham again volunteered for military action. Learning that Colonel Banastre Tarleton, the British cavalry officer, was approaching his area and planned to capture the members of the Virginia General Assembly as they fled from Charlottesville, Graham called together many of his neighbors and went to oppose him. He and his force joined the troops of the Marquis Lafayette near Charlottesville but when it was determined that the campaign would be long and his volunteers were not needed, he returned home.³³

In 1782, Graham, on behalf of the trustees, petitioned the General Assembly of Virginia for an act of incorporation for the school. In October, 1782, the General Assembly

³²"The Scotch-Irish of Northampton County, Pennsylvania," The Northampton County Historical and Geneological Society, Vol. I, (1926), pp. 294, 295.

³³Edward Graham, "Memoir...", pp. 259, 260.

passed the Act for the Incorporation of Liberty Hall Academy.³⁴

This act gave the school the right to grant degrees, own property and realize the gains therefrom and provided for a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. Graham and two of his neighbors gave land on which the new school building could be constructed.³⁵

Liberty Hall Academy began to revive under Rector William Graham, the man who had sustained it through the difficult years of the Revolution.

³⁴William Waller Hening, The Statues at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619, 11 volumes, Reprinted in 1969, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 11, pp. 164-166.

³⁵William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 458.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATOR, PUBLIC-SPIRITED CITIZEN, AND REVIVALIST

By action of the Virginia General Assembly in October, 1782, Liberty Hall Academy was awarded a charter of incorporation. The Board of Trustees, which had been appointed by Hanover Presbytery, now, under this charter, became a self-perpetuating body for the administration of the school. The Presbyterians, however, would be able to retain control of this self-perpetuating Board of Trustees and continue to indirectly govern the school. On January 30, 1783, when William Graham and ten other members of the newly incorporated board met to consider the school's administration, all eleven men were Presbyterians and four had been members of the original board of the school which had been appointed by the presbytery in 1776.¹ At this meeting, Mr. James Priestly, one of Graham's students, was chosen as his first tutor. It was also

¹Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, (New York, the Neale Publishing Co., 1911), pp. 133, 134.

decided that the school should remain near Graham's home and not be returned to Timber Ridge. A new structure would be erected on property donated by Graham and two neighbors.²

Until the new building was ready, the students were taught in an old dwelling house. In his administration of the school, Graham began to assign more of the teaching duties to others. However, at times during the next five years, he found that he often had to assume complete responsibility for the instruction of the school as it was difficult to secure and retain competent instructors. Many students now came to Liberty Hall Academy, but Graham found that most of these young men were quite different in their manners and attitudes from those students that he had taught during the early part of the war. The students now required much more discipline because of their disrespectful manners, their card playing and profane swearing and their unwillingness to obey their teachers. They did not have the diligent attitude toward their studies that his earlier students had exhibited.³

Because of the nature of the majority of the students that came to the Academy at this time and the necessity of imposing strict discipline on them, Graham at times became quite discouraged and depressed and wondered whether he should continue teaching. He was extremely concerned with the state of religion and morality in the country at the time, as

²Edward Graham, Memoir of Rev. William Graham," The Evangelical and Literary Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, (Richmond: N. Pollard, 1821), vol. IV, p. 261.

³Ibid.

profanity, infidelity and vice were becoming more widespread and people were seemingly rejecting religious beliefs and principles. He often doubted whether he was really rendering a service to society by educating these disrespectful and profane young men, who would probably only become more arrogant, unruly and irreverent by having a liberal education.⁴ However, Graham both strongly believed in the importance of education and felt that as a minister it was his duty to teach and provide knowledge and understanding. These convictions helped him to withstand these doubts and uncertainties about the value of his teaching and made him a more dedicated and conscientious teacher.

It was his belief that only through education and knowledge could man rise from and remain above the savage state and become free, moralistic, just and merciful. Education was essential if man were to gain an understanding of his existence and nature and a knowledge of the world in which he lives. Through it man could improve himself, achieve peace and justice and realize morality, mercy and freedom.⁵

⁴Ibid.

⁵William Graham, An Essay on Government, (Philadelphia, 1786), pp. 19 and 20, (microfilm in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Va.).

He stated

The end of education is to furnish the mind with the knowledge of truth, and to open the first principles of science, so that the student may be capable to pursue any business in life he shall afterwards think proper. Another important end of education is a knowledge of language, without which all our knowledge could be void of means to make it known to others.... The knowledge of truth is therefore the principal end of education, and the most proper means of acquiring this knowledge is diligent application.⁶

Graham also felt that it was his obligation as a minister to provide education to the youth of the country and instruct them in religious beliefs and morality. He felt that the clergy should not abandon this important responsibility. He was also concerned that the destiny of the nation would suffer if the youth were not properly educated.⁷

The course of study that Graham developed at Liberty Hall Academy was the same as the curriculum that he had studied at the College of New Jersey. The students were taught Latin and Greek, classical literature, English literature, mathematics, geography, natural science and moral philosophy. He had the students copy and learn the lectures of Dr. Witherspoon on moral philosophy and insisted that the foundation of a liberal education was the knowledge of classical literature. However, the science which concerned

⁶William Graham, "Lectures on Human Nature, Aula Libertatis," notes taken by Joseph Glass, 1796, (microfilm in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Va.), Lecture 1, p. 3.

⁷William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia Historical and Biographical, reprinted with index, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 460.

him more than all others, except theology, was the Philosophy of the Mind or moral philosophy.⁸ He delighted in studying and teaching this subject and devoted much time to it. He was aware of the different books that had been published on the subject, and read with interest Bishop Joseph Butler's sermons and his Analogy, as well as the works of the Scottish Common Sense philosophers, Lord Kames (Henry Home) and Thomas Reid.⁹ He regarded Butler's Analogy as an important work in that it taught him more on human nature than any other book except the Bible because it contained points and ideas that made him think. Unlike this book of Bishop Butler, he disliked Thomas Boston's Human Nature in the Fourfold State because it did all of the thinking for him.¹⁰ However, he did not form his ideas and thoughts on moral philosophy solely by a careful reading of these authors. His philosophy was mainly derived from "a patient and respected analysis of the various processes of thought as they arose in his own mind, and by reducing the phenomena thus observed to a regular system."¹¹ He compared the system of moral philosophy which he formulated to the Christian experience and the descriptions of human nature which are given in the Scriptures. Finding that his philosophy

⁸Archibald Alexander, "Address before the Alumni Association of Washington College, June 29, 1843," Washington and Lee University Historical Papers, (Baltimore, John Murphy and Co., 1890), No. 2, pp. 131, 132.

