

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

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.”

ARMSTRONG BLACK.

A FURTHER NOTE ON THE NAMES OF THE
TWO ROBBERS IN THE GOSPEL.

IN a recent communication to this magazine I endeavoured to use the instruments of palæographical reasoning to elucidate the meaning of the names assigned to the two robbers in the Gospel by certain copyists or legend-makers.

The names fell into two groups, one of which was represented by the body of legends known as the Acts of Pilate or Gospel of Nicodemus; the other was found in the old Latin copies of the Gospel. The former were seen to be the result of a misreading of words written against the figures of the two robbers in an early Greek representation of the crucifixion, describing one of the robbers as the faithful or believing one (ὁ πιστός) and the other as the one hostile to God (ὁ θεομάχος).

But when we came to treat of the names that are actually found in a group of Latin gospels, we were not able to reduce them to the same form, and were obliged to leave it as an unsolved problem, reserved for further and future consideration. To this problem we now return.

The group of MSS. referred to consists of the Codex Colbertinus (cod. *c*), the Codex Rehdigerianus (cod. *l*), and the Codex Ussherianus (cod. *r*), from which are extracted the following data for the names of the two robbers:

		Right-hand.	Left-hand.
Cod. <i>c</i>	Matt.	zoatham and	camma.
	Mark	zoathan „	cammatha.
		(?) Right-hand.	(?) Left-hand.
Cod. <i>l</i>	Luke	ioathas „	maggatras.
Cod. <i>r</i>	Luke	„	capnatas.

To which may be added, if we please, the testimony of Ps.-Beda, *Collectanea*, giving the names as :

Right-hand.	Left-hand.
matha.	ioca.

These forms come from a common original, but, as I think I pointed out in the first attack on the problem, it is no ordinary palæography that will reduce them to the lost original. We must grant the common original, for cod. *l* agrees closely with cod. *c* in the name of one robber, and cod. *r* furnishes the link between cod. *l* and cod. *c* in the case of the other robber; further, the names as given in Ps.-Beda are obviously linked by some unknown process of corruption, with the names as given in codd. *c l*, *ioca* being connected with *ioatham* and *matha* with *cammatha*.

The MSS. in question are of ages recurring from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, so that the derivation of the names must go back to a very early period, which one can hardly imagine to be later than the fifth century, and which may lie any distance behind the fifth century until we come to the first. Is there any script or any version belonging to such early times which will serve to explain the peculiar forms that are before us?

We will try to solve the problem on the assumption that the explanation lies in a perverse Latin transcription, for we failed in our attempt to deduce the forms from those which we detected in Syriac documents.

Now we may remember that there is one element in the transmission of the Old-Latin texts of the Gospels which consists of extraordinarily perverse readings due to the fact that the text passed through an early Roman minuscule stage which caused immense difficulty to the copyists. The proof of this lies in the Old-Latin Codex Bobiensis (*k*), which, although written in uncials, is disfigured by errors which can only be explained by the supposition that its

immediate ancestor was written in a Roman cursive, something like the writing of the *graffiti* upon the walls of Pompeii. A reference to the edition of the Codex Bobiensis¹ by Wordsworth, Sanday, and White, will show the extraordinary confusions to which we refer.²

I propose to inquire whether a somewhat similar source of confusion may not explain the names of the two robbers.

The first thing I notice is that there is a common element in the two names :

$$\begin{array}{l} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{io} \\ \text{zo} \end{array} \right] \text{atha} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{s} \\ \text{m} \\ \text{n} \end{array} \right] \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} [\text{camm}] \text{atha.} \\ [\text{magg}] \text{atras.} \\ [\text{capn}] \text{atas.} \end{array}$$

It is not easy to see how there can be a common element in two names, unless it represent what they have in common, viz., the fact that they are robbers. Write, therefore, the word

latro,

and observe how many letters it furnishes of the ending of *maggatras*. Put before it the word *malus* and indicate the abbreviation of the word by a stroke over the word and an appended dot, thus :

māl. latro.

Now in the peculiar cursive hand of which we are speaking the confusion between the letters *c g i l t* is constant ; and there is no difficulty whatever in this script in deciphering *malus latro*, written as above, as *maggatro*. We see, then, how the form *maggatras* has arisen. The other forms are corruptions of this.

On the other side we must have the good robber, *bonus latro*. We may write it, as in the previous case, with an abbreviation

bō. latro.

¹ Old-Latin Biblical Texts, No. II.

² A good instance is Matt. 5²⁹. Abrode aps te exredist tibi ut sicreat, which is apparently meant for: abscide abs te expedit tibi ut pereat.

In the cursive script, which we are working from, the letter *b* is sometimes confused with *h*, and sometimes with *i*,¹ something as they would be in our own current hands. With the mark of abbreviation across the word, we can easily get a "z" out of the crossed "b," and read:

zoiatro or *ioiatro*.
and so *zoiatha* and *ioatha*,

as in the other case, and the rest of the corruption is easily traceable.

I conclude, then, that the two names are nothing more than *Good-robber* and *Bad-robber*, written in a cursive scrawl over some representation of the crucifixion, and deciphered as names by some one who did not understand the script (which may very well have been worn and partly illegible).

It may, perhaps, be thought that this is too ingenious to be true and too subtle to be trustworthy. But a little reflection will show that we must have some such hypothesis to reconcile such divergent forms, whose divergence, almost certainly, has arisen within the Latin transmission. Hence we are driven to try either abbreviations or shorthand, or an early minuscule, or something of that kind, from which to make the various readings.

If this solution is correct, as I think it is, there is one more Old-Latin gloss explained away; for no one will maintain that the original text of the Gospel contained the statement that the one on the right hand was called *Good-robber*, and the one on the left *Bad-robber*. Every step gained in the study of the glosses is a step towards the final solution of the problem of the genesis of the text of the New Testament. Nor is it without interest to remark, as a matter of archæology, that, both in Greek and in Latin,

¹ Cf. cod. *k*, Matt. 14, *Nabassom* for *Nahassom*; Matt. 13⁴⁰, *bustorum* for *iustorum*.

our investigation has taken us back into representations of the crucifixion, with descriptions attached to the characters represented, at least as early as the fifth century.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

THE THUNDERS OF THE LORD IN AMOS.

It has become the fashion among commentators latterly to regard Amos iv. 13 and v. 8 as the interpolations of a later post-exilic editor. These verses are supposed to describe the greatness of God's work in creation, and we are told that such subjects did not exercise the Hebrews till a later date than that of Amos. "The germs long ago deposited by the preaching of Amos and Isaiah . . . had developed into the rich theology of Isaiah ii. and the Book of Job, . . . an ordinary reader of Amos inserted these doxologies (as we may call them) to relieve the gloom of the prophetic pictures" (Cheyne, art. "Amos," in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*).

The former passage runs in R.V. thus:—" . . . prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. ¹³ For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; the LORD, the God of hosts, is His name." Certainly the words of v. 13 do not at once fit into the context; the fact that God formed the mountains is about as far removed from what Amos has in hand as it can well be. At the same time the clause about making the morning dark shows that merely the creative energy of God is not uppermost in the writer's mind: it is a very definite picture which is drawn, if we could seize the right point of view.

For the first clause of v. 13 ("He that formeth the mountains") the Septuagint has *στρεφῶν βροντήν*, i.e. instead of