

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

was not favourable to prophetesses speaking publicly at all; but his principle "quench not the Spirit," i.e. never belittle or depreciate or discourage any working of the Spirit, would not permit him to forbid them speaking as the Spirit moved them, and he never denied that the Spirit may move women as much as, and in the same way as, it moved men.

W. M. RAMSAY.

"MENDING THEIR NETS."

(NOTE ON THE CALL OF THE APOSTLES JAMES AND JOHN.)

Two evangelists (Matthew and Mark) relate the call of these Apostles in nearly the same words. St. Matthew, after describing the call of Andrew and Peter, who were casting a net into the sea, proceeds to describe the call of their fellow-apostles, engaged in the like business. James and John were "also" (Revised Version, but why?) in the boat with Zebedee their father, "*mending* their nets." St. Mark's account is practically the same. The purpose of this brief paper is to question the translation "mending" given in the Authorised and Revised Versions.

This translation of the Greek words seems, in modern times, to have gone unchallenged. But there has been by no means always an unanimous consent to the meaning. The Greek words in the two Gospels are "*ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, καταρτίζοντες τὰ δίκτυα.*"

The presence of Zebedee their father is noted in each Gospel, but in a different part of the sentence. Our inquiry is, What were James and John actually doing at the moment when our Lord approached and called them? The assumption that they were "mending" their nets is, I suppose, universal. I think it open to question. The witness of the Vulgate is interesting. In the First Gospel the trans-

lation is—“ vidit Jacobum Zebedæi et Joannem fratrem ejus in navi cum Z. patre eorum, *reficientes retia sua.*” In St. Mark a completely different translation of the same Greek words is found; ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καταρτίζοντες τὰ δίκτυα becomes “ *et ipsos componentes retia in navi.*” Was this the work of a different translator? It certainly seems to be so, for the idea in the mind of the Latinist is quite different. The opinion of most readers goes with the Vulgate of St. Matthew, not of St. Mark. Let us endeavour to see on which side the truth lies. It may be noted that Luther has “ flickten,” “ patched,” a general equivalent to *reficientes*. The old translations by Beza and Tremellius, from the Greek and Syriac respectively, published in Geneva in 1617, and revised by Franciscus Junius, agree in rendering *καταρτίζοντες* by “ *farcientes*,” which has no suggestion of “ mending,” and simply means “ stowing ” the nets in the boat. There is by me an interesting early sixteenth-century volume, published at Lyons in 1610, under the title of “ Scholia in IV Euv., ex selectis Doctorum sacrorum sententiis collecta,” which, on the Vulgate in Matt., “ *reficientes retia sua,*” notes, first under the Literal Sense, “ *Reparantes ad lucrum. Chrys. ‘ indicium magnæ paupertatis, nova enim unde emerent non habebant,’*” and adds a word of praise to the sons of Zebedee for their filial piety in keeping with them in the boat a useless (?) aged father. The Mystical Sense follows, pointing out rather ingeniously that Peter and his brother only cast the net, as preachers of the Gospel, “ *nihil componentes*”; while John and his brother were “ *componentes, propter Ioannem qui evangelium composuit.*” This Note, however, though introduced under the text in Matthew, is clearly inspired, and only refers to the text of the Vulgate in Mark, for Matthew has “ *reficientes,*” and Mark “ *componentes.*”

In the same Scholia on St. Mark’s account, we have the

note on "componentes in navi" "vel farcientes, vel complicantes," "either stowing or folding." Illustrations of each are—of farcientes, Sen. Ep. 108: "Edaces et se ultra quam capiunt farcientes"; App. Flor. p. 353: "fartum totum theatrum"; of complicantes, "folding," Plin. Rud. 4, 3, 1, where the word is used to describe the neat folding away of a ship's cordage. And so Cicero, Q. Fr. 3, 1, 5, uses it of folding a letter. It was this interpretation of *καταρτίζοντες* which undoubtedly led the Marcan translator, ignorant of, or rejecting the view of his brother who rendered St. Matthew, to alter the position in the sentence of the words *ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ* and to place "in navi" after the verb, giving the sense, "He saw them stowing or folding the nets in the boat," i.e., preparatory for the next draught, a process which has to be carefully performed, or the nets would not run clear over the gunwale when the boat was being pulled in a great segment of a circle for a "draught."

There is a vividness of picturing here which is more interesting and reads more like the work of an eye-witness than is to be found in the phrase "mending their nets," derived from the Vulgate translation of St. Matthew.

Which of the interpretations is correct? We have to examine the original word *καταρτίζω* for an answer. *Καταρτίζω* means originally to put in proper order, to adjust, prepare, the synonyms given by Grimm from Hesych. *κατασκευάζειν, τελειοῦν, στερεοῦν.*

It is a little difficult to see why Grimm, in Thayer-Grimm Lexicon, places as a *first* meaning "to mend" (what has been broken or rent), illustrating this by reference to the two passages in the Gospels under consideration, the only places in N. T. where the verb has a literal or physical sense; and as a *second*, "to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust." The assumption which guided this order must have been the unquestioned belief that James and John

were found seated in the boat with netting needles in their hands, "patching," as Luther said, the broken nets.

It is submitted, then, that we may fairly question the common opinion and adopt the more probable sense of *componentes*, *farcientes* or *complicantes*, and imagine the hands in the boat carefully placing in neat folds the net they carried, always in view of the next haul. Any one who knows seaside habits knows the care bestowed by fishermen on this part of their business. And we may perhaps see reason, apart from the ingenious suggestion of the Scholia quoted, for picturing one group of the fishermen, soon to be made fishers of men, as actively engaged in casting their nets, and of the other, carefully arranging in the boat, under the eye of aged wisdom and experience, the instrument which must be kept always ready, as soon as the crisping surface should be broken by flashing fins, to be heaved instantly over the side, and not then only to be got ready, lest, if they were found unprepared, the fishers, whether of fishes or men, should lose a moment of opportunity which might not soon return.

G. R. WYNNE.

OPERA FORIS.

MATERIALS FOR THE PREACHER.

X.

JOHN x. 8: *All that came before me are thieves and robbers.*

Some fresh light has been recently thrown upon this extremely difficult word. The difficulty lies partly in the historical reference of the words (to Pharisaic teachers? or false messiahs?), and partly in the fact that even when any such reference can be established, it seems to leave a tinge of harshness in the saying. Two suggestions may be made. One is that the words refer to premature and ex-