The Minister
and His Greek New Testament

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Originally published: New York: George H. Doran, 1923. The text below is taken from a 1977 reprint by Baker. The book is now out of copyright. The original pagination is marked in {} at the beginning of the page. (The Roman numerals at the bottom of these sheets is only for convenience; the real page numbers are embedded in the text.) Chapters 1, 7, and 9 are included here—those chapters which I consider to have the greatest ongoing value, at least for beginning students trying to figure out why they are learning Greek. Some portions are obviously dated, particularly in the reference works which are referenced. Grammatical study has continued to develop and be refined. Others things are not said as we might today, but will all such allowances, there is still wisdom to be gleaned here.

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Chapter 1
The Minister’s Use of His Greek New Testament

SOME KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK POSSIBLE TO ALL

It ought to be taken for granted that the preacher has his Greek Testament. This statement will be challenged by many who excuse themselves from making any effort to know the Greek New Testament. I do not say that every preacher should become an expert in his knowledge of the New Testament Greek. That cannot be expected. I do not affirm that no preacher should be allowed to preach who does not possess some knowledge of the original New Testament. I am opposed to such a restriction. But a little is a big per cent. on nothing, as John A. Broadus used to say. This is preeminently true of the Greek New Testament.

There is no sphere of knowledge where one is repaid more quickly for all the toil expended. Indeed, the Englishman’s Greek Concordance almost makes it possible for the man with no
knowledge of Greek to know something about it, paradoxical as
that may sound. That would be learning made easy, beyond a
doubt, and might seem to encourage the charlatan and the quack.
It is possible for an ignoramus to make a parade of a little lumber
of [16] learning to the disgust and confusion of his hearers. But
the chief reason why preachers do not get and do not keep up a
fair and needful knowledge of the Greek New Testament is noth-
ing less than carelessness, and even laziness in many cases. They
can get along somehow without it, and so let it pass or let it drop.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE COMMON MAN

The New Testament is written in the vernacular Koiné, which
was the language of the common people as well as of the cultured
in the first century A.D. The papyri which have been unearthed
by many thousands in Egypt give us vivid pictures of the life of the
age. We thus catch the people in their business and pleasures. We
have love letters, receipts or bills, marriage contracts or divorce
decrees, census rules and tax lists, anything and everything. The
New Testament is shown beyond a doubt to be a monument of
the same vernacular koiné, The same words jump at us in the most
unexpected places. The book that is in the vernacular of its time
has an appeal to men of all times and need not be a sealed book
because written in Greek.

If one will read Cobern’s New Archaeological Discoveries he will
be able to see how much the papyri have helped us in our knowl-
edge of the New Testament. Then let him read Milligan’s The New
Testament Documents, his Greek Papyri, and his charming new vol-
ume, Here and There Among the Papyri, and his interest will be
deepened. If he will go on and read Deissmann’s Bible Studies and
[17] his Light from the Ancient East, he will have a glowing zeal to
push his Greek to some purpose.
THE REAL NEW TESTAMENT

The real New Testament is the Greek New Testament. The English is simply a translation of the New Testament, not the actual New Testament. It is good that the New Testament has been translated into so many languages. The fact that it was written in the koiné, the universal language of the time, rather than in one of the earlier Greek dialects, makes it easier to render into modern tongues. But there is much that cannot be translated. It is not possible to reproduce the delicate turns of thought, the nuances of language, in translation. The freshness of the strawberry cannot be preserved in any extract. This is inevitable. We have, no doubt, lost much by not having the original Aramaic sayings of Jesus, though He often spoke also in Greek.

But the New Testament itself was composed by its authors in Greek, unless Matthew wrote his Gospel first in Aramaic. Papias says that he wrote Logia (probably the Q of criticism) in Hebrew (Aramaic). Some progress has been made by Dalman (The Words of Jesus) and others in the effort to reproduce the original Aramaic employed by Jesus. Dr. C. F. Burney now claims (The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel) that the Fourth Gospel was originally written in Aramaic as Dr. C. C. Torrey (Composition and Date of Acts) argues for Acts 1–15 In the main we have to rely upon the reports in the [18] Greek New Testament which are wonderfully vivid and vigorous.

TRANSLATION NOT ENOUGH

The preacher cannot excuse himself for his neglect of Greek with the plea that the English is plain enough to teach one the way of life. That is true, and we are grateful that it is so. The Bible is in the vernacular and has entered into the very life of the modern man. It is impossible to overestimate the influence of the King James Version upon the language and life of the English-speaking world. Prof. William Lyons Phelps of Yale will have
nothing to do with recent translations because of the literary charm of the Authorized Version. But words are living things and, like all life, are constantly changing. Dictionaries run out of date quickly, not merely because of new ideas and new words, but because the old words change their meanings. The Psalmist said that he would “prevent” the morning, not stop the light from coming as one wishes he could do in the short summer nights, but get up before the morning. So “let” is even used in the Authorized Version for “hinder” instead of “allow.”