⁹Edward Graham, "Memoir....," p. 399.

¹⁰Graham Family Papers, Matthew Lyle to Edward Graham, November 14, 1820, (MS in Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina).

¹¹Archibald Alexander, "Address....," p. 133.

conformed to that which is related in the Scriptures, he was convinced of its truth. In describing how a knowledge of human nature should be acquired, he stated:

In order to become acquainted with Human Nature, it is necessary [that] we should be directed by certain axioms and not depend on the hypotheses of the Meta-physicians....We should inquire what Nature; Constitution and Capability God hath given to man.¹²

One of his students later described Graham's system of moral philosophy as being superior in clarity and fullness to any system which had been presented to the public in books at the time.¹³ Another student stated that Graham had an accurate "acquaintance of the heart" and could "trace its various windings with as much accuracy [and] facility" as any man he had ever seen and "in logical reasoning, he was excelled by very few."¹⁴

The task of disciplining the students often depressed Graham but with his strong will, great zeal for education, and his solemn and sometimes irritable nature, he became a strict disciplinarian. He sometimes found it necessary to call a meeting of the Board of Trustees to consider the behavior of the students and to recommend their proper discipline and punishment. He felt, according to one of his better students, that

¹²William Graham, "Lectures....," p. 5.

¹³Archibald Alexander, "Address....," p. 133.

¹⁴Graham Family Papers, Matthew Lyle to Edward Graham, November 14, 1820.

...at every risk, authority must be maintained; and when this was by any one resisted, however formidable the student might be in physical strength, or however many might combine to frustrate the regular exercise of discipline, he fearlessly went forward in the discharge of his duty, and generally triumphed over all opposition; and often inflicted severe castigation on the thoughtless persons who dared to rebel against lawful authority.¹⁵

Even though he was stern and harsh with the disorderly student, he was gentle and affectionate with the orderly ones and they loved him.¹⁶

Although his ministry at Timber Ridge and Hall's Meeting-House had been conscientious and zealous, he had not been able during the past few years to appreciably increase the membership of these churches. In 1785, he resigned as pastor of these two churches to devote full time to his responsibilities as Rector of Liberty Hall Academy. The minutes of the meeting of Hanover Presbytery on May 21st, 1785, state

Mr. Graham informed the Presbytery that the churches of Timber Ridge and Hall's Meeting-House in Rockbridge, of which he has been for several years the pastor, had come to an agreement with him that the relations formerly subsisting between them should be dissolved, and requested the Presbytery to ratify the said agreement; which was unanimously complied with.¹⁷

¹⁵Archibald Alexander, "Address....," p. 135.

¹⁶Dr. Henry Ruffner, "Early History of Washington College," Washington and Lee University Historical Papers, (Baltimore, John Murphy and Co., 1890), No. 1, p. 62.

¹⁷Minutes of Hanover Presbytery, May 22, 1785, (MS in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Virginia).

Graham, however, began to preach on Sundays in the academy building to the students and anyone else who chose to attend. Before long, because of the demands of the people who heard him at the school and were inspired by his ministry, he started preaching in different private homes in the area, but he was mainly concerned with his duties as Rector and with the spiritual instruction of the students.¹⁸

However, as a public-spirited citizen, Graham was also interested in the political affairs and issues of his state and nation in this eventful period after the Revolutionary War. With the struggle for the separation of church and state now underway in Virginia, he, like all the other members of Hanover Presbytery, favored laws that would eliminate the Anglican Church as the Established Church in the state and give equal religious freedom to all denominations. He helped draft the petitions that the presbytery submitted to the Virginia General Assembly asking that such laws be passed. Of the petition that was submitted to the legislature by the General Convention of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia which met at Bethel Church on August 10, 1785, he was the principal author.¹⁹ This petition advocated the complete separation of church and state and condemned the assessment of taxes for the support of any church by the government. It asserted that the civil authorities should not in any way impose restrictions

¹⁸William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 462.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 341.

upon the religious freedom of the individual or provide support and protection for an established church. A government can only be just and excellent if it insures the equality of its citizens both in a civil and religious respect.²⁰

In later years, Samuel W. Lyle, who was an elder of Timber Ridge Church, spoke of Graham's writing of this petition saying

I have often heard my father, the late William Lyle, elder of Timber Ridge Church, say, that he was present when the memorial to the Legislature on the subject of religious liberty was drawn up by a committee of Hanover Presbytery. That the Rev. William Graham drew it up; that he sat near him; that the Rev. J. B. Smith was in the room at the time, and a member of the committee, and proposed some verbal alterations which were adopted.²¹

In December, 1785, as a result of this petition and those of other churches, the Virginia legislature passed the Act for Establishing Religious Freedom.

During this same year, Graham's attention was attracted to the movement by certain residents of western Virginia and North Carolina to separate counties of these states and form a new state to be called Franklin. Certain graduates of Liberty Hall Academy had recently come to this region and were influential Presbyterian ministers and laymen. The noted ministers were Samuel Houston, Samuel Carrick and James Priestly who had graduated from Liberty Hall in the summer

²⁰Ibid., ppp. 342-344.

²¹Ibid., p. 456.

of 1785. As ministers in this area, they had become interested in the movement to form the new state.²² Because of the regard that these men had for Graham as their former teacher and friend and knowing his concern for political affairs, they sought his advice on matters dealing with the formation of the new state. Through them, Graham was asked to serve on the committee which would develop a proposed permanent constitution for the state.²³

Although a provisional constitution for the proposed state had been tentatively accepted by a convention at Jonesboro in December, 1784, the permanent constitution was to be adopted at a later convention to be elected by the people. This convention was to meet at Greeneville on November 14, 1785.²⁴ Before the convention convened at Greeneville, however, the committee of which Graham was a member was appointed to draft a proposal for the permanent constitution for the state.

