

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Lecture No. 1

My method I call the evidential method, or the legal method. This method takes up any given document and uses *prima facie* evidence of the document itself and nobody to take the unless he is an expert witness. Now, I all my work for a great many years, I have followed the method of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, who was appointed by the British Government to draw up a code of law for India. He did that and when he came home he wrote this little book on the law of evidence, and in speaking of expert witnesses in their relation to the law of evidence, he defines what he means by an expert witness. He defines the laws in regard to the witnesses themselves in cases where an expert must be called in, in order to determine the case, and he has a right to be called an expert. So I have formed a habit in what I write and especially in my introductory lectures, in general and particular, of showing my audience as far as possible why I have a right to speak on the subject. Now there is the homiletics sphere, but if you pay attention to that, it will be a great help for your ministry, in settling such a question as to the right of women to be ministers. But it might be a question whether many women--being women, which is nothing against them, but God made them so, that they were to be home keepers, and the man is to be a husband, "house band," who provides the food and the lady cooks and serves it--it is up to them to prove their right to enter this band of experts which we call the ministry. It may be true, and has been true in former times, when I was a boy, or before I was a boy, why, a man could be taken right from the plough with certain gifts of the gab--very common in this country before we had good seminaries. They took what they could get, and there were so many different sects and the ministers didn't know enough to argue either for or against, and perhaps they wrested the Scriptures, some of them, for their own destruction, like the Mormons.

This course is really one on the Canon and Text and General Introduction to the Old Testament Scriptures. I am going to tell you today what they do in court. An old doctor, a physician, was summoned to witness in court on a murder case. A young man had killed his father and the defense was insanity. It seemed very probable that he would be convicted--in most cases it would be probable--but this old family physician was called as an expert witness by the prosecution and his testimony happened to be in favor of insanity, as it came out when he was on the stand. Then the prosecution tried to rule him out on the ground that he was not an expert. The court ruled that as they had called him themselves they could not object to his witness. But either side of the case in law when insanity is raised and witnesses are brought can protest against expertness of physicians summoned by the other side but he ought to do it before he commences to testify. Now Sir James Fitzjames Stephen--I am not responsible for the name!--in giving the law of evidence says that in all cases of and , when a witness is called before a court his expertness may be challenged, and then the case shifts, you know, to discussing his expertness. You are here, you know, gentlemen, all to become expert expounders and proclaimers of God's message. You want to know what you are talking about. Know your Book, your message, then stand up before the people and give your testimony as to what you have found. First, you must convince yourself that the Book is what it purports to be. Then tell it out with a shout; or any way you please, to the people to whom God sent you. Yours not to reason why, yours but to speak for God with authority. Now I am pretty, you might think, wild, but I think you might agree with me in spite of that on this matter. A great many people the Bible and talk long and make long orations, and they have no right. Their knowledge is so second, third, fourth rate that they ought to keep quiet and listen, open their ears and not their mouths. The Bible speaks of faith and sometimes it is best to open your ears, others times whe[] testimony it is wise to open your mouth.

Now I am telling you this to let you know why I am giving you the lectures I am going to give you, the Lord willing. I want you to get interested in my method and to realize why I sometimes speak on certain subjects. They call a young fellow a professor in our country when he comes out of college and teaches chemistry or something, and is expected to know more than all the preachers in town. The best way to act, that is, for the preachers in town, is to have a knowledge of his own subject anyhow, and when he opens his mouth to speak about the Bible he shows he knows what he is talking about. Use a little bit of Hebrew and Greek mixed in here and there, to show you know something about that! The Presbyterian Church really requires their ministers to know the original languages of the Scriptures, and I do not know any other church represented here which does not. It does not follow that even though the Presbyterian Church doesn't ----- During this course I am going to refer to a great many languages and texts and documents, and so on, and I am going to tell you how I prepared for my work, or, rather, how the Lord prepared me for it. I always had a gift for languages. About my earliest recollection is of being exhibited as a sort of prodigy. They put me up there to read when I was four. My mother taught me, maybe I was too young, but she taught me so as to keep me quiet. I remember, too, when I was eight, I got hold of one of these Histories of the World and read it through many times. When I was nine, my father brought me down here to Philadelphia, also my brother who was ten, and he put us down in Heffelfinger's old bookstore, and told them to let us pick out a few books. When he came back he found that we had picked out all the works of history they had in the shop, and editions of all the English poets. My father was so pleased at these two cubs picking out such good books that he bought the whole lot. I was pretty well read up on history, and was ready for the sophomore class at Princeton when I was 13, and then I had a calamity, something like incipient typhoid, and had to stay out of school for two years. Those years were great. I read all sorts of books, and I amused myself by learning French. I had no teacher, but I got a hundred in French. I read a Greek grammar. Oh, I read lots of stuff, when I ought to have been out of doors, I suppose. But I couldn't do very much along that line on account of headaches. I spent one vacation on German and got a hundred in that. I learned Spanish on one vacation, and I learned Italian so I taught second year Italian in Pittsburgh. By the time I was through the Seminary I stood honor man at Princeton. There were ten in our family, and the younger ones I helped during the vacations with Latin, German and French. So, before I started to the Seminary--now this was Providence--I happened to be out on an evangelistic tour, and some old man out there had a Hebrew-Latin dictionary, a Hebrew grammar and an old Hebrew Bible, which he gave me. I still have them at my home. I learned Hebrew and took all the prizes going in the Seminary. I was enjoying my Hebrew, you know. You will never learn it till you read. I read every book but three in Seminary. I used to sit down one afternoon a month and get my Hebrew for the month. I got it by heart and for years my regular time was fifteen minutes a day. I believe I had a talent for languages. They asked me to stay and teach Hebrew, Syriac, and I studied Comparative Religion, under Briggs and A.A. Hodge. They published a little article I prepared in my fourth year's work at the Seminary. When I got through there, I had taught about eight or ten languages already and had studied about a dozen, and the question was whether I should preach or teach. I couldn't do both very well! My father wanted me to preach. He liked preaching the Gospel so well. I was an orator and had the gift of the gab. I had the offer of several fine churches, but I decided to teach instead. I am telling you this to show you that I didn't go into teaching just because I couldn't preach!

