

In the last place, I want you to think what was the difference between the ten spies and the two. What made them act so differently? Was it their upbringing? No; they had all lived the same life of hardship in Egypt. Was it their position? No; they were all 'heads of the Children of Israel,' each man a 'head' in his own tribe. What was it then? Just this: The ten were measuring *themselves* against the giants, but Caleb and Joshua were measuring *God* against the giants.

That is the secret of true victory—the secret of how to be brave. David knew it when he went against Goliath, Gideon knew it when he went forth against the hosts of Midian with his three hundred. The disciples knew it when they set out to conquer the world for Christ.

And we can know it too. Have you heard the story of Stonewall Jackson at the battle of Bull

Run? The fight was waging very fierce, shells were exploding and bullets flying in all directions. Jackson had been hit in the head; yet still he remained perfectly cool, and apparently indifferent to danger. Another General asked him the reason, and received the reply: 'General, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me.' After a pause he added: 'General, that is the way all men should live, and then all men would be equally brave.'

Whatever be our difficulties, whatever be our dangers, we need never fear them if we can say with Caleb and Joshua—'The Lord is with us.' 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.'

In Praise of Faith.

A STUDY OF HEBREWS XI. 1, 6, XII. 1, 2.

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III.

FAITH is a venture; but it is not a *forlorn hope*. It has value, for by it man gains his highest good. Faith has had, and ever has, its verification in religious history and experience. The Christian faith, to which the writer turns in the twelfth chapter, has the verification that the record of the faith of the heroes of faith under the old covenant offers, for 'we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.' It can find its final and absolute verification in Christ, 'looking unto Jesus the author and the perfecter of faith.' Each man can get a verification of it himself in his Christian character and experience, if by it he is enabled to 'lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *him*, and run with patience the race that is set before *him*' (He 12¹⁻²). Each of these modes of verification demands our closer scrutiny.

(1) About the cloud of witnesses a twofold assertion is made. In the last verses of the preceding chapter it is asserted that not having found full satisfaction for themselves they await

with hope the fulfilment of God's promise in the Christian community. Their good can be completed only by the consummation being wrought out in Christian character and experience. As they apart from us cannot be made perfect, we, in our Christian faith, and what it secures and accomplishes, can minister to their comfort, peace, and joy. In the first verse of this chapter they are represented as by their presence with us, and interest in us, encouraging us in the effort which the Christian life involves, and assuring us that it is not made in vain. How significant and valuable for us who have loved ones in the Unseen both thoughts are!

(i.) They who have lived and loved, suffered and laboured, here on earth for the kingdom of God do not at death snap the thread of continuity between this life and the next. Delivered from sin, sorrow, death, and judgment, they have not yet entered into full possession of their heavenly inheritance, for heaven's completion waits for the fulfilment of God's purpose on earth. It is a

comfort and help for the bereaved to think that their loved ones are waiting hopefully for that glorious and blessed consummation for which they are working in hope. Without attempting to formulate any doctrine of an intermediate state preparatory for the final perfection, glory, and blessedness, we may welcome such a suggestion as the writer here offers as harmonizing the individual and the universal hope, which is rooted in, and springs out of the Christian faith. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth; heaven's joy increases as the kingdom of God spreads and grows on earth.

(ii.) The Christian believer is not in a succession of heroes of faith; he belongs to a company that not only lives eternally in God, but is near to him, and cares for him. They who were actors are now represented as spectators. That is all that the writer's purpose requires him here to state for our comfort and encouragement; but may we not venture a step further than he has done, and suggest that they are not idle spectators, but that in ways too secret for us to detect they are helpers of our faith? Can they whose joy it was to minister to our good, while here on earth, be denied the further joy of continuing that ministry? If apart from us they are not perfected, are we being perfected apart from them? Is not their partnership with us in this life not less, but more real, even in the life beyond? The Church Militant and the Church Triumphant are and cannot but be one.

(2) I have taken for granted that we need not limit the cloud of witnesses to those heroes of faith immediately present to the thought of the writer. Not only the patriarchs, lawgivers, rulers, and prophets under the Old Covenant may be included in this company; but the apostles, the fathers, the saints, the sages, the seers, the martyrs, the reformers of the Christian Church: and not only they whose names are written large in the annals of the Church; but also those whose names are graven on the tablets of our hearts, who, known to and prized by only a few, yet not less faithfully lived, laboured, suffered, and 'fell on sleep' in Christ. When we contemplate these believers of all lands and ages, in their experience and character, their labours and sufferings, sacrifices and services, what a verification of the venture of faith is ours! They all lived and endured as seeing Him who is invisible, as tasting of the powers of the age to come. God and immortality in Christ were their

inspiration. They were not dominated by the material, but ruled by the spiritual: they were not engrossed in the present, but were possessed by the future. They were what they were, and did what they did, because the invisible to them was real, and the future certain. Their example should convince us that faith is 'worth while,' that life at its truest and best is possible only as its supreme interest lies beyond earth and time in the Unseen and the Eternal. It is good for us to realize, so far as it is possible for us, 'here in the body pent, absent from home,' the presence of that cloud of witnesses. Without the sensible tokens on which our intercourse on earth depends, may we not believe that there is a reality of the communion of saints; and there may come to us the *uplift* of belonging to such a society?