Graham and Arthur Campbell of Washington County, Virginia were probably the leading men on this committee. The proposed constitution which it drafted was presented to

²²Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin, (Johnson City, Tenn., The Watauga Press, 1924), p. 90.

²³Ibid., pp. 90-91. Like Graham, who had taught and inspired them, two of these men would become both noted ministers and prominent educators. Carrick became president of Blount College (later to become the University of Tennessee) and Priestly president of Cumberland College at Nashville.

²⁴"The Provisional Constitution of Frankland," The American Historical Magazine, vol. I, (January, 1896), p. 48.

the Greeneville convention on November 14, 1785 by the Reverend Samuel Houston.²⁵ This constitution recommended Campbell's idea that the name of the state should be changed from Franklin to Frankland and contained Graham's democratic, yet on some points overly impractical and idealistic, views on government. A Declaration of Rights which specified the different political, judicial, civil and religious rights that the government should guarantee to its citizens and protect for them preceded the articles on government. The government was to be divided into three branches: the executive which would be vested in the Governor and his Council, the legislative which would consist of a single elected body, the House of Representatives and the judicial which would include the various courts. Every free man twenty-one years of age or older would have the right to vote and most of the state and local officials would be elected. The Governor and the Representatives would be up for re-election annually and a person could only be eligible to hold either office three years out of seven. Every officer of the government was subject to impeachment for mal-administration. The legislature was not to pass any law respecting religion but was to pass laws for the encouragement of virtue and morality and provide that marriages between one man and one woman, both free and single, could be consummated. For the promotion of education, the legislature was to provide for the erection of a university

²⁵ Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin, p. 92.

and the different counties could establish and operate grammar schools at public expense.²⁶ The proceedings of the House of Representatives were to be printed weekly and

All Bills of a public and general nature shall be printed for the consideration of the people, before they are read in the General Assembly the last time, for debate and amendment; and except on occasions of sudden necessity, shall not be passed into laws before the next session of the Assembly.²⁷

Some of the qualifications that a person was required to have before he could be elected as a member of the House of Representatives or hold any other public office were very idealistic and if applied today would remove many men from our public offices. These requirements were

And no person shall be eligible or capable to serve in this or any other office in the civil department of this State, who is of an immoral character, or guilty of such flagrant enormities as drunkenness, gaming, profane swearing, lewdness, Sabbath breaking, and such like: or who will, either in word or writing, deny any of the following propositions,

- 1st. That there is one living and true God, the Creator and Governor of the universe.
- 2nd. That there is a future state of rewards and punishments.
- 3rd. That the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are given by divine revelation.
- 4th. That there are three divine persons in the Godhead, co-equal and co-essential.

And no person shall be a member of the House of Representatives, who holds a lucrative office either under this or other States; that is has a fixed salary or fees from the State, or is in actual military service and claiming dally pay, or minister of the gospel, or attorney at law, or doctor of physic.²⁸

²⁶"The Provisional Constitution of Frankland," pp. 53-63.

²⁷Ibid., p. 56.

²⁸Ibid., p. 55.

It was because of the impractical and obviously idealistic nature of many of the provisions of this proposed constitution which had been mainly drafted by Graham, that it was opposed. The Reverend Hezekiah Balch, who like Graham was a graduate of the College of New Jersey, was one of the main speakers who stated opposition to it. His arguments against it caused the convention to reject it and adopt a modified form of the North Carolina constitution.²⁹ However, a bitter conflict had arisen between the Graham-Houston faction and the supporters of Balch as a result of the argument over which constitution would be accepted. The followers of Balch became so enraged on one occasion that they burned effigies of Graham and Houston. Graham, upon learning of this event, was convinced that it had been incited by Balch, and wrote him a letter, in pamphlet form, which was filled with harsh and bitter satire.³⁰ This letter was widely circulated among the people of the southwest region and caused many persons to develop a dislike for Graham.

This rejection of the proposed constitution, which he had mainly drafted, by the convention at Greeneville, encouraged Graham to write his Essay on Government which was published in 1786. In this pamphlet, he expressed his views on government as to why it was necessary, the form it should have, how

²⁹Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin, p. 91.

³⁰William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 463.

it should operate and the rights that a just government should guarantee to its citizens. He had included most of the same views in this pamphlet in the proposed constitution for Franklin. Incidentally, Franklin failed to be formed as a new and free state mainly because of indecision among its supporters as to the form of government that it should have. He affirmed that government was necessary because of man's sinful nature and his transgression of the laws of God. It was an essential institution for the protection of health, property and individual rights. He explained,

...government is a mode to supply the defects of moral virtue; which it does by restraining the wicked and more profligate from acts of injustice and cruelty, by the terror of punishment, and affording security to the more honest and industrious. We see, then, in a few words, that government derives its origin from our wickedness, and its end is security.³¹

Feeling that a republic, or representative democracy, was the best form of government, he believed that the citizens under such a government would not be subjects,

...but confederate united for the common safety and happiness, in which they have all an equal interest; and that civil and military officers are no more than servants and agents, and at all times accountable to the people for the use that they make of their power, which is not their own, but the people's.³²

He stressed the importance of a written constitution as a document whereby the rights of the individual could be

³¹William Graham, An Essay on Government, (Philadelphia, NP, 1786), pp. 4, 5.