I wanted to go to Europe. My father said he would send me, so I borrowed the money from him. When I came back I had a salary and was going to pay it back to him, but he said, "All right, all right---!" It was Providence now. Not every man can get the education I got. I went over to Europe. At that time there was Professor Sayce of Oxford, well known in this country. I saw him and he is still living, an old man of ninety. He has had to go to Egypt every winter and is living still. He advised me to go to Leipzig to study under the younger Delitzsch. When I went to Heidelberg, I found I hadn't the strength to be a preacher and a teacher both, so I decided to be a teacher. I thought the world needed a man who was fitted as I was, so I decided that I would give my life just to that one thing, the defence of the Old Testament. I made my plan as to

my life, that I would give--you know, like life insurance. I was good on that line, my family was noted for its longevity, and I felt I might reasonably live till I was 70, so I divided my life into periods of fifteen years. I gave myself the first 15 years to study languages, these languages divided this way. I would learn all the Semitic languages, every language which threw light on the vocabulary or the syntax of the Old Testament. Of course, I did already know Syriac and Aramaic, and Hebrew, but there was Ethiopic and Phoenician and Babylonian and Assyrian, and a number of others--about twelve different Aramaic dialects. Secondly, I would learn all languages that threw light on the history of the Old Testament, taking in Egyptian, Coptic, and others. Then, thirdly, I would learn all languages that threw light on the text of the Old Testament, down to the year 600 after Christ. The texts after that would be too late. So that took me into Armenian and several other languages, Gothic and Anglo-Saxon, etc. Well, I thought, judging by the rate I had advanced, I thought I could probably get enough of these in fifteen years.

The second part of my life I would devote to lower Criticism, studying the text of the Old Testament, the comparison of the Hebrew text with the Versions, Greek, Latin, Syriac, especially, and all the versions down to 600. In 15 years I might do that, and then I would have 15 years left, and those last 15 years, after which I had acquainted myself with all the machinery, I would tackle the subject which is called the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament, including all that the critics have said, and so be able by that time to defend the history, the veracity of the Old Testament. Well, I prayed over that too, boys. You needn't think that a man stops praying simply because he is studying. He will probably need it all the more. You need to get out of yourselves, you might say, when you are reading and studying those things.

I determined deliberately, and I had a pretty good knowledge of what there was to learn, and so every year I studied until I had learned every one of these languages. I have a singular faculty for language. I could go for a long time without looking at a language, and then take it up and read it a great deal better than I could at first. When you get down to the final analysis, you ought to put your mind on what you are studying and repeatedly try to tie up everything you learn by alliteration. I tell you, the best thing for your memory is to keep your brain in good physical condition, and all the brain you have will have *totus in* ----- for your body, and "present-minded," being "*ansich*."

Well, I admit, and you will admit too, that that was a pretty big proposition that I laid out for myself, and I think you will admit that the Lord must have been in it. He has taken care of me ever since. There are people, you know, whom you see scratching their heads and looking as if they had just heard that the Lord was dead and were just going to the funeral. They are afraid that the Lord is going to leave them in the lurch. There are students like that, you know. If there isn't a grouch in every class, it is a wonderful class! I haven't lived among them all my life for nothing!

There was a member of the Pennsylvania legislature who had never made a speech there until the question of hogs arose. Then he got up and said, "Mr. Speaker, I have never made a speech in this assembly, but I am going to make a speech on hogs, because, Mr. Speaker, I was raised among them!" I was raised among students and have been with them all my life. A fellow thinks he is studying, sometimes, when he sits in a chair and puts two hours on that subject. Ordinarily, it means that you just sat in that chair for two hours, at least that! I was never guilty of thinking what the Lord was going to do with me. Berlin is the greatest university in the world, and I had the greatest teachers in the world. It was founded by Hengstenberg, whose history is still used. They were good old-time Presbyterians, Calvinistic, in Brandenburg. The Kaiser's family formed a forced union of the Evangelical Church with the Lutheran. Some refused to join, and some of the finest hymns in our book were written by one of these, Gerhart.

