

[This lecture was gratefully received from Michael Madden, an elder of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, Australia, who has an interest in 19th century church history.]

This lecture is taken from a rare first edition classic of theology, William Cunningham's "Theological Lectures on subjects connected with Natural Theology, Evidences of Christianity, The Canon and Inspiration of Scripture."

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LECTURE VI.

PRAYER, MEDITATION, AND TEMPTATION.

Meditation, as including learning, reading, and reflection, and especially reading and reflecting on the Word of God, so as to understand the meaning of its statements and the import of its teaching, is that which in the ordinary relation of cause and effect bears most directly and immediately upon the acquisition of theological knowledge. Prayer and the experimental application of divine truth are exercises which mainly and principally lie between God and your own souls, in which it is with him you have to do, and where little aid or assistance can be derived from your fellow-men. In meditation or study you may derive much assistance from others, by their interpreting and explaining the word of God to you, illustrating and establishing the truths which are taught there, counselling you as to the books that ought to be read, and the way in which they may be read and studied to most advantage, and in various ways affording you at the commencement of your theological studies the benefit and the experience acquired by those who have already given some attention to the investigation of these subjects. And this is just in substance a description of the exercises in which we are to be engaged in this place. In entering upon so wide a field as the study of theology, it may be reasonably supposed that you may derive some benefit from the advice and assistance of those who have already more or less extensively traversed it. Were you to let yourselves loose upon the wide field of theological literature without system and without directions, you would be in some danger of losing yourselves amid the multiplicity of objects that might attract your attention and call forth your curiosity. And hence the necessity of studying upon a regular plan, and having some directions laid before you as to the way and manner in which the plan may be most successfully prosecuted. It is only by your own reading and study, accompanied by the teaching of the divine Spirit, that you can become theologians. You must read and reflect. Theological knowledge cannot be put into you *ab extra*, without your own faculties being called into vigorous exercise. It consists radi-

cally and essentially in the formation of correct judgments, as to the meaning and import of statements in God's word, on which different interpretations have been put. And therefore the acquisition of it necessarily implies that you yourselves study the word of God, make use of all the appropriate means by which its meaning may be ascertained and established, estimate the evidence bearing upon all the subjects investigated, and form your own judgments regarding them. You have no right, and still less are you under any obligation, to take upon trust the views of any man or body of men, without having satisfied yourself of their accordance with the only standard of truth. It is with God you have to do, it is to him you are responsible, and him alone you are to follow. "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship" (Con. C. xx. s. 2). You are then to exert your own faculties, and to exert them on your own responsibility to God, that under the guidance of his Spirit you may attain to the knowledge of his truth, and that this be done, and done intelligently, you must yourselves carefully investigate all the subjects to which your attention may be directed, and bring them, in the exercise of your own faculties, to be tried by the standard of God's word. You might be led by the authority of others and the influence of circumstances to adopt and profess a system of views that is really in accordance with the sacred Scriptures, while you had never fairly and impartially exercised your faculties upon the subject, and could give no satisfactory proof from the word of God of the views which you professed to entertain. But such a result would neither be satisfactory to yourselves nor to the church of which you might become ministers. The church of course does not wish any to enter her service except those who, after diligent study and careful investigation, are satisfied that the doctrines of her public profession are in accordance with the sacred Scriptures, and can give some account of the scriptural grounds on which they maintain them, and it is supremely important that in the prosecution of your studies, you should be ever animated by a sincere love of truth, by a real and honest desire to ascertain what is the mind and will of God. You are not indeed to suppose that you are at liberty to adopt any opinions you choose, or that it is not a matter of great importance what views you adopt upon theological subjects, provided only they are sincerely held. You are under obligation to know aright the will of God, and are responsible and justly punishable for mistaking it, just because God requires that of you, and because he has made sufficient provision for guiding to the knowledge of the truth all who honestly and faithfully improve the means and opportunities with which he has furnished them. There is sincerity in error as well as in truth, but still error is error, and truth is truth, the one in opposition to God's revealed will, and the other in accordance with it. The knowledge of the truth is the gift of God, and is traceable to or connected with the right and honest exercise of our faculties, and the faithful and conscientious improvement of our opportunities, while the adoption and maintenance of error is owing universally to some failure in these respects; to the want of a sincere and honest desire to know the truth, to the operation of some perverting and misleading influence, or to some failure in the diligence, caution, and perseverance with which our faculties have been brought to bear upon the investigation. This is an important

principle that ought not to be lost sight of, especially in judging of ourselves, and in regulating our own conduct, in impressing upon our own minds the necessity of honestly and purely searching after truth, guarding against everything that might mislead us, and exercising our faculties with all due care and caution upon the various subjects which we may be called upon to examine.