³²Ibid., p. 8.

protected by restricting the power and authority of the elected officials and the different branches of government. It should specify the number of elected officials that are to be chosen, with the manner of their election, the terms of their service, and their responsibilities and authority. The different branches of the government should be clearly defined with the line of authority and jurisdiction of each described. This document should also guarantee the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of one's conscience and provide for the support of education.³³ To assure that men have liberty, their minds, tongues and pens must be free and these freedoms should be protected by the government. He asserted that if an individual "has a vote in choosing all the officers of government, as far as the state of things will admit, he is a free man; otherwise, he is not."³⁴ However, in describing the type of person, he would like to have for a government official or legislator, Graham became rather idealistic. He would prefer that these officials always be men of plain sense, honest industry and moderate estates. Men who were immoral, lewd, habitual drunkards, profane swearers, gamblers, and breakers of the Sabbath should be prohibited from holding public office.³⁵ By keeping informed on public affairs and issues, he believed that the citizens

³³Ibid., p. 6

³⁴Ibid., p. 7.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 10, 27-32.

would elect only honest, virtuous and just men to public office and that the government would operate to protect the rights and freedom of all. Thus even though he was democratic in his views concerning the form that government should have and the rights its citizens should possess, he became idealistic when he described how it would operate and whom he felt should be elected.

In 1787, when the proposed Constitution of the United States was submitted to the states for ratification, Graham opposed it and tried to prevent it from being ratified by Virginia. In writing to Zachariah Johnston, whom he felt would be opposed to it but who became one of the leading federalists in the Valley, he said

The Federal Constitution has made its appearance here. I am mistaken if you are not in opposition to it and should be glad to know your sentiments.... I have been solicited by some friends to write a Pice [sp] against it to open the Eyes of the people- I have determined to write but...not determined to publish. I hope you will give me your candid opinion.... The plan will be to prove it is arbitrary-to prove it will be very expensive and lastly that it is inadequate to the end proposed. If these things can be established as I think they clearly can, it should be rejected.³⁶

It is not known whether Graham wrote and circulated any material against the Constitution or not, but in the following year, he ran as an anti-federalist candidate in Rockbridge

³⁶Johnston Family Papers, William Graham to Zachariah Johnston, Nov. 3, 1787, (MS in Washington and Lee University Library, Lexington, Va.).

County for Virginia's convention to act on the proposed Constitution. He was the only Presbyterian leader of note among the anti-federalists.³⁷ Graham agreed with Patrick Henry as to the reasons why the Constitution should be rejected.³⁸ Some of these reasons were that it did not contain a statement of the individual's political, civil and religious rights and provide for the protection of such rights, the President and Senators were to be elected indirectly rather than by popular vote, and the federal government was to be given too much authority in certain areas, such as the regulation of commerce. Graham, like most of the anti-federalists, was concerned that the rights of the states should be preserved.

Archibald Stuart, who was a federalist candidate in Augusta County, feared that Graham would be elected and stated in a letter to a friend, "in Rockbridge where Graham has sounded the Bell of Sedition [and] raised a uncommon commotion, the consequence is that he to his infinite gratification is to be elected."³⁹ However, Graham and the other anti-federalist candidate were defeated.⁴⁰ Thus, Graham's interest in the political issues and affairs of his state and nation caused

³⁷Freeman H. Hart, The Valley of Virginia in the American Revolution, 1763-1789, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 174.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Breckinridge Family Papers, Archibald Stuart to John Breckenbridge, Staunton, March 3, 1788, (MS in Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.).

⁴⁰Freeman H. Hart, The Valley..., pp. 176, 177.

him, as a public-spirited citizen, to become actively involved in these affairs.

It was Graham's nature, however, whether he was involved in meetings concerned with business, political or ecclesiastical affairs to seek to take a leading part. He was seldom content to be a subordinate and was confident that he had the ability and knowledge to lead others. Even though he was generally courteous in debate, he would often show impatience and insolence to any strong and especially disrespectful opposition. Being irritable in his disposition, when provoked, he would resort to caustic and bitter sarcasm.⁴¹ He thus made enemies of some people who might have become close and loyal friends. Toward his opponents and those that he had offended, he made few attempts at conciliation and "seemed rather disposed to stand aloof from them, and to set them at defiance."⁴² The satirical letter that he wrote to the Reverend Hezekiah Balch, when he was concerned with the movement to form the new state of Franklin, offended some people and prompted ecclesiastical concern.

At its meeting on May 26, 1787, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia passed the following resolution:

⁴¹Henry Ruffner, "Early...", p. 61.

⁴²Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 135.

In respect to the letter addressed to Mr. Balch, through the medium of the press, and supposed to be written by the Rev. William Graham of Rockbridge County, Virginia, the Synod look upon the same as very unchristian and unwarrantable treatment of a brother; and the Synod do order the Presbytery of Lexington to cite Mr. Graham before them, and make due inquiry whether he be the author, and into the reasons of his conduct in that matter, and censure or acquit him as the nature of the case may appear.⁴³

At the fall meeting of Lexington Presbytery in 1789, after a delay which had been requested by Graham, he was questioned as to his actions in this matter. He confessed to writing the letter to Rev. Balch and produced evidence to support his accusations that Balch had approved of the mob's burning the effigies of Houston and himself. The presbytery felt that even though Graham had been intemperate and extremely harsh in his satire "that the treatment he met with was so grossly injurious, that they cannot suppose him to merit a formal censure of this Presbytery, on account of said letter."⁴⁴ However, the tendency of Graham to sometimes sharply and cruelly satirize others, along with his irritable and often uncompromising nature and the offensive arrogance that he might demonstrate at times were the traits of his character and manner that caused him to become disliked by some people.

In 1789, the congregation of Hall-s Meeting-House again issued Graham a call to be their minister. He accepted

⁴³William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 463.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 464.

this call and soon after he resumed his ministry at this church, the congregation was divided and a new church formed in Lexington which he also served. Through his encouragement both congregations soon built new churches. After the construction of the new stone building by the Hall's Meeting-House congregation, they changed the name of their church to New Monmouth.⁴⁵ Graham next sought to improve congregational singing. He persuaded Mr. Lemus Chapin, a music teacher from New England who was visiting in the area, to stay and teach singing and music to his congregations. Mr. Chapin remained in Rockbridge County for several years and taught church music there and in the surrounding counties.⁴⁶ Even though Graham considered the construction of church buildings and the improvement of singing in the worship service as being important, he regarded these as only aids to the primary object of his ministry which was the promotion of vital piety.⁴⁷ Although he sought to exhibit the same zeal and fervor in his ministry as he had earlier, Graham now became concerned with his effectiveness as a minister. He was realizing fewer converts now than during his earlier ministry and he was not being as effective in attracting the young people as he had been before. There

⁴⁵Papers of William Graham, Sketch on History of New Monmouth Church, (MS in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Va.).

