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THE ACTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(Continued.)

III. When we advance into the active life of the Word Incarnate, every action speaks; and our difficulty is, out of so much that is admirable, what to choose as most excellent. We will take, therefore, as an illustration of our principles, a series of actions which, separately, may appear indifferent, but collectively afford a meaning too striking to be accidental, and yet only fitting into the Catholic system.

Our Lord selected His principal Apostles from among the fishermen of the Sea of Galilee. The particular call of four is especially described, of the brothers Peter and Andrew, and the two sons of Zebedee. Thomas also and Nathanael, supposed to be the same as Bartholomew, were of the same profession. The reasons for this selection do not enter into our present subject; though they are not without their interest and importance. But the choice once made, it is evident that our Saviour associated Himself to His Apostles in their mode of life, and made use of it for His holiest purposes. A great part of the first year of His public life was passed on the borders of the Sea of Tiberias or Galilee; and He took advantage of His Apostles' skill, and familiarity with the coast, to move from place to place. The fourth, fifth, sixth, and eighth chapters of St. Mark will show how the fisherman's boat was almost His home. It was His place of sleep, the pulpit from which He addressed the people—His refuge in fatigue. Now, connected with this frequent use of the boat, are several remarkable passages of His life, which, apart from their miraculous character, present importantly instructive features. Indeed it may not be superfluous to remark, that in some of our blessed Redeemer's acts, the miracle may be considered as secondary; that is, we may contemplate the action independently of any miracle which accompanied it, and find that what was wonderful was only subservient to a lesson, inculcated by the action itself. Perhaps the instances on which we are going to dilate will afford the best illustration of this principle.

That our Saviour Himself saw, and consequently designed, an analogy between the Apostle's and the fisherman's occupation, He Himself has deigned to inform us, "I will make you fishers of men"—Matt. iv. 19—or "from henceforth thou shalt catch men,"—Luke v. 10.—were His words, naturally suggestive of the parallel. But besides this very natural analogy, there were surely others, which must be considered most apt, in another view. What more like the Church launched on the sea of this world, and freighted with a heavenly burthen, borne forwards towards a sure harbor, than the vessel laden with Apostles, and bearing their Lord, lashed by the angry billows, and buffeted by the raging blast, tossed, shaken, distressed, almost broken, yet holding on her good course, and riding fearless over the wave, and through the storm? So natural is this comparison, that it has ceased to be one. The "nave," or "ship," of the material church is no longer so in simile; and it is scarcely an allegory to describe the visible, yet spiritual, Church, as a ship in which Christ is pilot, or as the Catholic would call it, as the bark of Peter. From the rude galley carved on the oldest monumental slabs in the catacombs, to Giotto's mosaic, over the inner gate of St. Peter's, or Raphael's miraculous draught of fishes, the symbol has been continued, till a very child in the Church can comprehend it.

But wherefore Peter's boat? This it is that we must see. If our blessed Saviour was pleased to retire into a vessel, and travel by it, it was not a chance one picked up on the shore, but one especially chosen by Himself to attend Him. "And He spoke to His disciples, that a small ship should wait upon Him, because of the multitude, lest they should through Him"—Mark iii. 9. What bark was this, so privileged, and so ennobled, scene too of such wonderful works? "They that go down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; these have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. He said the word, and there arose a storm of wind, and the waves thereof were lifted up. They were troubled, and reeled like a drunken man, and all their wisdom was swallowed up. And they cried to the Lord in their affliction, and He brought them out of their distresses. And He turned the storm into a breeze, and its waves were still. And they rejoiced because they were still; and He brought them to the haven, which they wished for"—Ps. cvi. 23. All this was more literally fulfilled in the fisherman's skill on Galilee's blue waters, than ever it was in the proud trader on its ocean path to Ophir.

There were two boats ever keeping company on that inland sea, and they are so mentioned together, that we can have no difficulty in determining to whom they belonged. When our Lord began to call His

Apostles, the two vessels were close to one another; He went but a few steps from Peter's, to find that of Zebedee and his sons. At another time going to the lake, He "saw two ships standing by it, and going up into one of the ships that was Simon's, He desired him to draw back a little from the land, and sitting, He taught the multitudes out of the ship." The other ship was Zebedee's. For having given Simon a miraculous draught of fishes, "they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them." Simon then "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of fishes which they had taken. And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus said to Simon, 'fear not, from henceforward thou shalt catch men'"—Luke v. 2-10.

This remarkable passage leaves us no doubt on several interesting points. Two fishing boats keep company on the Sea of Galilee. They are consorts, fishing in company; *paranze*, as they are still called on the Mediterranean. One belongs to Peter, the other to the zealous and loving brothers, the "Sons of thunder." But we are carefully told that Jesus selected the first. Such a detail was surely of no great consequence in itself; and if specified must be so emphatically. It was Simon's boat that our Redeemer chose. Of what interest was this to Theophilus or the Greeks for whom St. Luke wrote, if Peter was no more than any other Apostle? Surely the mention of such a circumstance implies that it was not by accident, but by choice, that this bark was taken for His use by our Lord. And for what purpose?