I started to carry that out according to the schedule, and I studied there for two years and then I was taken ill. I never mind a week or two, but a month or two becomes too much. Recently, when I was ill, I taught all my classes, and boys,

I managed to keep them busy. But here was a singular thing now. The day I sailed from Germany, Samuel Jennings Wilson, the Moderator, died, and I was elected in his place, and I heard of it when I arrived.

The first year, I went to teach with Chancellor William R. Harper and Professor David Lyon and President of Oberlin College and Brown of Newton Center, a combination of Baptists and Presbyterians. We taught for some years. I wrote for *Harper's Magazine* as well as for the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. In 1900, when I went to Princeton, all my old associations were done away with. I wrote for the *Princeton Review* there and I wrote a Syriac grammar, published in '89. I have written reviews on nearly every subject I bring before you this year. I have already written on them and had the reviews published in *The Presbyterian Review*. My work has made me better every year in what I teach. I learn more every year I live. I must have read 25 dictionaries through on that last article of mine. I love dictionaries--something like the fellow that couldn't kill Horace, because we all love Horace!--you know, Horace was the family pet, a mountain lion, who ate them all up! I got one of these dictionaries from Harvard. I read a Hebrew dictionary through carefully twice and a concordance too, in preparing this article. In my writings I tell my readers where they can find what I have got. As a young fellow, a venerable old minister from Ohio found fault with me for publishing the source of my information; he said, "They will be able to follow you up!" That's just what I want! If we compelled everyone who makes a statement against the Old Testament to just base that statement on some authority, --well, if he can't do it, he'd better keep quiet! How in the name of sense can you know out of your own head? A girl who stood first at Wellesley was visiting at my house. I made some statement about the historical character of the Old Testament, and she picked me up on it. She had learned it by heart, this attack, and said so and so. You ought to have seen her when I said, "No, I don't believe that fellow." It never enters their heads that what occurs in a book they have studied is not absolutely without controversy.

Now, the point I have been trying to make this morning is my right to speak on these subjects. I am going to illustrate this a little further. When I was lecturing over in London, five years ago, I had been reading the Life of Mr. Gladstone, who is well known over there, and it is a good thing to illustrate from things known. But earlier I got to know so many languages and stuff that I thought they ought to be hauled into my discourses! I would haul in something from "Don Quixote" or Dante, or Greek or Latin. I had a whole book written in showing off in those days. They were not illustrations at all. I thought they were because they were ten times harder to understand than the things I was going to illustrate! Well, 300 ministers from the City of London and Great Britain, who could talk on every subject and knew nearly every language there was. A couple of bright boys in Parliament who got tired of hearing Gladstone taking up the discourse, read an article on original, ancient India, and thought they were going to catch the old gentleman asleep. They read up on this article and waited till they were all invited to a big dinner and brought up the subject of India. They were making it hot, quoting this article, until the old gentleman remarked, "Since I wrote that article I have changed my mind!!" Lots of people are just like that. They think highly of the Encyclopedia Britannica or Hastings' Bible Dictionary, anything else but the Bible. You will find them everywhere. There was a young fellow preaching over there in New Jersey. He had a church over there, and came up to see me after, saying, "There is a woman making trouble for me." He said, "She is very bright and has a Bible class and one of my elders is in the class, and she's trying to make a Modernist out of my elder. She reads up and then pours out stuff on these fellows, such as Robertson Smith, and Driver, both as radical as they could be." I said to him: "Do you remember when you were in the Seminary you thought the Seminary was the place to write sermons and go out on Sunday and get illustrations? If you had listened to me you would not have had any trouble. Now," I said, "Look here! You get two or three subjects in the Higher Criticism and read up on them very carefully, so as to be able to defend the Scriptures on all these points, and have your wife give a little party and invite three or four of the biggest gossips in your church and this woman among them, and then you just work it round till you get her to express herself and then---lay her right out on

the floor!" A lot of fellows think these subjects are not worth considering. The Bible defends itself. That's not the only church like that in this country. There are women who will quote a text of Scripture for everything. Some have a theory that every child should be trained according to its own bent. For instance, if it wants to thump on the piano let it thump 24 hours *per diem*, or if it wants to talk, let it talk all the time, and so on, that idea, you know. If you have a poor voice, do like that great man who stuttered so he couldn't get a word out. Finally, he got so that he was one of the most powerful speakers I ever listened to. The power of the intentional power in public speaking---he turned it into an implement. But that time, maybe you have felt it, you went fast because you were afraid to stop. It is nervousness. It is a sort of fright. Just you learn to pause, which is sometimes more powerful than anything else.

Tomorrow, now, I will take up the English Versions. Anything that I bring in here is in my line.