It was for this reason among others that the revisers undertook to make a new translation of the English Bible. The American Revisers have revised that. Then we have Weymouth’s Translation of the New Testament, The Twentieth Century New Testament, and Moffatt’s brilliant New Translation of the New Testament. We shall have many more. They will all have special merit, and they (19) will all fail to bring out all that is in the Greek. One needs to read these translations, the more the better. Each will supplement the others. But, when he has read them all, there will remain a large and rich untranslatable element that the preacher ought to know.

THE PREACHER A BIBLE SPECIALIST

We excuse other men for not having a technical knowledge of the Bible. We do not expect all men to know the details of medicine, law, banking, railroading. But the preacher cannot be excused from an accurate apprehension of the New Testament. This is the book that he undertakes to expound. It is his specialty, and this he must know whatever else he does or does not know. Excuses for neglecting the New Testament are only excuses after all. Dwight L. Moody made himself at home in the English Bible, and he shook the world. Spurgeon made himself efficient in Greek and Hebrew in spite of insufficient schooling. John Knox studied Greek when over fifty. Alexander Maclaren’s *Expositions of*
Holy Scripture are the wonder of modern preachers because he steadily throughout a long life pursued his Hebrew and Greek studies. He had consummate genius and he added to it fullness of knowledge by means of laborious scholarship. One notes the same careful scholarship in the preaching of Dr. J. H. Jowett. A popular preacher like Dr. G. Campbell Morgan is a close and laborious student of Greek New Testament grammar.

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ORIGINALITY IN PREACHING

Every preacher wishes to be original. That is a proper desire, within limits. One does not care to be bizarre or grotesque. He cannot, if loyal to Christ, be original in his creed. But he can be individual in his grasp of truth and in his presentation of his message. Originality is relative after all. The ancients have stolen all our best ideas from us. But one can be himself. That is precisely what people like most about us.

Now, the Greek New Testament has a message for each mind. Some of the truth in it has never yet been seen by anyone else. It is waiting like a virgin forest to be explored. It is fresh for every mind that explores it, for those who have passed this way before have left it all here. It still has on it the dew of the morning and is ready to refresh the newcomer. Sermons lie hidden in Greek roots, in prepositions, in tenses, in the article, in particles, in cases. One can sympathize with the delight of Erasmus as he expressed it in the Preface of his Greek Testament four hundred years ago: “These holy pages will summon up the living image of His mind. They will give you Christ Himself, talking, healing, dying, rising, the whole Christ in a word; they will give Him to you in an intimacy so close that He would be less visible to you if He stood before your eyes.”
Many who saw Jesus in the flesh did not understand Him. It is possible for us all to know the mind of Christ in the Greek New Testament in all the fresh glory of the Galilean Gospel of grace. The originality that one will thus have is the joy of reality, the sense of direct contact, of personal insight, of surprise and wonder as one stumbles unexpectedly upon the richest pearls of truth kept for him through all the ages.

ENRICHMENT OF ONE’S OWN MIND

The trouble with all translations is that one’s mind does not pause long enough over a passage to get the full benefit of the truth contained in it. The Greek compels one to pause over each word long enough for it to fertilize the mind with its rich and fructifying energy. The very words of the English become so familiar that they slip through the mind too easily. One needs to know his English Bible just that way, much of it by heart, so that it will come readily to hand for comfort and for service. But the minute study called for by the Greek opens up unexpected treasures that surprise and delight the soul.

Three of the most gifted ministers of my acquaintance make it a rule to read the Greek Testament through once a year. One of them has done it for forty years and is as fresh as a May morning to-day in his preaching. One of them is a man of marked individuality and he has added to undoubted genius the sparkling exuberance from the constant contact of his own mind with the Greek text. There is thus a flavor to his preaching and speaking that makes him a marked man wherever he appears upon the platform. He makes no parade of his learning, but simply uses the rich store that he has accumulated through the years. He brings out of his treasure things new and things old. And even the old is put in a new way. Light is turned on from a new angle of vision. The old has all the charm of the old and the glory of the new.
The doctor does not complain at the details of his science. He has to know the minutiae of nature’s handiwork. Nothing is too small for his investigation. He must know the laws of life, the ways of the cell, the habits of the bacilli and microbes that help and endanger human life, the value of all kinds of medicine, the idiosyncrasies of the individual, the wonders of the ductless glands and their influence on personality. Nothing is too small in order that one may save life. Surely the life of the soul is as important as that of the body. Scientists have high regard for the ways of nature. The microscope has done more for the prolongation of human life than has the telescope. Astronomy has become a science of grandeur and glory, but disease has been conquered largely through the revelations of the microscope. Generalities are the peril of the preacher who has a fine scorn of technicalities. One must be able to make the proper generalization out of a mass of details, but he is no theologian who is not first a grammarian, as Dr. A. M. Fairbairn said. The preacher who ridicules word-studies merely exposes his own ignorance. The lexicon may point the way to life. The preacher is of necessity a student of words. He is the interpreter of language and employs language to convey his interpretation of life to the minds of men. They understand his words in their own sense, not in his. He understands the New Testament in his own sense, not in that of the writers, unless forsooth he has managed to grasp the fullness of that meaning.

