

but it will be by his own fellow-countrymen that his memory will be cherished ; and these will number him among a select and chosen few who have illustrated most perfectly what all Scotsmen would desire to be, and have served most wisely, faithfully and unselfishly the highest interests of their native land.

JAMES STALKER.

### SONS OF THUNDER.

AMONGST the unsolved problems of the Gospel, both in the text and in the interpretation, I reckon few more perplexing than the determination of the meaning of the name which our Lord bestowed upon the sons of Zebedee, and the decision of the form in which the name ought to be presented. It is not easy to see how *Boanerges* can be a transliteration of a Hebrew or Aramaic title ; nor, if the transliteration can be restored to its original form, so as to give something which will justify Mark's translation, can we explain, without undue subtlety of exegesis, why the name was bestowed upon the two disciples to whom it is assigned in the Second Gospel. I should myself assume at once that the mysterious name was in error somewhere, both in its consonants and in its vocalization : for how can *Boane-* be the equivalent of *Sons of-*, without an extraordinary looseness of vocalic transcription ? nor can the Semitic consonants which underlie the last half of the word *-rges* be a correct transcription of any word which honestly means *thunder*. Dalman, in his *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch* (p. 112), explains the word as follows : First, he assumes that the final letter in *Boavηργές* is a replacement of a Greek ζ, just as we find in the early MSS. of the New Testament the form *Boés* for the ancestor of King David. Then he regards the first vowel in the word as displaced, and re-writes the title as

*Bavηργές.*

We have now a reasonable ground for assuming this to be the equivalent of an Aramaic or Hebrew

בני רגז

The next step is more difficult : Dalman has to show that the second of the pair of Hebrew words may mean *thunder*. He does this by appealing to Job xxxvii. 2, where the word occurs and where Job is exhorted by Elihu to listen attentively to the anger of the voice of God, which the LXX. present, with a fairly close transcription, as follows :—

Ακουε, Ἰώβ, ἀκοήν ἐν ὀργῇ θυμοῦ κυρίου,

but which Luther, more poetically, translates by

*Lieber, höre doch, wie sein Donner zürnet.*

But what we want is not the vivid translation of a poetical mind, but the justification of a prosy person in rendering the vocable *-ρογές* and the underlying Semitic consonants by the word *thunder*. Dalman's instance is not sufficient to justify such a rendering in a prose document like the Gospel of Mark. And I suspect that he was not quite satisfied with it, since he returns to the question in another note (p. 158), and there, after restating his solution briefly, records that Jerome had in his *Interpretation of Hebrew Names* given another solution. Jerome's explanation is in the following direction : Assume the final sibilant to be the Hebrew ט, and that this is a misreading of a final Hebrew ך; then, observing the constant transcription of the Hebrew ך by the Greek γ, we have a Hebrew original which Jerome gives in the form *banereem* = filii tonitruī ; i.e. the Hebrew original is בני רעם for בני רגז.

Dr. Swete, in his commentary on the passage of Mark, while pointing out that there are one or two cursive

<sup>1</sup> We get a similar confusion in Hegesippus' account of St. James the Just, whom he calls Oblias, i.e. *περιοχὴ τοῦ λαοῦ*, where the final letter in Oblias must clearly be an *m* (λαός = ׀מ).

MSS. which seem to favour Dalman's restoration, is careful to remark that the proper word for *thunder* in Hebrew and Syriac is ܕܘܪ, and that there is no assistance to be obtained from the Syriac language for other suggested forms. But he still seems to think that some light might be obtained from the speech of Elihu to Job, which, I must say, frankly, appears to me to be highly improbable. As far, then, as the textual problem goes, there is evidence for belief that we have a very ancient error somewhere, and, on the whole, Jerome seems to be nearer to the true solution than Dalman.

As for the interpretations of the Name, when a form has been found for which *Sons of Thunder* is a lawful translation, the common explanations are mere afterthoughts; the name is read in the light of the incidents in the Gospel which betray "a natural impetuosity of character"; (so Swete, referring to Mark ix. 38, Luke ix. 54;) or else referred to the prominence which the two brethren were to have in the new order. Over these exegetical attempts to justify the title, it is not necessary to occupy our attention longer at present; our path lies in another direction.

It should be remembered, before we proceed to the elucidation of the Boanerges riddle, that whatever may be the correct spelling, it is certain that the spelling as we have it is of the highest antiquity. The text of Mark iii. 17 reads as follows:—

καὶ Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ ἐπέθηκεν αὐτοῖς ὄνομα Βοανηργές, ὃ ἐστὶν Υἱοὶ Βροντῆς.

Now, although this does not appear in the Synoptic parallels of Matthew and Luke, it must be a touch of the highest antiquity, whose very obscurity would be sufficient to explain its omission by the later Evangelists. But, if it does not appear in Matthew and Luke, it appears again in an even more perplexing form in the Dialogue of Justin

with Trypho the Jew, where it appears to be taken from the Memoirs of Peter, and to be regarded as a fulfilment of prophecy.

Justin uses the incident of the re-naming of the Apostles by the Lord to show the parallelism of such a proceeding with the changes of names of famous Old Testament characters, and to draw from the parallel a conclusion as to the nature and authority of Christ. Accordingly, he says (*Dial.* 106) :—

καὶ τὸ εἶπεῖν μετωνομακῆναι αὐτὸν Πέτρον ἕνα τῶν ἀποστόλων, καὶ γέγραφθαι ἐν τοῖς ἀπομνημονεύμασιν αὐτοῦ γεγενημένον καὶ τοῦτο, μετὰ τοῦ καὶ ἄλλους δύο ἀδελφούς, υἱοὺς Ζεβεδαίου ὄντας, μετωνομακῆναι ὀνόματι τοῦ Βοανεργῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν υἱὸς βροντῆς, σημαντικὸν ἦν κτέ.