But some caution and forbearance are necessary in applying this principle of the sinfulness of error in forming a judgment of others whose views we may reckon erroneous. It is true that all error is sinful, and has arisen from something sinful on the part of those by whom it is maintained. But it would be very unwarrantable and offensive to be making a direct and personal application of this principle to all those who, we may be firmly persuaded, entertain erroneous views. Men are undoubtedly entitled, and indeed bound, to exercise their own faculties, and to form their own judgments in regard to all subjects that may be presented to them, without being subject to any authoritative control upon the part of their fellow-men, or of any but God and those who can produce God's commission. The connection between the understanding and the will, the investigation of those causes and influences that operate upon the formation of men's opinions, bears upon some of the deepest and darkest mysteries of the human spirit, involves points that may be imperfectly understood, even by those to whom they attach, and can in general be very imperfectly comprehended by others. They can be certainly known in individual cases only by Him who searcheth the hearts of the children of men, who understandeth our very thoughts afar off. The probability that men may have yielded to perverting and misleading influences in forming their opinions, is ordinarily just in proportion to their general character of the integrity, candour, and love of truth which they usually manifest. [Apparently the author's meaning is, that in proportion to a man's candour and love of truth, is his anxiety to take all arguments into account, and therefore his liability to be unconsciously misled by adventitious circumstances.—ED].

We ought ever to remember that we are all liable to yield to perverting influences, and the operation of collateral or adventitious circumstances in the formation of our opinions; and this should teach us charity and forbearance in judging of others whom we may believe to be in error. Upon the ground of those various considerations, it is manifestly improper and unwarrantable to be habitually and ordinarily applying the principle, however true in itself, that all error is sinful, to others whose views we may reckon erroneous. Within certain limits, and when there is no palpable outward evidence of a want of integrity and of due care in the formation of opinions, it is but reasonable to assume that those who may differ from us have been as honest and impartial in the formation of their opinions as ourselves, and though abstractly we may and should hold the general principle, that where there is error there is sin, yet the sin may, in many cases, be in some corner so obscure and inaccessible as to be cognisable only by Him who searcheth all things; so that men, in fairness should content themselves with refuting the error without pronouncing upon the character and motives of the errorists. When men profess to have a sincere desire to know the truth, and have used honestly, so far as man can judge, the proper means for attaining to a knowledge of it,—when there is no public tangible proof of the falsehood of their professions, they are entitled to be

treated as honest men, and should not be denounced as guilty of sin because of the errors in which we may believe them to be involved. In short, the right principle upon this point is, that before we can be warranted in personally applying to men who hold erroneous opinions the maxim that all error is sin, we should have some other proof besides the mere fact that they are in error,—proof such as men, who cannot see into the heart, may clearly apprehend and estimate, and which distinctly establishes against them some plain deviation from the course which an honest love of truth, and a faithful application of the right means for discovering it, would have produced. But while we should be careful of applying to others the maxim that all error originates in sin, and is traceable to something sinful as its cause, and while its application to others should be in general left to him who alone can apply it accurately, yet the maxim is undoubtedly true abstractly, and it is right that we should apply it to ourselves in regulating and in explaining our own conduct. We may be firmly persuaded that we will not fall into error except through some sin on our own part, through some sinful want of an honest and paramount love of truth, through some sinful negligence or oversight in the exercise of our faculties, or in the use of appropriate means, or through the indulgence of some sinful desire, or in the prosecution of some sinful object misleading and perverting us. Although there is a great deal of that which ought to pass among men for honesty and uprightness in the formation of opinions, and which ought to pass as such, just because men ought to be deeply conscious of their own liability to be misled, and are neither qualified nor entitled to judge of the hearts of others, yet we believe there is very little of pure and thorough impartiality in the sight of God, and that men's opinions, whether right or wrong, are but seldom the result of a purely honest and impartial consideration of the proper grounds on which they ought to rest, uninfluenced by collateral and adventitious circumstances. Our opinions in most cases have been largely determined by the circumstances in which we have been placed and the influences under which we have been brought and men who know themselves would be slow of asserting that their opinions, even those which profess to be built upon the word of God, would certainly have been the same as they now are, had their lot been cast in a different sphere. The practical use of these considerations is, that remembering that all error is sinful, and that there are many influences continually at work to lead you into error, you strive to preserve a deep sense of your responsibility to God for all the opinions you form, to cherish a supreme and paramount desire to know his will and to ascertain the truth, and that you guard carefully against any influence that might mislead or pervert you. Let no opinions be taken up hastily and rashly under the influence of outward circumstances, or to have any selfish or party object. Let there be a constant reference to the word of God, the only infallible standard of truth. Let all due care and diligence be employed to understand the meaning and import of its statements, let a constant sense of your dependence upon the Spirit of truth be preserved, and let all your meditations and all your investigations be accompanied with private prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Never forget that God's Spirit alone can guard you against the temptations to error which you have to encounter from without and from within, that sound theological knowledge, scriptural truth must be sought and obtained from Him, that the secret