⁴⁶William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 464.

⁴⁷Edward Graham, "Memoir....," p. 263.

were no pious young men now under his care, who desired to study for the ministry. Some of the members of his congregation had died and with few converts, he was serving mostly the same men and women that he had served before and many of these were not quite elderly.⁴⁸

Revivals were being conducted in the southside portion of Virginia, east of the Blue Ridge at this time. In August, 1789, Graham accepted an invitation from the Reverend John B. Smith, his college friend who was now president of Hampden-Sydney College, to come to Prince Edward County and participate in a revival. Taking two of his better students, Archibald Alexander and Samuel Wilson, Graham traveled to Prince Edward.⁴⁹ The Reverend William Hill later stated "As soon as Mr. Graham saw the state of things, and entered into that atmosphere, his heart caught fire; and during the occasion he exhibited from the pulpit some of the great and happy efforts of which he was capable."⁵⁰ Arriving on Saturday evening, he preached his first sermon the following morning at Briery Church. After Reverend Smith had given a sermon and communion services were held, Graham preached from Isaiah 40:1 and 2, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, and her iniquity is pardoned." As soon as he began his sermon,

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, pp. 420, 466.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 421.

it was obvious to those who heard him that his feelings were strong. His tone was evangelistic and he seemed to pour forth the gospel truth like floods of milk and wine and many in the group were moved to tears.⁵¹ When asked by a young member of the Briery congregation how long it had taken him to compose this sermon, Graham responded, "About twenty years."⁵² Many were inspired by this sermon, and as long as those who heard him lived, it was talked about and remembered.⁵³ After preaching numerous times during a period of about ten days or two weeks, Graham, along with his students, Rev. Smith, Rev. Nash Legrand and others went to Bedford County where another revival was in progress. After preaching several sermons here, Graham and Legrand returned to Lexington. Here they began to conduct revival services first in the churches at Lexington and New Monmouth and later in other nearby churches. These services inspired many with religious fervor and began to bring forth converts. New converts were now reported every day and a number of them were educated young men who upon being converted had decided to study for the ministry. It was reported that Graham said to a friend during this revival in the Valley,

⁵¹Ibid., p. 466.

⁵²Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, p. 136.

⁵³Ibid.

When this revival began I thought that if three young men would become ministers of the gospel, I should be satisfied. Now these three have become hopefully pious, and have turned their views to the ministry; and I feel as far from being satisfied as ever. I believe I shall never be satisfied while there is one left behind.⁵⁴

Through this revival ministry, Graham was more effective than he had ever been before in getting converts and it was quite satisfying to him that he was bringing these people to God. The general revival that had started in the southside area of Virginia, through the ministry of Graham and others had been brought to the Valley and had now spread through the Presbyterian congregations there.⁵⁵

With several young men in the Valley now desiring to prepare for the ministry, Graham in 1789 began to instruct a class in theology. He delighted in teaching this class and during the next several years had from seven to eight members annually.⁵⁶ This class was the first such organized class in theology to be formed in Virginia.⁵⁷ From the time that he had been in college, he had enjoyed the study of this subject and now it was most important to him that he teach it to young men who were preparing for the ministry. One of his theology

⁵⁴William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 469.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 133.

⁵⁷William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 469.

students, Archibald Alexander, after becoming a prominent minister and educator, described Graham's teaching of this class as follows:

It was his custom to devote one day in the week to hearing the written discourses of these candidates, and to a free discussion of theological points. In these exercises he appeared to take great delight; and the students were always gratified and commonly convinced by his lucid statements and cogent reasonings....The influence which he gained over the minds of his pupils, while under his care, was unbounded. Seldom did any one of them venture to maintain an opinion different from those which he inculcated. Yet he encouraged the utmost freedom of discussion; and seemed to aim, not so much to bring his pupils to think as he did, as to teach them to think on all subjects for themselves.⁵⁸

Alexander also stated that when he first went to Graham and asked him which books he should read in order to start preparing for the ministry, Graham told him that if he ever meant to be a theologian, he must do so not by reading, but by thinking. He instructed Alexander to learn to think for himself and form his own opinions from the Bible.⁵⁹ Alexander believed that this unwillingness of Graham to read many works of other men on any subject in his latter years, along with his low regard for the value of books in general, constituted a weakness in this man that he otherwise greatly admired.⁶⁰ He did have his theology students, however, to read and study works on the subject by such authors as Jonothan Edwards, Goronwy Owen,

⁵⁸Archibald Alexander, "Address....," p. 133.

⁵⁹Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, p. 184.

⁶⁰Archibald Alexander, "Address....," p. 133

who was a minister and scholar on religion at William and Mary College, and Thomas Boston.⁶¹

Both in his teaching of theology and in his ministry, Graham opposed the deistic views that became more prevalent in the United States after the French Revolution.⁶² Where deism rejected formal religion, instructed man to live solely by his reason and recognize God only as the creator of nature and the universe but not as a savior of mankind, he taught the orthodox Christian beliefs and principles which are expressed in the Bible.⁶³ God was to be worshipped as the creator of man, nature and the universe, and as man's Savior who would forgive his sins and grant him a joyful eternal life. He felt that he and other ministers must preach the simple truths of the gospel to every man in the sight of God and that only by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ could man escape from condemnation for his sins and gain salvation for his eternal life. Ministers should seek to know that Christ was crucified and by His crucifixion man can be saved.⁶⁴

At the second meeting of the Synod of Virginia in the fall of 1789, Graham was appointed to its Commission on

⁶¹Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, pp. 184, 185.

⁶²William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 475.

⁶³Archibald Alexander, "Address...", p. 134.

⁶⁴William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 488.