First, to teach from. This favored boat is the one from which the Divine master instructs the multitudes.

Secondly, to bestow on Peter the earnest of his future success, as the Apostle of Jew and of Gentile. It is impossible to misunderstand the meaning of the allegory performed, not merely spoken. Our heavenly Lord has Himself explained it: "From henceforward thou shalt catch men, as plentifully and as marvellously as, just now, thou hast caught fishes. Thou shalt cast thy net into the vast and dark depths of the earth, and thou shalt draw up in their safe, and lay up in thy bark, thousands, who shall bless the hour of thy capture." Nor is it possible to mistake the relative position of the parties in the scene. Peter is the chief, the actor; James and John are but his assistants, and subordinates in the work. He begins it, they follow it up; he receives the Lord's gift, the blessing, the miracle, they partake of his fulness, and are enriched from His store. His stock is superabundant, his measure well shaken and running over; and they come to share it, almost to relieve him of it, as it runs over into their bosoms. And hence it is carefully added, that to Simon were Christ's words of promise exclusively addressed.

Here we have a case where the miracle is absorbed in the action. The lesson is to us more important; for the miracle is only wrought as a means to convey it. But we have another miracle perfectly analogous to this, wrought at a very different period of our Lord's earthly existence; after His Resurrection. Between the two, Peter had given proof of his frailty, even of his dastardliness. John at the same time had shown himself faithful, even to the Cross. Peter, however, in company with him, his brother, and other disciples, expressed his intention of going a fishing. "They say to him, we come also with thee." Peter therefore is again at the head of the party, he is the captain of "the ship;" the rest are his mates and assistants, in other words, his crew. They toil for the night in vain; at morning, Jesus, unrecognised by them, stands on the beach, and bids them cast their net on the right side of the vessel. Their obedience is rewarded by a magnificent draught; and Peter throws himself into the sea, to reach his Master, whom John had detected. Once more it is in favor of Peter's boat and net, that the sea is compelled to give up its prey; and what makes the occurrence more personal and pointed is, that it is immediately followed by his Lord's charge, to feed His sheep and lambs. Here was the distinct fulfilment of the promise made after the first miraculous draught. Simon's humility was there rewarded by an assurance of future Apostleship; Peter's penitent love is here crowned by elevation to its headship. On the first occasion, his virtuous timidity prompted him to throw himself on his knees, and entreat his Lord to depart from him a sinner; on the second his penitential ardour urged him to dash into the sea, and go straight to his forgiving Master. Thus completely is the fishing of Peter's boat, after the resurrection, the counterpart of the same action before the denial.

Jesus then taught in Peter's ship, and gave to it the power of gathering into its nets, the multitude of the deep. But it was not always to be a calm

with it; storms were to assail it, even in spite of His benign presence; storms so fierce, that they who manned it were to fear, that He had forgotten them, or had forgotten His power. "And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves; but He was asleep." But He soon awoke at their call; and, reproving them for their want of faith, He "commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm"—Matt. viii. 24. Again we may ask, whose ship was this, to which this divine favor was accorded, of stilling the storm, and smoothing the sea? It is not difficult to ascertain it. We are told that, "when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying, and sick of a fever; and He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to them." At evening multitudes come to be healed; "and Jesus seeing great multitudes about Him, gave orders to pass the water, and when he entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him"—Matt. viii. 14-23. It is from Peter's house that he steps into the vessel; who can doubt that it was that Apostle's? And we may observe, that our Lord acts as the master of the boat. He commands its services, as He afterwards did that of the ass for His entry into Jerusalem. "Tell him that the Lord hath need of it, and he will let it go"—Matt. xxi. 3. To Peter's boat is granted this further privilege, that storms may be permitted to assail it, but not to wreck it, nor even to shatter it. The waves may dash over it, and threaten to engulf it, all may think it is about to perish, and Jesus may appear asleep, and heedless of their danger. But in good time, He awakens up, and His beaming eye is as the sun upon the billows, and His hand waves with a charm against the blast; and the rippling waters dance, rejoice, and sparkle in the light, and the soothing breeze glides playfully into the sail.

If the bark represent the Church of God, where is His Church? What is there that assumes the name, that has ever weathered a real storm, or rather that lives in the midst of tempests, with consciousness of a life that cannot fail, and of a vigor that cannot wane? Is it the stationary religion of the east, for ages water-logged and motionless, in waters dead and pestilent; neither battling with them, nor assailed by them, left in unrippling but fatal calm; originally too well framed to fall to pieces, but stripped of mast and sail, and rolling heavily with the dull swell and fall, of the element in which it happens to be embedded? For it has itself

"Nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship,
Upon a painted ocean."

Unhonored by persecution, not bearing even the note of the world's hatred, the Christianity of Asia feeds its languid life, upon painim toleration, without an aspiration of hope, or an effort of charity. It sends no missionary to distant regions to pluck the pain of martyrdom; it gives to the world no sisters of mercy, no brothers of Christian doctrine, no active clergy, no learned hierarchs, no studious monks, no zealous laity. It dreams on from age to age, achieving nothing great, and yielding nothing good; adding nothing to the knowledge or experience of the past, and opening no bright destiny to the prospect of the future. It is not worth a storm, the lazy, slumbering craft. Neither has it a net to cast abroad or to draw home. It is quite clear *this* is not Peter's boat.

