

1 "The Glory of the Christian Church"
2 *Parochial and Plain Sermons* vol. II sermon 8
3 St. John Henry Newman
4 1834 year end

5 "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isaiah
6 lx. 1.

7 [Note 1] OUR Saviour said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, when ye shall
8 neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." [John iv. 21.] And
9 upon today's Festival I may say to you in His words on another occasion, "This day is
10 this scripture fulfilled in your ears." This day we commemorate the opening of the door
11 of faith to the Gentiles, the extension of the Church of God through all lands, whereas,
12 before Christ's coming, it had been confined to one nation only. This dissemination of
13 the Truth throughout the world had been the subject of prophecy. "Enlarge the place of
14 thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen
15 thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on
16 the left; and thy seed shall {80} inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be
17 inhabited." [Isa. liv. 2, 3.] In these words the Church is addressed as Catholic, which is
18 the distinguishing title of the Christian Church, as contrasted with the Jewish. The
19 Christian Church is so constituted as to be able to spread itself out in its separate
20 branches into all regions of the earth; so that in every nation there may be found a
21 representative and an offshoot of the sacred and gifted Society, set up once for all by
22 our Lord after His resurrection.

23 This characteristic blessing of the Church of Christ, its Catholic nature, is a frequent
24 subject of rejoicing with St. Paul, who was the chief instrument of its propagation. In one
25 Epistle he speaks of Gentiles being "fellow heirs" with the Jews, "and of the same body,
26 and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." In another he enlarges on "the
27 mystery now made manifest to the saints," viz. "Christ among the Gentiles, the hope of
28 glory." [Eph. iii. 6. Col. i. 26, 27.]

29 The day on which we commemorate this gracious appointment of God's Providence, is
30 called the Epiphany, or bright manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles; being the day on
31 which the wise men came from the East under guidance of a star, to worship Him, and
32 thus became the first-fruits of the heathen world. The name is explained by the words of
33 the text, which occur in one of the lessons selected for today's service, and in which the
34 Church is addressed. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is
35 risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness
36 the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.
37 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising ... Thy
38 people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My
39 planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." [Isa. lx. 1-3, 21.]

40 That this and other similar prophecies had their measure of fulfilment when Christ came,
41 we all know; when His Church, built upon the Apostles and Prophets, wonderfully

42 branched out from Jerusalem as a centre into the heathen world round about, and
43 gathering into it men of all ranks, languages, and characters, moulded them upon one
44 pattern, the pattern of their Saviour, in truth and righteousness. Thus the prophecies
45 concerning the Church were fulfilled at that time in two respects, as regards its sanctity
46 and its Catholicity.

47 It is often asked, have these prophecies had then and since their perfect
48 accomplishment? Or are we to expect a more complete Christianizing of the world than
49 has hitherto been vouchsafed it? And it is usual at the present day to acquiesce in the
50 latter alternative, as if the inspired predictions certainly meant more than has yet been
51 realized.

52 Now so much, I think, is plain on the face of them, that the Gospel is to be preached in
53 all lands, before the end comes: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the
54 world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." [Matt. xxiv. 14.]
55 Whether it has been thus preached is a question of fact, which must be determined, not
56 from the prophecy, but from history; and there we may leave it. But as to the other
57 expectation, that a time of greater purity is in store for the Church, that is not easily to
58 be granted. The very words of Christ just quoted, so far from speaking of the Gospel as
59 tending to the conversion of the world at large, when preached in it, describe it only as
60 a *witness* unto all the Gentiles, as if the many would not obey it. And this intimation runs
61 parallel to St. Paul's account of the Jewish Church, as realizing faith and obedience only
62 in a residue out of the whole people; and is further illustrated by St. John's language in
63 the Apocalypse, who speaks of the "redeemed from among men" being but a remnant,
64 "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." [Rom. xi. 5. Rev. xiv. 4.]

65 However, I will readily allow that at first we shall feel a reluctance in submitting to this
66 opinion, with such passages before us as that which occurs in the eleventh chapter of
67 Isaiah's prophecy, where it is promised, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy
68 mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover
69 the sea." I say it is natural, with such texts in the memory, to look out for what is
70 commonly called a Millennium. It may be instructive then upon this day to make some
71 remarks in explanation of the state and prospects of the Christian Church in this
72 respect.

