

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

*THE USE OF ΣΚΑΝΔΑΛΟΝ AND ΣΚΑΝΔΑΛΙΖΕΙΝ
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

THE word *σκάνδαλον* occurs fourteen times in the New Testament; namely, five times in St. Matthew (thrice in one passage), once in St. Luke, six times in St. Paul's Epistles, once in 1 John, and once in the Apocalypse.

The verbal form *σκανδαλίζειν*, which does not occur in the LXX., is found nineteen times in the New Testament; namely, ten times in St. Matthew, three times in St. Mark, twice in St. Luke, once in St. John, and thrice in St. Paul's Epistles.

The Revised Version has practically one and the same rendering for *σκάνδαλον* in all the passages in which it occurs, namely, "things that cause stumbling" (*πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα*, St. Matt. xiii. 41); "stumbling block," "occasion of stumbling," "occasion of falling." In Romans ix. 33, and 1 Peter ii. 8—a citation from Isaiah viii. 14—*πέτρα σκανδάλου* is translated "rock of offence," "stone of stumbling" having been used to render the preceding *λίθος προσκόμματος*.

The rendering of the verb *σκανδαλίζειν* by the Revisers proceeds on the same lines. "To cause or make to stumble" is the active voice, and "to stumble" or "find occasions of stumbling" (Luke vii. 23) are the renderings in fifteen passages; in the remaining four the translation of the A. V. "to be offended" is retained.

The following investigation into the meaning of these words is an attempt to show that the Revisers have, to say the least, very unnecessarily narrowed the meaning of them, and have in consequence failed to express, as perfectly as might have been done, the true significance of several important passages of Holy Scripture. These remarks, therefore, are not intended merely to establish a

point of verbal accuracy, but to endeavour to elicit the full force of divine sayings.

Σκάνδαλον is not found in literary Greek before the Hellenistic period. It had, however, probably had a long previous existence in the vernacular, as it has already acquired a figurative sense when adopted in the language of literature. The root meaning is said to be that of swift, darting movement, as of falling or gliding away (Curtius, *Greek Etymology*, 166). This agrees with the meaning of the cognate form, σκανδάληθρον, which is defined as the crooked hook or stick to which the bait is suspended in a trap, and which, being pressed or disturbed, closes the trap on the imprisoned bird or animal. Hence in a figurative sense σκανδάληθρ' ιστάς ἐπῶν, Aristoph., *Acharn*, 647, "setting word traps" in a disputation.

The scanty evidence from the classics in regard to σκάνδαλον points to the literal meaning of a baited trap or snare, and to the figurative meaning of enticement or allurement to ruin. This sense of the word is retained in later authors, as Alciphron, *Epistolæ*, iii. 22, κρεάδιον τῆς σκανδάλης ἀφάψας, "having attached a bait to the trap"; and Joann. Mosch. 3049 C (cited by E. A. Sophocles *sub voc.*) ἐσκανδαλίσθη εἰς ἐμέ, "was tempted to fall in love with me."

This primary thought of ensnaring through temptation, extended to a wide range of figurative meaning, seems to be applicable wherever the words σκάνδαλον and σκανδαλίζειν occur in the New Testament.

In the LXX. version of the Old Testament σκάνδαλον is employed to represent the Hebrew word שִׁבְיָה in eight passages, and לִשְׁבִיב in three passages. Two other passages, Ps. l. 20, xlix. 13, where different Hebrew words are represented, need not be considered in our argument.

The precise meaning of שִׁבְיָה, which is derived from שָׁבַב, to ensnare, is seen in Amos iii. 5: "Can a bird fall in

a snare upon the earth where no *môkēsh* ('gin' R.V. 'bait,' Driver) is set for him? Shall a snare spring up from the ground and have taken nothing at all?" (R.V.). Professor Driver, in his explanation of the passage, refers to Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, 1878, ii. 103, where a bird-trap is described, "consisting of net-work strained over the semicircular flaps, moving on a common axis: this was laid upon the ground; and when the bait in the middle was touched by a bird, the two flaps, by a mechanical contrivance, flew up and closed, entrapping the bird."

It will be observed that this precisely corresponds with the description given independently above of the *σκάνδαλον*. It is true that *σκάνδαλον* is not here used to translate *שֶׁקֶט*; but this is accounted for by the fact that for some reason unknown to us *σκάνδαλον* is not included in the vocabulary of the translators of the prophetic books in the LXX. In Psalm lxxix. 23 *γενηθήτω ἡ τράπεζα αὐτῶν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν εἰς παγίδα. . . . καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον* (Heb. *môkēsh*) the reference is probably to the oriental cloth or leather spread upon the ground like a net. Other passages where *σκάνδαλον*, representing *môkēsh*, signifies ensnaring or ruin through allurements are Joshua xxiii. 13: The nations allowed to remain shall be a "snare and a trap unto you"; Judges ii. 3: "Their gods shall be a snare unto you." So Gideon's ephod became unto him *εἰς σκάνδαλον*, Judges viii. 27. Michal was given to David by Saul to be "a snare (*σκάνδαλον*) unto him." In Psalm cxl. 10 *σκάνδαλον* (*שֶׁקֶט*) is used in parallelism with, *παγίς* (Heb. *פַּי*), a net or snare (trap). In passages where *שֶׁקֶט* is not rendered by *σκάνδαλον* it is represented by *παγίς*, *σκῶλον*, a pointed stake; *πρόσκομμα*, an impediment; *σκληρότητες*, pains, agonies; *δυσκολία*, hardship or waywardness; *βρόχους*, snares; *κοίλασμα*, a pit.