Thus there are all sorts of pitfalls for the preacher as the exponent of the message of the New Testament. If the blind guide leads the blind, they will both fall into the ditch. One simply has to know his parts of speech if he is to keep out of the ditch and avoid dragging his followers after him. Schisms have arisen around misinterpretations of single words. Grammar is a means of grace. One may, indeed, break grammar if he can break hearts, provided his grammar smashing concerns unessential details not
vital to the sense. Theological and philosophical crudities have always played an important part in the history of heresy.

THE TOOLS AND THE MAN

Civilized man has triumphed over brutes largely by the use of tools. They do not make the man, but the man makes the tools. As man makes progress, he continually improves his tools and his use of them. This is true in war, railroads, agriculture, everything. The man who has the best tools, other things being equal, will do the best work. Efficiency is largely skill in the use of the right tools. The modern preacher in his study is a man with his tools. If he does not have the right tools upon his desk, he cannot produce rapid results and as high grade work as he otherwise may. A man of parts without tools may surpass a dunderhead with good implements for work. That is beside the point. The man of genius with the best tools will do far more and far better work than he can do without such implements of service. No preacher can be satisfied with less than the best that is in him. One can usually tell the quality of a preacher’s work by looking at the books in his library.

Dr. Jowett says in his *The Preacher; His Life and Work*: “I would urge upon all young preachers, amid all their reading, to be always engaged in the comprehensive study of some one book of the Bible. Let that book be studied with all the strenuous mental habits of one’s student days.” That is the way to grow as a preacher. That is the way that Jowett grew. “You will see every text as colored and determined by its context, and indeed as related to vast provinces of truth which might otherwise seem remote and irrelevant. And you will be continually fertilizing your minds by discoveries and surprises which will keep you from boredom.” How can a man who can get the best tools be content to use any others? How can he be willing to have the best tools and not use them?
LEARNING TO USE THE GREEK

It is possible for one to teach himself the elements of Greek so as to get a great deal of benefit from the study of the Greek New Testament. Davis’s Beginner’s Grammar of the Greek New Testament is a good book for one who knows no Greek at all. A man of average intelligence and culture can go through this little book without a teacher. In a few months he will be reading the Gospel by John with some comfort. If he will then secure Bagster’s Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek, he will find every form in the New Testament given in alphabetical order and explained for a beginner. It will then be a matter of perseverance.

It is an open road for one at this stage to get a Westcott and Hort Greek Testament with a lexicon, or he can get Souter’s Pocket Lexicon of the Greek New Testament or Abbott-Smith’s Manual Lexicon. He can get a limp-back copy of the Westcott and Hort or of the Nestle edition that he can carry in his pocket and pull out whenever he has a moment of leisure. He can add now to this equipment Robertson’s Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament and by degrees get ready for a more extended study of the Greek New Testament. One does not have to be a gifted linguist to follow a course of study like this. It requires only a half hour a day and the determination to stick to it steadily, and one will win out and be glad of it all his life. So will his hearers.

NEW HELPS FOR THE STUDENT

There is less excuse than ever for the man with college and seminary training who does not turn his knowledge of Greek to tremendous account. His tools are far superior to those of a former generation. The critical and grammatical commentaries of Meyer served their day well and have been revised and brought up to date in the German editions. One who knows German can also use Zahn’s commentaries and those by Holtzmann, and Lietzmann’s Handbuch. But the English student of
the Greek New Testament has perhaps better commentaries on
the whole. Those who have Ellicott will still find his comments of
value, and certainly that is true of the great commentaries of
Lightfoot and of Westcott in the valuable series so ably carried on
by Swete, Milligan, Mayor, and Robinson (the Macmillan Com-
mentaries). The International Critical series challenges compari-
son with the best in any language. The Expositor’s Greek Testa-
ment is a distinct advance on Alford, and that is saying a good
deal. The Cambridge Greek Testament for schools is a model
series for brief and scholarly exposition.