Missions. During the next few years he served on this commission, which examined and appointed those men who desired to become missionaries for the church on the frontier.⁶⁵ In 1791, after the resignation of Dr. John Blair Smith as President of Hampden-Sydney College, Graham was asked to become president of this school by its Board of Trustees. He also received a call to become the minister of Cumberland, Briery and Cub Creek Churches in Prince Edward County. However, he decided not to accept these offers as he felt his duty was to the students of Liberty Hall Academy and the people of the Valley.⁶⁶

As the result of Graham's class in theology, the Synod of Virginia in 1791 decided to establish a seminary for the education of ministers. Graham was named to a committee to form a plan for promoting the education of persons for the gospel ministry. Upon hearing the report of this committee, the Synod at its meeting on October 1, 1791, recommended "that there be two general institutions for learning, conducted under the patronage of this body-the one to be established in Rockbridge County in this State, under the care of the Rev. William Graham as the President; the other in Washington county, Pennsylvania, under the care of the Rev. John McMillan."⁶⁷

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 526-527.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 474.

⁶⁷Minutes of Synod of Virginia, October 1, 1791, (MS in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Va.), also William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 471.

At its meeting in September, 1792, the Synod requested the Board of Trustees of Liberty Hall Academy to fill any of its vacancies from the Presbyteries of Hanover and Lexington so that this school could become one of the Synod's seminaries. The Board of Trustees of Liberty Hall Academy agreed to this in 1793, and by request of the Synod, the two presbyteries raised enough money to pay for construction at the school amounting to 900 pounds (about \$2,250). In January, 1794, Graham and his students occupied the new stone building.⁶⁸ This seminary at Liberty Hall was the first Theological Seminary in Virginia. Graham was now Professor of Theology under the Synod of Virginia and Rector of the academy under its Board of Trustees.⁶⁹

While attending a meeting of the Synod of Virginia in Harrisonburg in 1794, Graham's concern for the rights of his fellow man caused him to become involved in another political affair. Soldiers had stopped in Harrisonburg on their way to western Pennsylvania to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion. Farmers there were rebelling because of the tax that the government had levied on the sale of their whiskey. When it was proposed that a statement should be made to the people in the area encouraging them to obey the law, Graham opposed it. He felt that these people were justified in rebelling against

⁶⁸William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, pp. 472-474.

⁶⁹Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, p. 137.

this tax, for what exact reasons it is not known, and that there were wrongs to be redressed rather than a rebellion to be crushed. When the motion for the resolution was voted on by the Synod, it was defeated by a small majority. With many people in the town now supporting the rebels, the soldiers almost clashed with a group of citizens and violence was barely avoided. Graham, as one of the most outspoken supporters of the rebels, was advised to leave the town for his safety.⁷⁰

In 1796, Graham learned that President George Washington planned to give the 100 shares of stock in the James River Company which he had received from the Virginia legislature to an educational institution in the state. He had been awarded these 100 shares in the James River Company and 50 shares in the Potomac Company by the Virginia legislature in 1785 for his service to the state and nation in the Revolution.⁷¹ These companies had been formed to improve the navigation and commerce on these two rivers by building and operating canals, widening the rivers at some points and dredging channels. Writing Washington on behalf of the Trustees of Liberty Hall Academy, Graham described the history of the school, its standards of education and the financial problems that it had endured during the Revolution. After stating that its students had gone on to serve the country well

⁷⁰William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 476.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 478, 479.

in many different fields, he said

...as the public good is the only object which can influence your determination, it is unnecessary to add anything further, but fully confiding in your wisdom, we shall entirely acquiesce in your decision.⁷²

On the basis of this letter, President Washington decided to give the 100 shares of James River Company stock to Liberty Hall Academy. He wrote a letter to Governor Robert Brooke of Virginia on September 15, 1796, asking that he by an official act grant this stock to Liberty Hall Academy.⁷³

The par value of these 100 shares of James River Company stock was \$20,000.⁷⁴ In honor of President Washington making this generous grant to the school, the Board of Trustees in 1797 changed its name to Washington Academy.⁷⁵

After seeing some of the land near the Ohio River during a visit to Kentucky and western Virginia in 1795, presumably to conduct a revival in a church or churches in the area, Graham desired to move to this beautiful area.⁷⁶

⁷²Trustee's Records of Liberty Hall Academy. Letter by William Graham on behalf of Trustees of Liberty Hall Academy to President George Washington-January, 1796, (MS in Washington and Lee University Library, Lexington, Va.).

⁷³Trustee's Records of Liberty Hall Academy. Letter of President Washington to Governor Brooke of Virginia, September 15, 1796, (also in William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 482).

⁷⁴Henry Ruffner, "Early...", p. 53.

⁷⁵William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 485.

⁷⁶Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 403.

Over the years he had served the school loyally but had received only a small remuneration, at times barely enough to provide the necessities for his family. After considering the needs of his family and believing that he could obtain land in the Ohio valley, he decided to resign his position as Rector. On September 25, 1796, he wrote a letter of resignation to the Board of Trustees and about this same time resigned his position as the minister of Lexington and New Monmouth Churches.⁷⁷

Now after over twenty years of service to the people of the Valley of Virginia as a competent educator, devout minister, and public-spirited citizen, Graham was planning to move his family to where he hoped they would have a more enjoyable and rewarding life. He believed that he could provide more adequately for his family by buying land on the banks of the Ohio River and becoming a farmer once again.

⁷⁷Trustee's Records of Liberty Hall Academy, Graham's letter of resignation to trustees, September 25, 1796.