מִשֶׁקֶט, which is represented by *σκάνδαλον* in three

passages (Lev. xix. 14; 1 Sam. xxv. 31; Ps. cxix. 164), is derived from a root signifying weakness in the limbs, and is used to express any obstruction or impediment which causes a fall. Hence, with the addition of צֶיֶר, "a rock of offence" or "stumbling-block" (Isa. viii. 14). In a figurative sense the word implies temptation to sin (Ezek. vii. 19, xiv. 3); illecebræ ad peccatum, Gesen. *sub voc.* In passages where σκάνδαλον is not used the LXX. translators render מִכְשָׁל by πτώμα, Isa. vii. 14; σκῶλα, Isa. lvii. 14; τὴν βάσανον, Ezek. iii. 20, vii. 12 (*scandalum*, Vulg.); τὴν κόλασιν, Ezek. xiv. 3, 4, 7, xviii. 30, xlv. 12; οἱ ἀσθενούντες, Ezek. xxi. 20.

So far, then, as the evidence of the LXX. goes we find no justification for the uniform translation of σκάνδαλον by "stumbling-block" either in a literal or symbolical sense. Even in Leviticus xix. 14 the impediments would include pitfalls or obstruction by ropes or nets, etc. (comp. εἰς παγίδα ποσὶν ἀφρόνων, Wisdom xiv. 11), and in most of the passages cited the ideas of allurements and ensnaring are predominant.

In the Apocryphal books σκάνδαλον is used in a literal sense (Judith v. 1) of impediments laid in the plain. These may have been pitfalls, rope-entanglements, sharp stakes or "caltrops," *Lat.* tribuli or murices; comp. Curt. l. 4, c. 13. Murices ferreos in terram defodisse Darium qua hostem equites emissurum credebat. The Syriac, however, of this passage has "and laid ambushes in the field" (*Speaker's Com. ad loc.*); and a comparison with 1 Macc. v. 3 shows that this sense of entrapping by an ambush may be the meaning of σκάνδαλα here. In other places in the Apocrypha σκάνδαλον has the sense of temptation or sin through temptation; see especially Judith xii. 2: "I will not eat lest there be an offence," *i.e.* a temptation to ceremonial defilement.

It is in the Apocrypha also that for the first time we

meet with the verbal form *σκανδαλίζειν*. Its meaning is derived from the symbolical use of the noun. It occurs three times, and in the book of Ecclesiasticus only: in ix. 5, in the sense of being ensnared by allurements, *παρθένον μή καταμάνθανε, μήποτε σκανδαλισθῆς ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτιμίαις αὐτῆς*; in xxiii. 6 it has the meaning of being entrapped by words; in xxxii. 15 the extended force of finding difficulties in the law.

Returning to the new Testament, we find there the same group of meanings for *σκάνδαλον* and *σκανδαλίζειν* which we have endeavoured to trace in the classics and in the Septuagint. But in the New Testament both noun and verb have extended their signification, and especially the verb.

σκάνδαλον has carried with it to New Testament times the following meanings: snare, temptation or impediment, hindrance, difficulty, and (joined with *πέτρα*) stumbling-block.

Hence the verb *σκανδαλίζειν* signifies: (a) to entrap (figuratively), to tempt to sin; and (b) from result of ensnaring, to check, discomfit, ruin; and (c) from the feelings of one ensnared, to shock, terrify, disconcert, bewilder, cause anger, resentment, doubt, difficulty.

The different passages where the words occur may be classified under these meanings: in S. Matthew xiii. 41 *πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα* are all persons and things which hinder the growth of the spiritual life. S. Matthew xvi. 23 *ὁ δὲ στραφεὶς, εἶπε τῷ Πέτρῳ, Ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ, σκάνδαλόν μου εἶ.* "Thou art a snare unto Me." Thou temptest Me by the inducement of a wordly ambition to depart from the Father's will. S. Matthew xviii. 7 *οὐαὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἀπὸ τῶν σκανδάλων ἀνάγκη γάρ ἐστιν ἐλθεῖν τὰ σκάνδαλα πλὴν οὐαὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ δι' οὗ τὸ σκάνδαλον ἔρχεται.* Here the thought is of temptation, and of the sin and ruin which follow temptation. Some such translation as "Woe to

that man by whom the temptation cometh" would teach Christ's lesson better than the rendering of the R.V., "Woe to that man through whom the occasion (of stumbling) cometh!"¹

The combined quotation from Isaiah viii. 14 and Isaiah xxviii. 16 in Romans ix. 33, and 1 Peter ii. 8 is not given in the words of the LXX., but is independently translated from the Hebrew. In place of πέτρας πτώμα, LXX., we have in the New Testament πέτρα σκανδάλον, representing the Hebrew צִוּר מְכַשֵׁל. The rendering of this by "rock of offence or stumbling" is correct. But the addition of πέτρα tends to show that σκάνδαλον by itself would not be understood to mean "a stumbling-block."