We still lack a new lexicon to take the place of Thayer which
makes no use of the papyri, but the Vocabulary of the Greek Testa-
ment Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources, by
Moulton and Milligan will, when completed, go a long way
toward supplementing Thayer until some one shall give us a new
lexicon. Souter’s Pocket Lexicon of the New Testament is useful and
convenient as is Abbot-Smith’s Manual Lexicon of the New Testa-
ment, which gives a good deal of fresh information not in Thayer.
The death of Caspar René Gregory postpones indefinitely a new
edition of Tischendorf’s Novum Testamentum Graece, but some one
will some day perform this greatly needed service. The untimely
death of James Hope Moulton leaves his Grammar of New Tes-
tament Greek incomplete. [27] The Prolegomena (Vol. I) was pub-
lished in 1906. Accidence (Vol. II) he nearly finished before his
death, and it was published. Syntax (Vol. III) unfortunately he
had not done, and this is the most important part of all.¹ However,
in his Prolegomena he made many syntactical remarks which
very well outline his general attitude. He rendered an imperish-
able service by his work on the papyri in illustration of the Greek
of the New Testament. Debrunner has revised Blass’s Grammatik
des neustamentlichen Griechisch, but English students have only

¹ One of Moulton’s students, Prof. W. F. Howard, has undertaken
to write Vol. III and has edited Vol. II, which appeared in two parts.

There is, therefore, ample opportunity for the student who wishes to pursue his Greek studies. The books mentioned above will lead one on to monographs without number. A dip into the papyri can be had in Milligan’s Greek Papyri. This book will tempt one to go on and read widely in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri of Grenfell and Hunt and in other fascinating volumes that are now at one’s command. Deissmann’s Licht vom Osten is now in the fourth thoroughly revised edition. [28]

THE CHARM OF THE GREEK

The high schools and the colleges may drop the Greek out of the curriculum in obedience to the demand of a utilitarian age. But the changing whims of modern educators cannot change the eternal charm of the Greek language. Chancellor West of Princeton University has published a remarkable volume of papers called The Value of the Classics. In this volume prominent men in various walks of life bear witness to the value of Greek in preparing them for great enterprises in modern life. The study of language has a value all its own as a mental discipline.

The most perfect vehicle of human speech thus far devised by man is the Greek. English comes next, but Greek outranks it. The chief treasure in the Greek language is the New Testament. Homer and Thucydides and Aeschylus and Plato all take a rank below Paul and John and Luke. The cultural and spiritual worth of the Greek New Testament is beyond all computation. In the Renaissance the world woke up with the Greek Testament in its hands. It still stands before the open pages of this greatest of all
books in wonder and in rapture as the pages continue to reveal
God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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Chapter 7
Grammar and Preaching

PAUL vs. PETER AND JOHN

It may provoke a smile on many a preacher’s face when there
is suggested any connection between grammar and preaching.
Moody broke grammar and broke hearts, we are reminded. That
is true, but he did not break hearts because he broke grammar.
Plenty of preachers have broken grammar who have never broken
hearts. Power in the preacher rests at bottom on the Master, the
message, and the man. The power of Christ is mediated through
the Holy Spirit and is at the service of all men. The message of the
gospel is open to all who can apprehend it. We gain fresh
glimpses of the word of life, but in essence it remains the same.
The one variable quantity in preaching is the man’s personality.
This is itself complex and includes what we call genius and mag-
netism for lack of more precise terms, for there is a subtle power
in a real man that cannot be defined. God uses men of differing
gifts. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit”
(I Cor. 12:4). But we must not confuse cause and effect. The
Spirit of God blesses the work of different men, not because they
are ignorant of Greek or English, but although they are ignorant.
We can thank God for this fact.

[78] Knowledge ought to be power and ignorance is weakness.
Knowledge may minister to pride and so become an element of
weakness (I Cor. 8:1). God has always been able to take the weak
things of the world and confound the strong (I Cor. 1:7). But we
must not forget that Paul himself was a man of the schools with
the best technical training of his day at Tarsus and Jerusalem. The
chosen vessel of Christ for the conquest of the Roman Empire was the ablest mind of the age with Hebrew, Greek and Roman culture, and not the fishermen of Galilee, who had courage, but lacked the special scholastic equipment (Acts 4:13) that Paul possessed. Paul was a linguist, at home in Aramaic (Hebrew), in Greek, and probably in Latin, and did not need an interpreter like Mark for Peter. Even his oratorical impetuosity and intensity of feeling in Second Corinthians did not betray him into the grammatical crudities seen in the Apocalypse. Paul wrote and spoke the vernacular Koiné, but as an educated man in touch with the intellectual life of his time. I am not pleading that Paul was a professional stylist, as Blass has done. I do not believe that Paul consciously imitated the rhetoricians of Rhodes or the grammarians of Alexandria. He was not artificial, but real, in his learning. However, Paul knew the power in a word and in a phrase and was able to write I Cor. 13, the noblest prose poem on love in all literature. Man of genius that he was, he was also a man of the schools, as Peter and John were not. He became the great preacher, missionary, theologian of the ages. Linguistic learning is not all that the preacher requires, but the supreme preacher like Paul does need it. Instance Alexander Maclaren as a modern example of the scholarly preacher.