73 Now the system of this world depends, in a way unknown to us, both on God's
74 Providence and on human agency. Every event, every course of action, has two faces;
75 it is divine and perfect, and it belongs to man and is marked with his sin. I observe next,
76 that it is a peculiarity of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its providential side;
77 ascribing all that happens in it to Him who rules and directs it, as it moves along, tracing
78 events to His sole agency, or viewing them only so far forth as He acts in them. Thus
79 He is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, and to hinder the Jews from believing in Christ;
80 wherein is signified His absolute sovereignty over all human affairs and courses. As
81 common is it for Scripture to consider Dispensations, not in their actual state, but as His
82 agency would mould them, and so far as it really does succeed in moulding them. For
83 instance: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even

84 when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." [Eph. ii. 4, 5.] This
85 is said as if the Ephesians had no traces left in their hearts of Adam's sin and spiritual
86 death. As it is said afterwards, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in
87 the Lord." [Eph. v. 8.]

88 In other words, Scripture more commonly speaks of the Divine *design* and *substantial*
89 *work*, than of the *measure* of fulfilment which it receives at this time or that; as St. Paul
90 expresses, when he says that the Ephesians were chosen, that they "*should* be holy
91 and unblameable before Him in love." Or it speaks of the *profession* of the Christian; as
92 when he says, "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ;"—
93 or of the *tendency* of the Divine gift in a long period of time, and of its *ultimate fruits*; as
94 in the words, "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify
95 and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present to Himself a
96 glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy
97 and without blemish," [Eph. i. 4. Gal. iii. 27. Eph. v. 25-27.] in which baptism and final
98 salvation are viewed as if indissolubly connected. This rule of Scripture interpretation
99 admits of very extensive application, and I proceed to illustrate it.

100 The principle under consideration is this: that, whereas God is one, and His will one,
101 and His purpose one, and His work one; whereas all He is and does is absolutely
102 perfect and complete, independent of time and place, and sovereign over creation,
103 whether inanimate or living, yet that in His actual dealings with this world that is, in all
104 which we see His Providence (in that man is imperfect, and has a will of his own, and
105 lives in time, and is moved by circumstances), He seems to work by a process, by
106 means and ends, by steps, by victories hardly gained, and failures repaired, and
107 sacrifices ventured. Thus it is only when we view His dispensations at a distance, as the
108 Angels do, that we see their harmony and their unity; whereas Scripture, anticipating the
109 end from the beginning, places at their very head and first point of origination all that
110 belongs to them respectively in their fulness.

111 We find some exemplification of this principle in the call of Abraham. In every age of the
112 world it has held good that the just shall live by faith; yet it was determined in the deep
113 counsels of God, that for a while this truth should be partially obscured, as far as His
114 revelations went; that man should live by sight, miracles and worldly ordinances taking
115 the place of silent providences and spiritual services. In the latter times of the Jewish
116 Law the original doctrine was brought to light, and when the Divine Object of faith was
117 born into the world, it was authoritatively set forth by His Apostles as the basis of all
118 acceptable worship. But observe, it had been already anticipated in the instance of
119 Abraham; the evangelical covenant, which was not to be preached till near two
120 thousand years afterwards, was revealed and transacted in his person. "Abraham
121 believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." "Abraham rejoiced to see
122 My day; and he saw it, and was glad." [Rom. iv. 3. John viii. 56.] Nay, in the
123 commanded sacrifice of his beloved son, was shadowed out the true Lamb which God
124 had provided for a burnt offering. Thus in the call of the Patriarch, in whose Seed all
125 nations of the earth should be blessed, the great outlines of the Gospel were
126 anticipated; in that he was called in uncircumcision, that he was justified by faith, that he

127 trusted in God's power to raise the dead, that he looked forward to the day of Christ,
128 and that he was vouchsafed a vision of the Atoning Sacrifice on Calvary.

129 We call these notices *prophecy*, popularly speaking, and doubtless such they are to us,
130 and to be received and used thankfully; but more properly, perhaps, they are merely
131 instances of the harmonious movement of God's word and deed, His sealing up events
132 from the first, His introducing them once and for all, though they {86} are but gradually
133 unfolded to our limited faculties, and in this transitory scene. It would seem that at the
134 time when Abraham was called, both the course of the Jewish dispensation and the
135 coming of Christ were (so to say) realized; so as, in one sense, to be actually done and
136 over. Hence, in one passage, Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the
137 world;" in another, it is said, that "Levi paid tithes" to Melchizedek, "in Abraham." [Rev.
138 xiii. 8. Heb. vii. 9.]