(3) And yet the writer would not have us fix our attention on them to catch, if we may, some glimpses of their glory, or overhear some snatches of their song. No, it is to Jesus that we are to look, and to Jesus in one particular aspect of His manifold perfection. We are to look to Jesus as *the author and perfecter of faith* (the word *our* inserted by A.V. and R.V. alike hides the true meaning). He is here presented not as the object but as the subject of faith; and we are called here not to believe in Him, but to believe as He did. He is, that goes without saying, the object of Christian faith as Saviour and Lord, for He alone mediates for us the truth and grace of God, and this epistle so presents Him. But what is relevant to the context is the complementary truth that He is the subject of faith. A distinction used to be made between the religion of Jesus and the Christian faith; and defenders of the truth of the latter have often failed to recognize the worth of the former. Jesus mediated the divine truth and grace in His personal relation to God, His dependence on communion with and submission to the Father; in short, through His faith. He received in faith from God what He imparted in grace and truth to men. It was by the exercise of faith that He so anticipated the joy which was set before them, that He was enabled to endure the Cross, despising shame. This enthronement is the victory of faith in God over sin, death, and judgment. He could not be our Saviour and Lord, the object of our faith, had He not as the Son lived by faith in God as His Father. Accordingly, Christ is the supreme example of faith. In Him and Him alone we can

see to what depths faith can reach without failing, and to what heights it can mount without growing faint; what sacrifices it can endure, and what victories it can secure.

(4) Jesus is, however, more than an example: as we look to Him, He surely looks on us, and His look is potent as was His look on Peter. He is not an example of the distant past, but a companion of the immediate present, and a companion endowed with immeasurable transforming influence. 'We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit' (2 Co 3¹⁸). That He as Spirit can become an inward renewing power is the testimony of Christian experience, and the extent of that influence our thought cannot measure. But, meanwhile, we may limit ourselves to considering the influence of Christ as psychologically explicable. Concentration of the attention on, absorption of the interest in, an object has a reflex influence on the personality in reproducing the characteristics of that object. We become good or bad as we fix our minds on good or bad sights, sounds, persons. Accordingly, the contemplation of Christ will, apart altogether from the conscious, voluntary activity He may put forth on our behalf, produce resemblance to Christ. The aspect of His manifold perfection on which we fix our gaze will be the aspect which will be reproduced in us. If we contemplate His faith in temptation, trial, sorrow, suffering, and death, our faith will develop, and in this respect we shall be like Him. For this reason a knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus, if joined to an insight into its inner meaning, may be made a very constant and potent means of grace. As we companion with Him in the Wilderness of Temptation, the Mount of Transfiguration, the Garden of Agony, and the Cross of Desolation, we shall be enabled to live through all experiences as He did by faith in God.

(5) With the inspiration of the cloud of witnesses and of Jesus Himself, we may put our faith to the test and find the verification of our venture.

(i.) 'The race that is set before us' is the vocation in life which has come from God to us; it is the assigned task. In accordance with the whole context we may affirm that this vocation will possess two characteristics, which may be expressed in the language of the preceding chapter. We shall look for 'the city which hath the foundations,

whose builder and maker is God.' It is a spiritual and not a material good which will be sought. Again, we shall desire 'a better country, that is an heavenly.' The spiritual is also a future good. Paul has the same thought. 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal' (2 Co 4¹⁸). It is truth, love, holiness, blessedness, the Christlike (which is also the Godlike, for He is the image of the invisible God) that is sought. The vocation has the marks of faith, for here the invisible rules as the real, and the future as the certain.

(ii.) There are two hindrances to the fulfilment of the vocation, and consistently with his figure of the vocation as a race to be run, the writer describes these hindrances as a burden, and a clinging garment (this is the figure suggested by *ἐνπερίσσωτον*, no less than by *ἀποθέμενοι*). In the burden are included even the innocent things, the pleasures and the profits of this earthly life which divide the affections, and distract the efforts, and so prevent the concentration of interest and purpose which the spiritual, future good demands, if it is to be constantly pursued, and finally secured. Faith which prefers the higher good will make possible all the self-denial in respect of any lower goods which may be needful. Had the rich young ruler had faith enough in the eternal life about which he questioned Jesus, he would have sold all he had, and given to the poor, that he might follow Him.