NOT PLEADING A LOST CAUSE

There is no denying that the drift to-day in educational circles is heavily against the study of the classics. This undoubted fact by no means proves that the modern minister acts wisely when he ignores or neglects the Greek New Testament. There are fashions and fads in education as in other things. It remains to be seen whether the new utilitarian education will equal in value the old cultural standards and ideals. There may be as much mental drill and gymnastics in the study of scientific details and sociological theories as in the study of the language and of the literature of the
ancients. The modern topics demand a place, but the old term “humanities” for the classics is not without significance. They have had a refining and a humanizing influence beyond a doubt. In Dean West’s volume, *The Value of the Classics*, the most striking argument is that made by business men, captains of industry, who plead for the retention of Latin and Greek in the college curriculum on the ground that classical students make better leaders in business life than those without the humanities. And ex-President Woodrow Wilson is quoted in a recent magazine as saying that, if he had his college course to go over, he would give more attention to the study of Greek. In his case he was not thinking of Greek as a pastime, as when Gladstone would write Greek hymns to relieve the tedium of dull speeches in the House of Commons, but rather as a means of sharpening his intellect for problems of statecraft. The best outcome of educational discipline is not the storing of facts, useful as that may be, but the training of one’s powers for instant service on demand. For this result the study of the Greek language claims preeminence. It is true that in the United States the high schools now seldom offer Greek. Here in Louisville my own son could not study Greek at the Male High School because it was not offered, though he did take it up at college. Even Oxford University, with the approval of Professor Gilbert Murray, has at last dropped compulsory Greek. One can now, alas, secure his B.A. in some colleges without either Greek or Latin. But if the study of the dead languages become itself dead in our colleges, the problem is still not settled for the minister of the gospel.

THE MINISTER A SPECIALIST

The physician has to study chemistry and physiology. Other men may or may not. The lawyer has to study his Blackstone. The preacher has to know his Bible or the people suffer the consequences of his ignorance, as in the case of the physician or the
lawyer. The extreme in each instance is the quack who plays on the ignorance and prejudice of the public. It is true that the minister can learn a deal about his Bible from the English versions, many of which are most excellent. There is no excuse for any one to be ignorant of his English Bible, which has laid the foundation of our modern civilization. But the preacher lays claim to a superior knowledge of the New Testament. He undertakes to expound the message of the gospel to people who have access to the English translations, and many of these are his equal in general culture and mental ability. If he is to maintain the interest of such hearers, he must give them what they do not easily get by their own reading. It is not too much to say that, however loyal laymen are to the pulpit, they yet consider it a piece of presumption for the preacher to take up the time of the audience with ill-digested thoughts. The beaten oil is none too good for any audience. Now the preacher can never get away from the fact that the New Testament was written in the Greek language of the first century A.D. The only way for him to become an expert in this literature of which he is an exponent by profession is to know it in the original. The difficulty of the problem is not to be considered. One will not tolerate such an excuse in a lawyer or in a physician. The only alternative is to take what other scholars say without the power of forming an individual judgment. Some lawyers and physicians have to do this, but they are not the men that one wishes in a crisis. The preacher lets himself off too easily and asserts that he is too busy to learn his Greek Testament. In a word, he is too busy about other things to do the main thing, to learn his message and to tell it. Fairbairn says: "No man can be a theologian who is not a philologian. He who is no grammarian is no divine." Melanchthon held that grammar was the true theology, and Mathias Pasor argued that grammar was the key to all the sciences. Carlyle, when asked what he thought about the
neglect of Hebrew and Greek by ministers, blurted out: “What! Your priests not know their sacred books!”

THE SHOP AND THE SERMON

One is familiar with the retort that the preacher must not be a doctor dry-as-dust. It is assumed that technicalities sap the life out of one’s spirit. The famous German professor who lamented on his death-bed that he had not devoted his whole time to the dative case is flaunted before one’s eyes. So the preacher proudly reminds us of the “Grammarians’s Funeral,” and scouts “Hoti’s business” and all the other dead stuff while he preaches live sermons to moving audiences. “Grammar to the wolves,” he cries. No gradgrind business for him! He will be a preacher and not a scholar. He will leave scholarship to the men who cannot preach. Such a preacher seems to rejoice in the fact that he does not look into his Greek grammar, lexicon’ or Testament, and not often into his commentary.