139 Similar remarks might be made on the call and reign of David, and the building of the
140 second Temple [Note 2].

141 In like manner the Christian Church had in the day of its nativity all that fulness of
142 holiness and peace named upon it, and sealed up to it, which beseemed it, viewed as
143 God's design,—viewed in its essence, as it is realized at all times and under whatever
144 circumstances,—viewed as God's work without man's co-operation,—viewed as God's
145 work in its tendency, and in its ultimate blessedness; so that the titles given it upon
146 earth are a picture of what it will be absolutely in heaven. This might also be instanced
147 in the case of the Jewish Church, as in Jeremiah's description: "I remember thee, the
148 kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the
149 wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-
150 fruits of His increase." [Jer. ii. 2, 3.] As to the Christian Church, one passage descriptive
151 of its blessedness from its first founding has already been cited; to which I add the
152 following by way of specimen: "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings
153 thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall
154 name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in
155 the hand of thy God ... As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God
156 rejoice over thee." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My
157 kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be
158 removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. All thy children shall be taught of the
159 Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." "Behold, I have graven thee upon
160 the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me ... Lift up thine eyes round
161 about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live,
162 saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind
163 them on thee as a bride doeth." "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting
164 nor destruction {88} within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy
165 gates praise." [Isa. lxii, 3, 5; liv. 10, 13; xlix. 16, 18; lx. 18.] In these passages, which in
166 their context certainly refer to the time of Christ's coming, an universality and a purity
167 are promised to the Church, which have their fulfilment only in the course of its history,
168 from first to last, as fore-shortened and viewed as one whole.

169 Consider, again, the representations given us of Christ's Kingdom. First, it is called the
170 "Kingdom of *Heaven*," though on earth. Again, in the Angels' hymn, it is proclaimed "on
171 earth peace," in accordance with the prophetic description of the Messiah as "the Prince
172 of Peace;" though He Himself, speaking of the earthly, not the Divine side of His
173 dispensation, said, He came "not to send peace on earth, but a sword." [Matt. x. 34.]
174 Further, consider Gabriel's announcement to the Virgin concerning her Son and Lord:
175 "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall
176 give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob
177 for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Or, as the same Saviour had been
178 foretold by Ezekiel: "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them ... I
179 will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of
180 the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will
181 make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to
182 come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." [Luke i. 32, 33. Ezek.
183 xxxiv. 23, 25, 26.] It is observable that in the two passages last cited, the Christian
184 Church is considered as merely the continuation of the Jewish, as if the Gospel existed
185 in its germ even under the Law.

186 Now it is undeniable, and so blessed a truth that one would not wish at all to question it,
187 that when Christ first came, His followers were in a state of spiritual purity, far above
188 anything which we witness in the Church at this day. That glory with which her face
189 shone, as Moses' of old time, from communion with her Saviour on the holy Mount, is
190 the earnest of what will one day be perfected; it is a token held out to us in our dark age,
191 that His promise stands sure, and admits of accomplishment. They continued in
192 "gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people."
193 Here was a pledge of eternal blessedness, the same in kind as a child's innocence is a
194 forerunner of a holy immortality; and as the baptismal robe of the fine linen, clean and
195 white, which is the righteousness of saints;—a pledge like the typical promises made to
196 David, Solomon, Cyrus, or Joshua the high-priest. Yet at the same time the corruptions
197 in the early Church, Galatian misbelief, and Corinthian excess, show too clearly that her
198 early glories were not more than a pledge, except in the case of individuals,—a pledge
199 of God's purpose, a witness of man's depravity.

200 The same interpretation will apply to the Scripture account of the Elect People of God,
201 which is but the Church of Christ under another name. On them, upon their election, are
202 bestowed, as on a body, the gifts of justification, holiness, and final salvation. The
203 perfections of Christ are shed around them; His image is reflected from them; so that
204 they receive His name as being in Him, and beloved of God in the Beloved. Thus in
205 their election are sealed up, to be unrolled and enjoyed in due season, the successive
206 privileges of the heirs of light. In God's *purpose*—according to His *grace*—in
207 the *tendency* and ultimate effects of his dispensation—to be called and chosen is to be
208 saved. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate; whom He did predestinate,
209 them He also called; whom He called, them He also justified; whom He justified, them
210 He also glorified." [Rom. viii. 29, 30.] Observe, the whole scheme is spoken of as of a
211 thing past; for in His deep counsel He contemplated from everlasting the one entire
212 work, and, having decreed it, it is but a matter of time, of sooner or later, when it will be

213 realized. As the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, so also were His
214 redeemed gathered in from the first according to His foreknowledge; and it is not more
215 inconsistent with the solemn announcement of the text just cited, that some once
216 elected should fall away (as we know they do), than that an event should be spoken of
217 in it as past and perfect, which is incomplete and future. All accidents are excluded,
218 when He speaks; the present and the to come, delays and failures, vanish before the
219 thought of His perfect work. And hence it happens that the word "elect" in Scripture has
220 two senses, standing both for those who are called *in order* to salvation, and for those
221 who at the last day shall be the *actually resulting fruit* of that holy call. For God's
222 Providence moves by great and comprehensive laws; and His word is the mirror of His
223 designs, not of man's partial success in thwarting His gracious will.