CHAPTER IV

WESTWARD TO UTOPIA

While on his trip to western Virginia and Kentucky in 1795, Graham had admired the beautiful, fertile region near Point Pleasant on the Ohio River and had learned of an opportunity to buy a large tract of property here. This opportunity not only seemed to be the unexpected chance to satisfy a desire that he had felt for some time but also fired his imagination with a dream. Now that he was forty-nine and had a family of six children,¹ he often thought of how he would provide for his family's needs in his latter years and what he would have to leave them. For this reason, he often desired more property so that he and his family could have a better, more rewarding life. With rich, fertile land on the Ohio River, he could provide for the needs of his family and also be able to give each of his children a small farm. In addition to his

¹William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical, reprinted with index, 1966, John Knox Press, Richmond, Va., p. 488.

concern for his family, he was also inspired with the dream that he might persuade other Presbyterian families to move to this region and buy parcels of land. He could serve as a minister to these settlers and from them a peaceful, prosperous, moralistic and Christian community might develop and grow on the banks of the Ohio River.² He did not feel that he would have any trouble getting Scotch-Irish families from the Valley of Virginia to move to this sparsely settled area, because it had been these people who had primarily settled the back country of Pennsylvania and Virginia and they were folk with a hardy, independent nature and a pioneering spirit.

However, it was mainly the hope of a more prosperous and satisfying life for himself and his family that caused Graham to accept the opportunity to buy property and make a major change in his life at this time. Even though he had enjoyed and had been conscientious and zealous in his teaching and ministry for over twenty years in Rockbridge County, these positions had not provided him with sufficient income to obtain many material possessions or much property for himself and his family. In a letter to his friend the Rev. John B. Smith in January, 1795, he stated

²Edward Graham, "Memoir of Rev. William Graham," The Evangelical and Literary Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, vol. IV, (1821), pp. 403, 404.

If I can be said to enjoy satisfaction in anything, it is from the company and correspondence of a few friends. The world so far as I possess it affords me very little and yet I am continually desiring more-I am convinced that this world will not give satisfaction and yet I am not looking out for another nor desiring that change which would really be for the better. I am indeed a contradiction.... Experience does not make me wise and I am afraid it never will.³

Although he may not have looked for it, he now had the chance to change his life and acquire the property which he was convinced would give him and his family a more rewarding and satisfying existence. Therefore, on March 12, 1796, Graham entered into a contract with William Hepburn and John Dundas of Alexandria, Virginia for the purchase of 6,000 acres on the banks of the Ohio River. This contract described the location of the land and its boundaries and stated that Graham would pay \$18,000 for it. He was to pay this sum in a series of payments.⁴

Graham left Lexington in April, 1796, and journeyed westward to examine his property. When he was unable to find all of the boundary markers which had been described in the contract, he returned to Lexington in July. Writing to Hepburn and Dundas, he asked that they describe the exact location of the boundary markers of his property and promised to make the first payment to them as soon as the exact boundaries of the property could be determined.⁵

³Graham Family Papers, William Graham to Rev. J. B. Smith, January 24, 1795, (MS in Duke University Library, Durham, N. C.).

⁴Graham Family Papers, Agreement between William Graham and William Hepburn and John Dundas for the purchase of Ohio land, March 12, 1796.

⁵Graham Family Papers, William Graham to the Judge of the High Court of Chancery, (about April 1, 1797).

Thus when he resigned as the Rector of Liberty Hall Academy and as the minister of New Monmouth and Lexington churches in the fall of 1796, Graham had already negotiated to buy property on the Ohio River and was ready to sell what he possessed in Lexington. After resigning his positions as Rector and minister, he returned to the Ohio land with his family and by the end of November had found all of the boundary markers except one.

During the winter he succeeded in selling, as he planned to do, some parcels to a few other people but they were not pious Presbyterians as he had hoped. During this winter, he constructed buildings and water mills on his property but because of the bad weather, he was unable to return to eastern Virginia until the spring of 1797. When he arrived in Alexandria about the end of March to make his first payment, he learned that Hepburn and Dundas had filed a suit against him for not making his payment on time. Writing to the Judge of the High Court of Chancery, he asked that a counter-suit be instituted against Hepburn and Dundas and stated that it was his intention to comply with the contract and make the prescribed payments but that he had first wanted to satisfy himself that he could find the property as it was described in the contract and had been delayed by the weather in returning to make his first payment. Asserting that he and the men to whom he had already sold portions of the property had made improvements on it, he asked that Hepburn and Dundas be compelled to comply with the

contract upon his completion of this and the remaining payments.⁶ With their suit pending against Graham, the realtors were unwilling to accept from him the \$4,895.91 which was to be the first payment.⁷ However, Graham sought counsel on this matter and was advised by Edmund J. Lee, an attorney in Alexandria, that he should get and offer to pay the balance of the money that he owed on the contract as this would certainly render an already very plain case in his favor.⁸ Feeling certain that he would now win the case, Graham left the money for the first payment with a friend who was to pay the realtors if he himself would be unable to return when the case was decided. This friend betrayed Graham's trust, however, and lent the money out whereby it was lost as it could not be recovered.⁹

In order for him to earn the money to pay the balance of what he owed on the contract, even though the lawsuit over this contract was still pending, Graham completed the sale of his property in Lexington and returned to the banks of the Ohio. However, he was unsuccessful in persuading, as he had hoped, Presbyterian people from the Valley to return with him and buy parcels of his Ohio land. As he had to sell plots of it

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Graham Family Papers, Edmund J. Lee to William Graham, September 24, 1797.

⁹Dr. Henry Ruffner, "Early History of Washington College," Washington and Lee University Historical Papers, (Baltimore, John Murphy and Co., 1890), No. 1, p. 58.

in order to raise the money that he needed, he soon became willing to sell to anyone who could pay him. It was now evident that his dream of bringing only pious Presbyterian families to the banks of the Ohio would not be fulfilled. As has been stated earlier, Graham had made enemies through the years with his arrogant nature and satirical and sarcastic remarks and he probably didn't realize that many of those who disliked him lived in or near Lexington. These people would have rejected his offer themselves and discouraged others from listening to him. A letter that he received from a John L. Campbell in Rockbridge County in October, 1797, shows how he was disliked by certain people in the area. Campbell confesses that he had harshly censured Graham before one William Moore and asked him not to repeat what he told him. However, he states

William Moore betrayed me to several about Lexington and particularly to William Welch who talked freely I believe on the subject as he was irritated with you on other accounts. William Moore and your enemies about Lexington are chargeable with the guilt of defamation in the present case and none others.¹⁰

Realizing that he had been very unchristian in making his remarks against Graham which others had circulated, he asked Graham to pardon him.