It is not argued that the preacher should bring the dust and debris of the shop into the pulpit, only that the workman shall have a workshop. There is music in the ring of the hammer on the anvil when the sparks fly under the blows. Certainly the iron has to be struck while it is hot. No parade or display of learning is called for. Results and not processes suit the pulpit. The non-theological audience can usually tell when the sermon is the result of real work. The glow is still in the product. There are men who study grammar and never learn how to read a language, men who cannot see the wood for the trees, who see in language only skeletons and paradigms, who find no life in words, who use language to conceal thought, who have only the lumber of learning. These men create the impression that scholarship is dry. Ignorance is the driest thing on earth. One does not become juicy by becoming ignorant. That is a matter of temperament. The mind
that is awake and alert leaps with joy with every scholarly discovery that throws light on the thought of a passage.

THE PREACHER A LINGUIST

He is so by profession and he is debarred from unconcern about grammar. He is a student of language in the nature of the case. Just as the lawyer must know how to interpret phrases to make a will effective and to keep one from losing money, so the preacher must be able to expound the will of God to men that they may not lose their souls. The preacher only reveals his incompetence when he disclaims being a student of language. He uses the English language and he must be understood in that tongue. Often he is not understood because he preaches in the language of the books while the audience thinks in the language of the street. The homely language of Spurgeon went home to men’s business and bosoms. Spurgeon was deficient in his college training, but he made himself at home in Greek and Hebrew that he might speak with [84] first-hand knowledge. Language is man’s greatest discovery, or invention—or whatever it may be called. Nothing else save the gospel of Christ has played so great a role in human history as the use of language. It is folly for the preacher to affect a superiority to linguistic knowledge. There is no other key to literature save the knowledge of letters. Grammar is simply the history of human speech. It is the record of human thinking. The first thing to do with any passage in a book is to read it, to construe it. This has to be done by the elements of speech. One picks up a certain amount of English without much technical study. He hears English of a certain type spoken and he learns to speak that dialect. But he has to learn his dialect whether he gets it out of books or by hearing of the ear. The very preacher who glories in his own eloquence condemns his lack of interest in the Greek New Testament. He is a linguist by profession.
EXACTNESS IN EXEGESIS

It is pitiful to think how the Bible has been abused by men who did not know how to interpret it. Many a heresy has come from a misinterpretation of Scripture. The worst heresy is a half truth. The literalist carries it to one extreme and the speculative theorist to the other. The only cure for wrong criticism is right criticism. The people find themselves at the mercy of every new “ism” because they are themselves so poorly instructed in the Bible. Sometimes the preacher does not know how to expose the subtle error before it is too late. There is in some quarters a prejudice against all scholarship because of the vagaries of some men who have not been able to be loyal to Christ and open to new learning. To a little man a little learning is a dangerous thing, Broadus used to say. Obscurantism is no answer to radicalism. The man who loves the light is not afraid of the light. No amount of toil is too great for the lover of the truth of God. The true preacher wishes to plant his feet on the solid rock of real learning. Grammatical exegesis precedes the historical and the spiritual. A preacher with college and seminary training can hardly keep his self-respect if he does not have upon his study table a Greek Testament, a Greek lexicon, a Greek grammar, and several modern commentaries on the book that he is studying. He will have many other books, of course, but these are prime necessities if he plans to do serious work upon a page in the New Testament before he preaches upon it. Only thus can he be sure of his ground. Only thus can he be relatively as original as he ought to be. The contact of his mind with the Greek Testament is a fresh experience of first importance. The mind of the Spirit literally opens to his mind in a new and wonderful fashion.

THE PREACHER A PSYCHOLOGIST

The psychology of preaching is attracting fresh attention these days. Language itself has its psychological side. Grammar cannot
be fully understood until one considers language as the expression of the thought in the mind. The thought shapes the (86) mold into which it is cast. The very inflections and cases have a meaning. The Greek prepositions are instinct with life. There are pictures in Greek prepositions and sermons in Greek roots that leap out at one. The preacher has to know the mood of the audience as well as the mind of the spirit. He mediates the written word by the living word to the hearer. He must know his own heart and keep it ready for this spiritual transmutation. If a man is a wizard in words he will win hearts to attention and to service. Those men spoke like Jesus in depth of thought, simplicity, charm, and power of expression. Men, even rough soldiers, hung on his words, listening. His enemies gathered round him to seize him, but their hands were palsied as they listened to his speech. The gift to pick the right word and drive it like a nail in a sure place is what makes a speaker effective. Hence the exact and prolonged study of language is of inestimable value for the preacher. Instead of scorning grammar he should devour it with avidity.