of the Lord is with them that fear him, and that he will shew them his covenant. Take care that you grieve not, that you quench not, the Holy Spirit, by neglecting to cherish a due sense of your dependence upon him, by indifference about really enjoying his guidance and ascertaining his mind and will, by restraining prayer, by regarding any iniquity in your hearts, by indulging in sloth or pride, in self-seeking and self-confidence, by failing to exercise your faculties, and to improve your opportunities under a deep sense of your responsibility to Him, and with a sincere determination to consecrate yourselves soul and body to his glory and service. It is by such means as these, and under such impressions and desires as these, that your theological studies ought to be conducted, and it is only when you are enabled to abound and to persevere in the use of these means, and in the maintenance and habitual manifestation of this frame of mind, that you have reasonable ground to expect that you will be enabled to attain to a thorough knowledge of God's revealed will, and be fitted to become able ministers of the New Testament, not only having yourselves that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life, but able to teach others also.

Erroneous opinions upon any of the subjects concerning which God has given us information, are not only sinful and displeasing to him, but injurious to ourselves, adverse to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, and are therefore to be carefully guarded against in the use of all appropriate means, by keeping our hearts, and by regulating our conduct. Our Saviour has said, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). An offence here means anything that causes or tends to cause to stumble and fall, or to turn aside from the right path in matters connected with God and eternity. And of the offences in this sense which are so plentifully spread over the history of the church, errors and heresies form no inconsiderable portion. The erroneous opinions that have been breached, directly and in themselves, by their own proper tendency and results, and the fact that so many erroneous opinions all professing to be derived from one and the same source or standard have been maintained, have proved great stumbling-blocks in every age, have contributed largely to pervert men, and to lead them astray, and thus to endanger their eternal welfare. When our Saviour said "it must needs be that offences come," the leading idea he meant to convey was merely the certainty that in the actual condition of things, in the actual constitution of the world, and of man's nature, it would happen that stumbling-blocks would be laid in men's way, and that many would, in point of fact, fall over them, with perhaps the additional idea insinuated that even these offences would be over-ruled of God for accomplishing his own purposes. But the great lesson which the statement is fitted to impress is, that however certain or necessary offences may be, and to whatever extent this may be over-ruled for good, they involve, at all times, great and heinous guilt on the part of those who are responsible for them. And it must not be forgotten that for the evils which have arisen—the stumbling-blocks which have been thrown in men's way—by controversies and divisions, those must bear the chief responsibility, and incur most fully the woe which our Saviour has denounced, who, by adopting and maintaining opinions that were erroneous and in-

consistent with the standard of God's word, have rendered contention necessary, and thereby made themselves the real authors or causes of the offences, of the stumbling-blocks that have been thrown in the way of individuals and churches, tended to mar their progress in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and to obstruct the great ends for which they ought to have lived and laboured. Let this responsibility weigh deeply upon your minds, and let it prompt you to a diligent and faithful use of all those means, whereby through God's blessing the woe denounced by our Saviour may be avoided, and our spiritual nourishment and the peace and welfare of Christ's church may be advanced.