It seems as though Graham came to believe, by what means it is not known, that the property which he had

¹⁰Graham Family Papers, John L. Campbell to William Graham, October 7, 1797.

contracted to buy from Hepburn and Dundas possibly really belonged to Major John Polson, an Englishman. He had obtained this 6,000 acres as part of a grant of 51,302 acres that he and six other men had received from the King of England on December 15, 1772.¹¹ Learning this information, Graham now began to negotiate through William Hay, a Richmond, Virginia lawyer, in order to buy the property from Polson. It is not known why Graham considered this grant as still being valid when other such royal grants had been nullified by the Revolution. On March 3, 1798, William Hay wrote a statement saying that as the attorney for Major John Polson of the City of Exeter in Great Britain, he had sold and was conveying 6,000 acres on the Ohio River in the County of Kanawaha, Virginia to the Rev. William Graham. This land was part of the 51,302 acres that had been granted to Polson and six other men in December, 1772. Hay stated that he had "deposited the Deed of Conveyance in the hands of Col. Robert Gamble for the purpose of being recorded at the next ensuing General Court."¹² The deed bore the date of March 3, 1798, and Robert Gamble certified that he held it. Graham, already having lost nearly \$5,000 in attempting to buy this property, now agreed to pay \$9,000 for it.¹³

¹¹Graham Family Papers, Statement written by William Hay concerning the sale of John Polson's property to Rev. William Graham, March 3, 1798.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

He continued to seek buyers who could purchase portions of the land from him but to his dismay very few could be found. The lawsuit concerning his dealings with Hepburn and Dundas now sought to resolve who legally owned and could sell the Ohio land. Graham now felt that he had a good, clear deed to the property, even though the suit was still pending. In the following May, he again returned from the banks of the Ohio River to eastern Virginia. The purpose of this trip was to both settle business affairs and to be present for the resolution of the lawsuit that would decide, he was quite certain, his ownership of the Ohio land. On this trip after fording flooded rivers and riding through a rain, he failed to change his wet clothes. Upon reaching Richmond, he soon became ill at the home of his friend, Colonel Robert Gamble. In a letter, Gamble described Graham's actions and how he was stricken with the illness which resulted in his death a few days later. He said,

On the last day of May he arrived at my house- the evening preceeding he was caught in a sudden rain and neglected drying or changing his clothes and reached town rather in a chilly state-but that day and part of the next he went about attending to business viz engaging the printing of a piece he had written on Infant Baptism-however, a fever succeeded and settled in an obstinate pleurisy.¹⁴

This pleurisy grew worse and on June 8, 1799, he died.¹⁵ His friend Robert Gamble made arrangements for his funeral and he

¹⁴Graham Family Papers, Robert Gamble to Edward Graham, June 10, 1799.

¹⁵Edward Graham, "Memoir...", p. 408.

was buried in the cemetery of St. John's Episcopal Church on Church Hill in Richmond. After a few years, a marble slab which was primarily paid for with money raised in Rockbridge County, was placed on his grave by his eldest son.¹⁶ His tomb remained here until 1911, when it was decided that his body should be brought to Lexington for burial because of his service to Liberty Hall Academy as teacher and Rector and to the town of Lexington as its first regular minister. His body was re-interred at Washington and Lee University on May 5, 1911.¹⁷

Soon after Graham's death, the lawsuit over the rightful ownership of the Ohio River land was decided. It is thought that the property was returned to Hepburn and Dundas, even though no actual court records remain of this case. His family lost the land, however, and were driven pennyless from their home.¹⁸ Graham's hope for their well-being and the property that he desired to leave them had been nothing, therefore, but a dream. He left six children, two boys and four girls. Jahab, the oldest child, became a Presbyterian minister and William, the youngest child, and second son became a physician. One of his daughters died young and the other three married and raised families.¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Rockbridge County News, May 11, 1911.

¹⁸Henry Ruffner, "Early...", p. 58.

¹⁹William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia, p. 488.

One of the last acts of Graham's life was to arrange for the publishing of a paper that he had written on the scriptural doctrine of water baptism. In this he states that baptism is a sign of the covenant that exists between God and man. The covenant that God made to Abraham saying "I will be a God to you and to your seed after you" still exists between God and man. This covenant is affirmed by the sign of water baptism. He said "to all whom the Lord our God shall call, they have a right to the sign, and seal of this promise in its extent also. A sign of what it means to have God for their God. That he will give them a new heart, and put a right spirit within them, and enable them to perfect holiness in His fear."²⁰

On April 18, 1804, the Board of Trustees of Washington Academy paid tribute to Graham for his dedicated teaching, and loyalty, service and sacrifice to Liberty Hall Academy, by voting to provide a free education to his son William.²¹

As a teacher, minister and public-spirited citizen, William Graham was then actively concerned with the interests, rights and needs of his fellow man. His zeal for education and diligent teaching had insured the establishment and preservation of Liberty Hall Academy in those difficult years

²⁰William Graham, The Scriptural Doctrine of Water Baptism, (Richmond, Virginia: William Alexander Rind, 1799), p. 20, (microfilm in Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Virginia).

²¹Trustee's Minutes, Washington Academy, Washington and Lee University Library, Lexington, Virginia.

during and after the American Revolution. Mainly through his efforts, the school had first become incorporated in 1782 and then endowed in 1796 with the generous gift of stock by President George Washington. Through his ministry, as a regular pastor for certain churches and as a revival minister in others, he helped spread Presbyterianism and religious instruction in the Valley of Virginia. He not only was effective in winning converts through his ministry but also through his teaching of theology prepared many young men for the ministry. His interest in the political and religious rights of men caused him to play an active role in the political and religious affairs of his day. He, therefore, became a participant in the Revolution and the struggle for religious freedom which resulted in the separation of church and state in Virginia. He also encouraged democratic principles of government and just laws for his state and nation. For his interest in his fellow man and these services to him, William Graham should be remembered.

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