A CLOSED GREEK TESTAMENT

Imagine yourself with a Greek Testament, priceless treasure of the ages, and yet with no lexicon and no grammar and no teacher. Imagine yourself without even a copy of the Greek Testament of your own, and yet with a deathless passion to read for yourself this book that is the greatest not only in the Greek language but in all the world! Imagine yourself too poor to buy a copy of the Greek Testament and unable to go to school because you had to make (87) your living as a shepherd boy on the hills of Scotland. Surely one would be excused for not learning to read the Greek Testament in such a case. One day in 1738 a youth of sixteen, John Brown, walked twenty-four miles to St. Andrews, and in his rough homespun clothes startled the shopman by asking him if he
had a Greek Testament for sale. He took it eagerly and read a passage in the gospel of John, and proudly walked back to his sheep with the most precious book in all the world in his hand. This lad had borrowed a Greek Testament from a minister and at odd hours had made a grammar for himself slowly, like a new Rosetta Stone, in order that he might unlock this treasure for himself. One of the dearest treasures at St. Andrews to-day is John Brown’s Greek Testament. Grammar, self-made grammar, unlocked the closed Greek Testament for him and opened the door to the treasure of the ages. To-day thousands of ministers who have had Greek courses in college and seminary and who have Greek grammars and lexicons on their desks lack the energy to hold themselves to a steady course of daily reading in the Greek Testament till it becomes one of the delights of life. One could wish that the picture of John Brown, the shepherd lad, making his own grammar, might rise to put us all to shame and send us back to grammar and lexicon and Testament. For in the Greek Testament Jesus speaks to us with almost more of reality, Erasmus says, than if he stood by our side and we heard his audible voice. He spoke both in Greek and in Aramaic. Certainly we have some of his *ipsissima verba* and his very words are life.

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Chapter 9
John Brown of Haddington
or Learning Greek Without a Teacher

There are few stories more thrilling than the simple narrative of John Brown of Haddington, as he came to be called. The facts are all given in the fascinating biography by Robert Mackenzie, published in 1918. The list of his important works cover three pages (347-9) and include *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, republished as late as 1868. The dates of his books run from 1758 to
1785. *The Self-interpreting Bible* was reissued in America in 1919 with 26 editions in all. "Brown's Bible" came to be a treasure to ministers. For twenty years at Haddington, Scotland, in connection with his pastorate, he acted as professor of theology to about thirty students each year, who came to sit at his feet. He sided with the Erskines and the United Presbyterian Church, which later in 1900 was united with the Free Church of Scotland as the United Free Church. But our interest in John Brown, who became the greatest preacher and scholar of his people during this period, lies in the marvelous zeal exhibited by him for acquiring knowledge. He was born in 1722 in Carpow near Abernethy in Perthshire. His father was in winter a weaver of flax on the little farm and a fisher of salmon in the summer. He had taught himself to read and had current religious literature in his little home. Thus the son formed a taste for good reading. It was the law that a schoolmaster should be appointed for every parish, but in the strife between Prelacy and Presbytery little regard was paid to the law. When a school was held, it might be a cowshed, a stable, a family vault, or a hovel. John Brown had a few months in a school like this, but the fire was kindled in his mind and soul that was to become a great light. He read what catechisms he could get.

"My parents’ circumstances did not allow them to afford me any more, but a very few quarters at school, for reading, writing, and arithmetic, one month of which, without their allowance, I bestowed on Latin." So he tells the pathetic story.

But where did the Greek come in? "My father dying about the eleventh year of my age and my mother soon after, I was left a poor orphan, who had almost nothing to depend on, but the providence of God.” That and his own pluck and courage. He found shelter in a religious family, but had fever four times during the year and seemed a mere wisp of a boy. In his twelfth year he was converted. He became the herd-boy for John Ogilvie for several years on the sheep farm of Mieckle Bein. Ogilvie was an elder
of the church at Abernethy, who had never learned to read. He was fond of having the shepherd boy read to him. He built a shelter on Colzie Hill for that purpose, where they could watch the sheep and have spiritual communings. Young John Brown borrowed what Latin books he could and used them so well that he mastered the language. He had two hours at noon each day for rest. But he used this time to go to his minister at Abernethy, Rev. Alexander Moncrieff, or to Rev. J. Johnstone, a minister at Arngask, several miles away. These set him tasks in Latin, which he finished with dispatch.