PREVIOUS STUDIES—LATIN, GREEK, AND HEBREW.

I have endeavoured to lay before you an outline of the wide field comprehended in the study of theological science, and the processes by the prosecution of which such a knowledge of theology as may fit you for becoming useful ministers of the gospel is to be acquired, comprehending, as the explanation of these processes does, a statement of the motives by which you ought to be animated, and of the spirit in which your whole theological studies ought to be conducted. I would now wish to lay before you a few practical directions as to the prosecution of your studies, not as to the prosecution of the study of any particular department of theology, for the different branches of the science may, in some respects, require special directions more immediately applicable to them severally, but bearing upon the mode of prosecuting your studies generally. It is assumed not only that you have gone through a curriculum of study in literature and philosophy, but that you actually possess a respectable measure of acquaintance with the subjects you profess to have studied. In authors who have written upon the general subject of the study of theology, these topics are usually adverted to under the head of propaedeutica, or preliminary instructions, which ought to be mastered before men begin the proper study of theology. In so far as you are not possessed of a respectable acquaintance with all those subjects, you are not fully prepared for entering upon theological study; and in so far as your knowledge of them is still partly defective, it is proper, in regard to some of them at least, that you should even now be giving some degree of attention to the object of repairing your deficiencies.

The most important branches of your previous studies, in so far as concerns their immediate use and bearing upon the prosecution of the study of theology, are a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages, and an acquaintance with mental philosophy, as including the powers and faculties, the capacities and susceptibilities of the mind, the principles and laws bearing upon the right use and application of these powers and susceptibilities upon investigating truth, judging of evidence, and establishing duty. No man can be regarded as having any pretensions to the character of a well-educated and accomplished theologian who has not read a considerable number of works which exist only in the Latin language; and hence the importance—we might almost say the necessity in the prosecution of theological study—of being so familiar with Latin as to be able to read ordinary theological Latin works, without finding much more difficulty, or requiring to spend

much more time in the perusal of them, than you would on works in your own tongue. This is the sort of measure of the familiarity which you ought to possess with Latin; and such a degree of acquaintance with it you will find a most important advantage in the prosecution of your studies. In regard to Greek, there are fewer books in this language than in Latin which it is necessary for you to read for the mere sake of the information they contain; but the language, as a language, it is still more indispensable that you should thoroughly understand, because it is that in which the most important part or the inspired Scriptures were composed. A man's real theological knowledge may be said practically and substantially to be measured by his real knowledge of the Greek Testament; and in order to understand aright the Greek Testament, it is of course indispensable that he be familiar with the Greek language. And this leads us to advert to the general subject of the necessity of an acquaintance with the original languages in which the word of God has been given us by its auditors. The Old Testament, you are aware, is written in the Hebrew language, with the exception of two or three short passages in Chaldee; and the New Testament in Greek. The Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament constitute the word of God given by the inspiration of his Spirit, and forming the only authoritative rule of faith and practice. The will of God is to be learned authentically only from an examination of books written in these languages; and hence it follows at once that every one who is really desirous to know the will of God, and to know it thoroughly and authentically, and especially every one who aspires to be a religious instructor of others, is bound to acquire such a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek as may qualify him to derive his knowledge of God's will at once from the fountain-head, or at least to be able to test all the views that may be pressed upon him, by a reference to the only infallible standard, and to be qualified to defend, if necessary, his convictions upon religious subjects from the same sources. A translation of the Scriptures into any other language merely shows the interpretation put upon them by those who have executed the translation; and though most translations of the Scriptures into modern languages give a sufficiently clear and correct exposition of the mind and will of God in his word to serve all the infinitely important purposes of general practical instruction, yet no one will be contented with a translation who desires to be thoroughly versant in divine revelation, and who is called upon to be prepared to give a reason of his faith, and to defend God's truth against the assaults of error. It is true that many, very many, have been guided by God's Spirit into all truth; have been led to embrace Christ, and to become meet for heaven; have attained that knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life; who know God's will only through the medium of a translation. Nay, more, it is certain that God has honoured with singular usefulness as ministers of the gospel men whom he himself had called to labour in his vineyard, although they nothing of Hebrew or Greek.