(iii.) The clinging garment impeding the racer's steps is sin. 'The article *τὴν* does not point to some particular sin, but to that which characterizes all sin, the tenacity with which it clings to a man' (*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, iv. p. 365). Faith gives deliverance from sin, for it brings another interest, affection, purpose into the life. It is our interest that directs our attention, and our attention that determines our action. 'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat' (Gn 3⁶). Thought dwells on the object until the will is moved. The faith for which the invisible is real, and the future certain, will not allow the soul to be attracted to and dominated by the sensuous, temporal good that sin offers. Persistent as temptation may be, yet the constancy of faith can

prevail against it. What faith possesses in Christ so attracts and dominates the soul as to exclude all other interests. The writer represents the laying aside of the burden and the clinging robe as preparatory to the race as a task to be undertaken; but here both his imagery and his psychology are defective. It is the faith which is the characteristic feature of the Christian vocation that delivers the soul both from the burden and the clinging garment, by the process, just sketched, of the mutual exclusiveness of rival and competing interests. When heaven reigns, earth resigns its sway; when grace rules, sin ceases to be.

(iv.) The word 'patience' does not at all adequately express *ὑπομονή*. It means endurance, steadfastness, constancy. The course is kept in

spite of all hindrances and difficulties. No effort is too severe, and no sacrifice is too great, if fidelity to the call demand it. Such endurance again is the fruit of faith. To illustrate by Paul's words, 'Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Co 4¹⁷). For faith, God is so real, and immortality so certain, that the sorrows and struggles of this earthly life, which is swiftly passing away, appear so insignificant that they cannot divert interest and effort away from the vocation, which has its beginning in God, and its end in immortality. Thus, alike by what he can surrender, and by what he can achieve in his Christian life, can a man find for himself and offer to others the verification of his faith.

Contributions and Comments.

Σκάνδαλον.

THE problem of this word has been discussed this month at the seminar which meets in connexion with the Hellenistic Department at Manchester University. This note is meant to prepare in advance for the excursus written by Archdeacon Willoughby Allen for his forthcoming book on the Gospel of Mark, in which he works out the tentative suggestion made at the seminar, and establishes it firmly, as it seems to me, on the basis of O.T. evidence. Dr. W. H. Bennett independently examined the O.T. evidence and came practically to the same conclusion.

I confine myself mainly to the Greek record. Σκάνδαλον is a word which Grimm describes as 'purely biblical and ecclesiastical,' for the Attic word denoting the stick of a mouse-trap. This occurs once only, in Aristophanes, *Acharn.* 687, *σκανδάληθρον' ἰστὰς ἐπῶν*, 'setting word-traps.' Pollux, the antiquary of ii A.D., interprets Aristophanes for us, and we have also scholia pointing the same way. Etymologically the meaning is guaranteed by the certain connexion with Skr. *skand*, 'leap, spirt,' Lat. *scando*, O. Ir. *scendim*, 'I spring': 'sudden motion' is the differentia of the root. It can hardly be doubted that *σκάνδαλον* existed before *σκανδάληθρον*, though not occurring in literature; we can see no other possible step between the root

σκανδ and the Aristophanic derivative. (Contrast the history of *ἀγάπη* as a shortening of *ἀγάπησις*, which I illustrated in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for December 1914.)

Now in eight of its LXX appearances *σκάνδαλον* renders *שִׁרְיָה*, a 'noose' or 'snare.' It is in company with *παγίς*, as in Jos 23¹⁸; and that it means something of the same kind is presumable, unless there is a mistranslation of the Hebrew. The only reason for suspecting this, or giving *σκάνδαλον* a double meaning, is the fact that in Lv 19¹⁴ and two other places it renders *לִשְׁמַרְיָה*, a 'stumbling-block,' as also in Aquila's version of Is 8¹⁴; cf. the two N.T. citations of this passage. Since our purely Greek evidence is all for 'trap,' and a Hebrew word with this meaning accounts for the largest number of LXX occurrences of the noun, the question struck me whether *snare* might not be at least the normal meaning in N.T. A link between *snare* and *rock* might be imagined if we apply the principle of the modern mouse-trap on an enlarged scale: a carcass is placed in a large hole, a rock delicately poised just over it and kept from falling by a stick—the wild beast knocks the stick aside and brings the rock down on him. I suggested that in Lk 20¹⁸ the rock acts first as a *πρόσκομμα*, and then as a *σκάνδαλον*; cf. the combination in Ro 9⁸³, 1 P 2⁸.

If *σκάνδαλον* ever does mean *stumbling-block*, it