In Romans xiv. 12 σκάνδαλον is the hindrance to the Christian life caused by needlessly raising questions of conscience; in Romans xvi. 17 σκάνδαλα are such hindrances as would arise from contentions within the Church.

In 1 Corinthians i. 23 and Galatians v. 11 "Christ crucified," or "the cross," is spoken of as a σκάνδαλον. It was a shock, a surprise, a difficulty to the Jew who expected something very different in the Messiah.

St. John also uses σκάνδαλον in the sense of hindrance or impediment, 1 John ii. 10 ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. That is, there is nothing in him to hinder his Christian progress; love and light have made all smooth, "qui amat iter expeditum habet" (Bengel); or else, he that loveth his brother presents no hindrance, no cause of resentment, no difficulty in the way of belief, or offence to others.

The primitive idea of the word, "temptation to sin and ruin," may be traced in Revelation ii. 14, where Balaam is described as one who, ἐδίδασκεν τῷ βαλὰκ βαλεῖν σκάν-

¹ Dr. S. C. Malan, in the *Revision of 1881 Revised*, p. 43, notes that the Æthiopic version of S. Matt. v. 29 renders, "If . . . cause thee to err, mislead thee"; and the Arabic, "If . . . offend, mislead or deceive thee."

δαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ, φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεύσαι.

In most cases the use of the verb is sufficiently illustrated by what has been said of the noun. But the following examples are of exceptional interest: *Μακάριός ἐστιν ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῆ ἐν ἐμοί*, St. Matthew xi. 6. Blessed is he who feels no resentment from disappointed hopes, has no difficulty in recognising Me as the Messiah. John had been perplexed and disappointed.

Γενομένης δὲ θλίψεως ἣ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζεται, S. Matthew xiii. 21. "Straightway falls," being grievously disappointed and alarmed at the dangers of the position into which he had been tempted to enter. This is also the meaning of the word in S. Matthew xxiv. 10 and xxvi. 31. Even the disciples would be vexed and disappointed and find difficulties when things proved different from their hopes and expectations.

Οἶδας ὅτι οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν, S. Matthew xv. 12. The Pharisees resented that which Jesus had said. Here "were offended at it" of the A.V. and R.V. is an adequate rendering if rightly understood.

In S. Matthew xiii. 27 our Lord gives as a reason to His disciples for paying the temple tax to those who demanded it, *ἵνα μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς*. That is, either, lest we offend them, in the sense of exciting their anger. Even if we rightly enjoy an immunity, let us pay the tax for the sake of peace. "Facillime ubi de pecunia agitur, scandalum capiunt a sanctis homines negotia mundana curantes" (Bengel). Or, lest we place them in a false and difficult position, and even bring them unwittingly into an unconscious act of sin. Comp. for this use of the word Romans xiv. 21, 1 Corinthians viii. 13.

Twice in St. John's Gospel *σκανδαλίζειν* is used in the sense of causing perplexity or difficulty in belief; chapter

vi. 61. *Τοῦτο ὑμᾶς σκανδαλίζει*; and in chapter xvi. 1, *ἵνα μὴ σκανδαλίσητε*, that ye be not disquieted, and tempted. to lose faith through persecution.

To sum up our conclusion. We claim to have shown that in several passages of the new Testament where *σκάνδαλον* and *σκανδαλίζειν* occur the underlying original thought of enticement or temptation is included in the meaning of the word, and that in other passages where hindrance or difficulty is the predominant symbolical meaning the imagery is enriched and made more suggestive by the wider associations which we have described as properly belonging to the words.

ARTHUR CARR.

THE GENESIS OF DEUTERONOMY.

II.

B. Deuteronomy and its relation to History and Prophecy.
—In our previous paper we discussed the relation of Deuteronomy to the middle book of the Pentateuch; we now propose to examine its relation to History and Prophecy. A recent writer¹ is quoted as having said, “In history not in literary criticism lie the problems of the future.” In keeping with which Wellhausen² affirms that “the basis of Old Testament criticism is the historical and prophetic books; on this basis rests not only the position of Deuteronomy but also the other strata of the Pentateuch.”

The problem in the following paragraph, accordingly, is this: Have we, or have we not, sufficient traces in the historico-prophetic books of the Old Testament to warrant the conclusion that the laws of Deuteronomy were not

¹ Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, 1897.

² Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, 1889, p. 353.