But it is true in this as well as in other matters, that God's doings are not the rule of our duty, and that there rests an imperative obligation upon all who desire the office of a bishop to acquire, if they have the means and the opportunity, a knowledge of God's revelation as it came from himself, and of course in the original

languages. This is plainly comprehended in the more general obligation undoubtedly attaching to them to acquire as full and accurate a knowledge of God's revelation as their circumstances admit of, before they venture to engage in the instruction of others. I trust you have all knowledge enough of the classic models of antiquity to be able to appreciate the difference between the original and a translation, in so far as the perception and enjoyment of literary beauty and excellence, the gratification of the taste and the emotions are concerned. This applies in all its extent and in full force to the difference between the Scriptures in the original and in a translation, however generally faithful and accurate. And were you disposed to study the Scriptures merely as literary productions and objects of taste, you would be called upon in fairness, with a view to your own enjoyment and gratification, to examine them in the original languages. But this of course is a low and inadequate view of the subject. It is a matter of imperative obligation that you should study the word of God for your own salvation and that of others. In a matter of such importance it is incumbent upon you to take every practicable security for understanding it correctly and thoroughly, and this necessarily implies an acquaintance with the original, especially in those who, in addition to the general obligation attaching to all men according to their circumstances to acquire as complete a knowledge as they can of God's word, are set for the defence of the gospel and the instruction of others. Whenever a difficulty or difference of opinion arises as to the mind and will of God, the ultimate appeal must always be to the Hebrew and Greek text; and the minister who cannot carry the appeal to that tribunal, and discuss it there, must be regarded as destitute of most important auxiliaries and influences for the right discharge of his duties, for the proper execution of his functions; and if God in his providence has given him opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of the original languages, and if he through carelessness, sloth, or perhaps spiritual pride, has failed to improve them, he is justly chargeable with a grievous dereliction of duty. There can be no doubt that our common English version of the Scriptures, though one of the best that has been made, and though quite sufficient for fully instructing the people in what they are to believe concerning God, and in the duty he requires of them, conveys in many instances the meaning of the original obscurely and ambiguously, and in not a few cases with some mixture of error and inaccuracy. (Goode, *Divine Rule of Faith and Practice*, vol. i., p. 112, on 2 Tim. i. 13.)

And hence the necessity of a constant appeal to the original in order that the mind of God may be fully and correctly known, and may be set forth with the authority and accuracy which ought to attach to the office and functions of the ministry. The great object of the ministry is to explain, enforce, and apply the statements contained in God's word. Their first duty, therefore, is to use the best means of attaining the full and certain knowledge of their meaning. It may be reasonably doubted whether any minister who has been favoured in providence with opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek is warranted to go to the pulpit and profess to open up the mind of God in his word, without having satisfied himself by an examination of the original what the mind of the Spirit in the passage is, in place of taking it upon trust from others, whether translators or

commentators.

Commentaries indeed often contain information as to the meaning of the original, when it may be given ambiguously or incorrectly in the translation commented on; but one who is himself ignorant of, or very imperfectly acquainted with, the original languages, can make no right use of what he may find on the subject in the commentary, and of course is as much dependent upon the commentator as otherwise he would have been upon the translators. The grand object of all your studies should be that you may clearly and correctly ascertain the meaning of the Spirit of God in the various statements which compose the Bible, and may be qualified to open up their true meaning to others, and to defend it against the assaults of adversaries; and an obviously essential part of this preparation is an acquaintance with the original languages. There is a great responsibility connected with ascertaining and setting forth the mind of the Spirit in the word, and a proper sense of this responsibility will constrain men to adopt the best and surest means of effecting this, though it may require of them some self-denial and sacrifice. The duty, then, of acquiring competent knowledge of the original languages of Scripture we urge upon you, not merely because the possession and application of this knowledge is fitted to afford you much satisfaction and enjoyment, not merely because it is creditable and becoming in a public instructor of others, and because the want of it is discreditable and dangerous; but on the ground of a still higher and more solemn consideration, viz., that by the neglect of acquiring it, you are failing to do all that you can to prepare for attaining to the fullest, firmest, and most rational acquaintance with divine truth, and are thereby indicating that you have not a due sense of the responsibility connected with the infinitely important object of ascertaining the mind of God from his inspired word. You have all opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of the original languages of Scripture, and on the ground which we have stated, you are all bound to embrace and to improve them. It is not, of course, to be expected that all the ministers of a church should become profound philologists, though it is most desirable that every church should have some men who have given careful and lengthened attention to philological studies, and may thus be qualified to defend truth against the most learned opponents; but it is reasonable that all the ministers of the gospel who are favoured in Providence with the necessary opportunities, should possess such a knowledge of the original tongues as may enable them fully to satisfy themselves as to the certainty of the grounds on which they hold their convictions, and to qualify them to appreciate and employ aright the profound researches of others. Of the Greek language you have all acquired some knowledge already, and that knowledge it will be incumbent upon most of you to increase and extend, especially by the careful study of the Greek Testament itself, and other Greek works, which, being composed in a similar style and diction, i.e. with a large admixture of the Hebrew idiom, are more particularly fitted to afford assistance in studying the philology of the New Testament. The principal work of this kind is what is commonly called the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, a work which occupies this very peculiar and important place in the study of the Scriptures in the original, that it is almost indispensable to the careful philological study of both