Here we have the conjunction between the re-naming of Peter and the Sons of Zebedee, in close agreement with Mark, and an apparent reference to Peter's Memoirs, which has not unnaturally led to the belief that we had here the earliest reference to Mark's Gospel. Moreover, if, as we have shown to be likely, Boanerges is a corrupt form, then the probability that Justin is quoting from Mark is much increased. Only we must remember that the admission of the quotation would not add anything to the explanation of the word : it would show us over again that we are dealing with very early matter ; but this would be equally the case if Justin were quoting from Peter's Memoirs and not from Mark. (I note, in passing, that the slight variation in spelling between Justin's form and Mark's suggests, in a shadowy way, that there has been no assimilation of Justin's text to that of the second Gospel.)

And now for our suggestion as to the meaning of the term Boanerges. It is not exactly a theological suggestion, and it is not, strictly speaking, my own. It comes from the side of Anthropology and from Dr. J. G. Frazer, who drew my attention to it some time since, and who now

recommends me to publish it. The suggestion, a perfectly obvious one when once it is made, is that we have in the "Sons of Thunder" a title of the Dioscuri or Heavenly Twins, and that the name has been bestowed upon the two brethren because of twin-like features in their appearance or conduct.

The common name for the Heavenly Twins in the Greek world is Dioscuri, or Children of Zeus; and it is well known that the name of Zeus is derived from an Aryan word for the Sky, probably the bright sky. Hence, in the first instance, the European God was a Sky-god, and the Heavenly Twins were his sons and assessors. An interesting case of a parallel development of religious thought has been pointed out by me<sup>1</sup> from the Baronga tribes of S.E. Africa, who pay especial honour to twin-births, and give to the children the name of Bana-ba-Tilo, or Children of Tilo, the word Tilo being the Baronga equivalent of Sky. We may say, then, that we have an exact parallel to the genesis of the cult of Zeus the Sky-god, and the Dioscuri. We may state the case in the words of M. Junod, a missionary among the Baronga, who explains the matter thus :

*Cette puissance, qui produit l'éclair et la mort, préside aussi d'une manière toute spéciale à la naissance des jumeaux, à tel point que la femme qui les a mis au monde est appelée du nom de Tilo, Ciel, et les enfants eux-mêmes : Bana-ba-Tilo, enfants du Ciel.*

Here, then, we have the Greek idea of Children of the Sky, with an accentuation of the term Sky in the direction of *Lightning* and Death. How slight a space separates, then, the conception of the Children of the Sky from the Sons of Thunder.

And the farther back we go into the history of savage peoples the more closely do the Sky and the Thunder and

<sup>1</sup> *Cult of the Heavenly Twins*, pp. 19, 27.

Lightning approach together, and the Sky-god and the Thunder-god appear to be equivalent. We are accustomed to recognize in the Zeus of mythology the figure of the Thunderer; but no one knows, until he examines the matter carefully, how absolutely identical the Sky-god and the Thunder-god can be. Indeed, we constantly find amongst savage peoples that the very same word does duty both for Sky and Thunder. Here is a single instance from Ellis' account of the Yoruba-speaking tribes of West Africa (p. 35) :—

Tshis and Gàs use the words Nyankupon and 'Nyonmo to express sky, rain, or thunder and lightning.

Thus the philology of savage languages comes to our aid when we point out that the Children of the Sky and the Sons of Thunder are adjacent and almost equivalent ideas.

Those who wish to see the case for the European Sky-god splendidly worked out, should consult a series of articles by Mr. A. B. Cook, which appeared in the journal *Folk-lore* for the last two years. Here we shall find the complete proof that our own ancestors worshipped a god who was by turns (and perhaps at once) a god of the Sky, a god of the Thunder, and a god of the Oak.

But I must not diverge into this region at present: enough has been said to present the statement that the Sons of Thunder in the Gospel of Mark are the Dioscuri, in some form or other of their varied presentation in the cults of the Mediterranean. And it follows, from this explanation, that Dioscuric ideas must have been prevalent in Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era.

We are now relieved of any artificial explanations as to why the two brethren came to receive the perplexing name. We do not need, for instance, to argue, with Dr. Swete, that James, the brother of John, was probably a forcible

person, who owed his martyrdom to his vigorous denunciations; nor need we search the writings attributed to St. John for *νοητὴ βροντὴ*, with Origen. For, if the name was really given them by our Lord, it was given them at an early period, and not exactly for literary reasons, however true it may be that a forcible man lies behind a forcible book. The real reason for the name must lie in the fact that they were twins, or that they looked like them, or that they acted in some way as the Dioscuri were reckoned to act. We are at least sure that they were brothers, and there are not wanting cases in which they behave in a Dioscuric manner, the most striking being the attempt (Luke ix. 54) to avenge a case of inhospitality on the part of a Samaritan village by fire from heaven, where we notice that the common reference to Elijah, as the person whose conduct was imitated, does not appear to belong to the original text. But the examination of such points is difficult, and it takes one into a good many obscure paths, which, for the present, we are hardly prepared to traverse. So we content ourselves with the suggested explanation of Boanerges which Dr. Frazer has made, and with the corollary that, if it is correct, the proof of the existence of Dioscuric ideas in Palestine in our Lord's time appears to be conclusive.

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