Then what shall we say of a more splendid and well-laden vessel nearer home, which calls itself modestly a branch only of Christ's Church? Surely there is some stir, if not activity about it; internal commotion, if not onward progress. Every modern improvement is there, to hide defects, or to mend imperfections; all is trim, neat, and respectable, as on any other vessel belonging to the state. And it is splendidly manned, with skillful officers and a zealous crew, whose whole interest is in its prosperity. Abundance and comfort are provided for all on board. But it keeps carefully under the shelter of a safe shore, it tempts not the storm, it shuns the perils of the deep. Its sails and masts are not made for rude conflict with the wind and wave, it loves the smoother water of vicinity to earth.

"Nil pietis timidus navita puppibus
Fidit: tu, nisi ventis
Debes ludibrium, cave."

It has not the fisherman's blessing; it draws into its own compass nothing from without; it sends out, quietly and decently, as a genteel angler might, not as depending on it, its well ordered tackle; but it pretends not even to gain, by it, increase. Yet of conflict and clamor, it has enough. Within all is dissension, contention, strife. It is no wonder that it does not move. If its chief commander set the sails in one direction, his mate will trim them oppositely on another mast. If one rows forward, the other strikes backwards. And still more strange, there are those who applaud, and think their bark is going bravely on, because one out of twenty engaged in its direc-

tion, pulls alone against the rest. This surely was no more than the other, the ship to which it was said "Duc in altum," go out into deep waters, and there face the billows, and throw into them the apostolic net. It is none of Peter's boat.

And moreover these, and others, have one complete disqualification: they profess *not* to be Peter's bark. They repudiate the connection; they are indignant at being supposed to have anything special to say to him. They have made their choice of another ship, or of many smaller craft, but they will take particular care that it be not his. Anything but that. Now St. Mark tells us, that when our blessed Lord went into the ship, where he slept during the storm, "there were other ships with Him"—Mark iv. 36—that is, keeping in His wake. What became of them during the tempest? We hear no more of them. Only one ship had Jesus on board, and only of it is the Gospel narrative. They may have put back to harbour, they may have been dispersed in the darkness; some may have been cast on shore. But we read of only one that reached its destination, because only one bore the sure Pilot, and the Queller of the storm; and that was Peter's.

But there remains one more instance, in what we may term the sea-faring part of our Saviour's mission, of its connection with St. Peter's prerogatives. We allude to the miracle of our Lord's walking on the waters, related succinctly by St. John, and more fully by St. Matthew. In the storm above described, Jesus was in the boat, but sleeping; here He was absent, but near. In the midst of the tempest He appears walking on the waters. The Apostles are terrified, and their Divine Master reassures them. There is one of them, however, bolder than the rest. As afterwards he cast himself into the sea to swim to his Lord, so now Peter claims the desperate evidence of walking to Him on the waters. It was a test worthy of himself; ever ardent, ever eager. "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter going down out of the boat walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus." It was important, nevertheless, that he should be informed of the danger into which his ardent temperament would lead him. As later he would protest his readiness to die rather than deny his Lord, and yet would fail; so here it was expedient to show him, of how little avail would be his own strength where supernatural support was needed. For "seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretching forth His hand, took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? And when they were come up into the boat the wind ceased." Now here are several remarkable circumstances. Peter alone claims the right of walking upon the billows. It is not the ship that must support *him*; it is not because he is in it, that he does not perish. He has a power independent of it, so to speak; which no other Apostle has. The right hand of Jesus is directly his support, when fearless and alone he commits himself to the troubled waters. To doubt that, so supported, he has this marvellous prerogative, is to be of little faith. He is allowed partially to sink, that this reproof may be administered to him; and through him, to us. And then, "when they came up into the boat, the wind ceased." For they go together hand in hand, Jesus and Peter, the Head sublime, invisible, and divine, and the Head inferior, visible and earthly, of the Church—the hand of one is power, the other's is confidence; thus linked they give security. Both ascend the ship together, from which they seemed to have withdrawn their care, Master, and pilot; and to their joint presence is attributed the calm. Can any one believe that there was no connection between our Saviour's act and Peter's? That the one was not performed for the sake of the other? Did Jesus defer accompanying His disciples, and follow them walking on the waters, and instead of thus passing over the narrow sea, go on board their boat half way across only to astonish them? Is all that relates to Peter merely secondary? On the contrary, no one can read this passage, and doubt that the whole narrative is inserted mainly for the sake of the Apostle's share in it. It is clearly the *lesson* of the history.

Now let us come to our practical conclusions from all that we have here put together.

1. It is evident that our Saviour, during his mission in Galilee, wished, or rather ordered, that a boat should attend Him, from which He preached, and in which He sailed. And though His beloved disciple had one at His disposal, He gave preference to that of Peter.

2. Three classes of miracles are recorded, as taking place in connection with the boat and its occupation; two miraculous draughts of fishes, two quellings of storms, and our Lord and Peter walking on the water.