Latin led to Greek, but in a curious way. He hesitated to ask help about the Greek, as it was not so commonly known as Latin. So he took an old Latin grammar, his copy of Ovid, and went to work to find out the Greek alphabet by the use of the proper names in the genealogies of Christ in Matthew and Luke. This was the key to unlock the door between Latin and Greek. He had borrowed a copy of the Greek New Testament and kept on his comparative study till he learned the sounds of the Greek letters. He learned the meanings of the words by comparing short ones with the English translation. He made comparisons of the endings with the Latin and thus made a rough grammar for himself. Now and then he would ask questions of a Mr. Reid in the neighborhood.

He became anxious to get for himself a copy of the Greek New Testament. It was twenty-four miles to St. Andrews, where there was a copy to be had. He got his friend, Henry Ferney, to look after his flock, and set out one evening for St. Andrews and arrived there next morning. This was in 1738, and he was only sixteen. He was footsore and weary and found the book store of Alexander McCulloch. Let us follow Mackenzie (pp. 26 f.):

"Going in, he startled the shopman by asking for a Greek New Testament. He was a very raw-looking lad at the time, his clothes were rough, homespun, and ragged, and his feet were bare. What
would YOU do wi’ that book? You’ll no can read it,’ said the bookseller. ‘I’ll try to read it,’ was the humble answer of the would-be purchaser. Meanwhile some of the professors had come into the shop, and, nearing the table, and surveying the youth, questioned him closely as to what he was, where he came from, and who had taught him. Then one of them, not unlikely Francis Pringle, then Professor of Greek, asked the bookseller to bring a Greek New Testament, and throwing it down on the counter, said: ‘Boy, if you can read that book, you shall have it for nothing.’ He took it up eagerly, read a passage to the astonishment of those in the shop, and marched out with the gift, so worthily won in triumph. By the afternoon, he was back at duty on the hills of Abernethy, studying his New Testament the while, in the midst of his flock.” This simple narrative is eloquent in its portrayal of the determination of the poor shepherd boy of Abernethy to know the Greek New Testament. This very copy of the Greek New Testament, a precious heirloom, has been handed down to the fifth John Brown in lineal descent of Greenhill Place, Edinburgh.

But there is a tragic sequel before the final triumph of young John Brown. There were some young men in Abernethy studying for the ministry who became jealous of the shepherd lad who had [107] forged ahead of them in his knowledge of the Greek New Testament. One of them, William Moncrieff, son of the minister at Abernethy, said to him one day: “I’m sure the de’il has taught you some words.” This seemed to John Brown a jest, but it was an expression of jealousy that led to serious consequences. John Brown added Hebrew to his Latin and Greek, and the suspicion of witchcraft grew apace. Even John Wesley in his Journal for May 25, 1–68, expressed sorrow that the English had given up belief in witchcraft, for “the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible.” In 1743 the ministers of the Secession in Scotland
deplored the repeal by Parliament of the law against witchcraft for the punishment of witches.

Unfortunately his pastor, Rev. Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy, gave heed to the charge of witchcraft as the explanation of John Brown's knowledge of Greek. This slander followed young Brown for five years. On June 16, 1746, the elders and session of the church at Abernethy by unanimous vote gave John Brown a clear certificate of full membership in the church; but even so Rev. Alexander Moncrieff, the pastor, refused to sign it and left it to the clerk of the session. The narrow preacher continued to throw difficulties in the way of the brilliant young scholar, who was struggling towards the light. Later in 1752, some members of the church at Abernethy were brought by Moncrieff before the session for going to hear John Brown, "a pretended minister." But the young man fought his way on as peddler, soldier, schoolmaster, divinity student, and finally pastor at Haddington, theological professor and great scholar and author.

It is a romantic story that puts to rout all the flimsy excuses of preachers today who excuse themselves for ignorance of the Greek New Testament or for indifference and neglect after learning how to read it. Any man today can learn to read the Greek New Testament if he wants to do it. There are schools in plenty within easy reach of all. But if circumstances close one's path to the school, there are books in plenty and cheap enough for all. No one today has to make his own grammar and lexicon of the Greek New Testament or go without a teacher. One can start with Davis's Beginner's Grammar and Bagster's Analytical Lexicon and go on to the mastery of the noblest of all languages and the greatest of all books. Indeed, today one actually hears of young ministers who rebel against having to study books that help them learn the Greek New Testament, and who regard their teachers as task-masters instead of helpers. The example of John Brown of Haddington ought to bring the blush of shame to every
minister who lets his Greek New Testament lie unopened on his desk or who is too careless to consult the lexicon and the grammar that he may enrich his mind and refresh his soul with the rich stores in the Greek that no translation can open to him. Difficulties reveal heroes and cowards. Every war does precisely that. The Greek New Testament is a standing challenge to every preacher in the world.