portions of the word of God.

As a translation from the Hebrew, made when the Hebrew was, if not properly a living language, yet well known and carefully studied, and when there were much greater facilities for acquiring a knowledge of it than there have been in subsequent times, it is still one of the sources from which, as a virtual witness to the actual *usus loquendi*, we may derive some knowledge of the leaning of Hebrew vocables. And having been in familiar use by the inspired writers of the New Testament, and indeed actually used by them in the quotations made in their writings from the Old Testament, and being composed in the same dialect or idiom as the New Testament itself, viz., what has been called Hellenistic, or Hebrew Greek, it is fitted to cast much light upon the meaning of particular words, and the whole structure of the language of the New Testament.

Of the Hebrew most of you are probably still ignorant, and if so, it ought to occupy a considerable portion of your attention during the present session—the Hebrew being not only the language in which the Old Testament was written, but some knowledge of it being necessary for fully understanding the Hebrew Greek of the New. It would be preferable on many accounts that you should have acquired some knowledge of Hebrew at an earlier period of your studies, and indeed before you entered upon the proper study of theology, both because amid the interest with which you may now be expected to engage in your theological studies, there is some danger that you may feel the learning of a language to be rather irksome, and therefore be apt to neglect it, and to fail in giving it the requisite attention; and because it would be desirable that you should even now be prepared to enter upon the critical study of the Old Testament, instead of merely acquiring a knowledge of the elements of the Hebrew language. Arrangements, it is to be hoped, will soon be made for accomplishing this desirable object of securing that those who are contemplating entering upon a course of theological study shall acquire a competent knowledge of Hebrew before they begin. But if you have not yet learned the Hebrew language, it is your duty to do so now without any further delay; and if you are still very imperfectly acquainted with it, your knowledge should without delay be increased and extended. And with the advantages which in this place you enjoy for the study of it, you will, I have no doubt, find it a most interesting and useful occupation.

With regard to the extent to which your study of the original languages ought to be carried, and the amount of acquaintance with them which you are bound to acquire, it is surely not

unreasonable that before entering upon the office of ministers of the gospel, and becoming the public instructors of others, you should be able to read the Scriptures in the original languages with ease, without needing to have recourse to lexicons or translations. Without this measure of acquaintance with the Hebrew and Greek of the Scriptures, you may almost as well be entirely ignorant of them;

for unless you possess this measure of acquaintance with them, you are scarcely qualified for applying to any practical use critical commentaries upon the Scriptures; and what is perhaps of still more importance, until you are so familiar with the original languages, that you can read the Scriptures without finding it necessary to have frequent recourse to the lexicon or the translation, you will not get into the habit, which is of inestimable value and importance, of reading and studying the sacred Scriptures in the words in which God has given them to us. Let this then be the object which you aim at, and which you are resolved by God's blessing to effect; and be assured that the acquisition of such a knowledge of the original languages will be at once the discharge of an important duty, and a source of abundant satisfaction and enjoyment to your own minds. The study of Hebrew you will prosecute under the superintendence of one [The late Dr John Duncan.—Ed.] who is pre-eminently qualified to make it interesting and useful; and I will consider it part of my duty to take opportunities of ascertaining how far you are prepared for understanding and explaining the Greek Testament, and probably prescribing such exercises as the state of your efficiency in this respect may seem to require.