224 The Church then, considered as one army militant, proceeding forward from the house
225 of bondage to Canaan, gains the victory, and accomplishes what is predicted of her,
226 though many soldiers fall in the battle. While, however, they remain within her lines,
227 they are included in her blessedness so far as to be partakers of the gifts flowing from
228 election. And hence it is that so much stress is to be laid upon the duty of united
229 worship; for thus the multitude of believers coming together, claim as one man the
230 grace which is poured out upon the one undivided body of Christ mystical. "Where two
231 or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them;" nay rather,
232 blessed be His name! He is so one with them, that they are not their own, lose for the
233 time their earth-stains, are radiant in His infinite holiness, and have the promise of His
234 eternal favour. Viewed as one, the Church is still His image as at the first, pure and
235 spotless, His spouse all-glorious within, the Mother of Saints; according to the Scripture,
236 "My dove, My undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the elect
237 one of her that bare her ... Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee." [Cant. vi.
238 9; iv. 7.]

239 And what is true of the Church as a whole, is represented in Scripture as belonging also
240 in some sense to each individual in it. I mean, that as the Christian body was set up in
241 the image of Christ, which is gradually and in due season to be realized within it, so in
242 like manner each of us, when made a Christian, is entrusted with gifts, which centre in
243 eternal salvation. St. Peter says, we are "saved" through baptism; St. Paul, that we are
244 "saved" according to God's mercy by "the washing of regeneration;" our Lord joins
245 together water and the Spirit; St. Paul connects baptism with putting on Christ; and in
246 another place with being "sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by
247 the Spirit of our God." [1 Pet. iii. 21. Tit. iii. 5. John iii. 5. Gal. iii. 27. 1 Cor. vi. 11.] To the
248 same purport are our Lord's words: "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him
249 that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but *is*
250 *passed* from death unto life." [John v. 24.]

251 These remarks have been made with a view of showing the true sense in which we
252 must receive, on the one hand, the prophetic descriptions of the Christian Church; on
253 the other, the grant of its privileges, and of those of its separate members. Nothing is
254 more counter to the spirit of the Gospel than to hunger after signs and wonders; and the
255 rule of Scripture interpretation now given, is especially adapted to wean us from such

256 wanderings of heart. It is our duty, rather it is our blessedness, to walk by faith;
257 therefore we will take the promises (with God's help) in faith; we will believe they are
258 fulfilled, and enjoy the fruit of them before we see it. We will fully acknowledge, as being
259 firmly persuaded, that His word cannot return unto Him void; that it has its mission, and
260 must prosper so far as substantially to accomplish it. We will adore the Blessed Spirit as
261 coming and going as He listeth, and doing wonders daily which the world knows not of.
262 We will consider Baptism and the other Christian Ordinances effectual signs of grace,
263 not forms and shadows, though men abuse and profane them; and particularly, as
264 regards our immediate subject, we will unlearn, as sober and serious men, the
265 expectation of any public displays of God's glory in the edification of His Church, seeing
266 she is all-glorious *within*, in that inward shrine, made up of faithful hearts, and inhabited
267 by the Spirit of grace. We will put off, so be it, all secular, all political views of the
268 victories of His kingdom. While labouring to unite its fragments, which the malice of
269 Satan has scattered to and fro, to recover what is cast away, to purify what is corrupted,
270 to strengthen what is weak, to make it in all its parts what Christ would have it, a Church
271 Militant, still (please God) we will not reckon on any visible fruit of our labour. We will be
272 content to believe our cause triumphant, when we see it apparently defeated. We will
273 silently bear the insults of the enemies of Christ, and resign ourselves meekly to the
274 shame and suffering which the errors of His followers bring upon us. We will endure
275 offences which the early Saints would have marvelled at, and Martyrs would have died
276 to redress. We will work with zeal, but as to the Lord and not to men; recollecting that
277 even Apostles saw the sins of the Churches they planted; that St. Paul predicted that
278 "evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse;" and that St. John seems even to
279 consider {94} extraordinary unbelief as the very sign of the times of the Gospel, as if the
280 light increased the darkness of those who hated it. "Little children, it is the last time; and
281 as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists,
282 whereby we know that it is the last time." [2 Tim. iii. 13. 1 John ii. 18.]

283 Therefore we will seek within for the Epiphany of Christ. We will look towards His holy
284 Altar, and approach it for the fire of love and purity which there burns. We will find
285 comfort in the illumination which Baptism gives. We will rest and be satisfied in His
286 ordinances and in His word. We will bless and praise His name, whenever He
287 vouchsafes to display His glory to us in the chance-meeting of any of His Saints, and we
288 will ever pray Him to manifest it in our own souls.

289 Notes

290 1. The Feast of the Epiphany.

291

292 2. In the instance of the first [Temple] there clearly is not the same combination of the
293 Mystical sense with the Temporal. The prediction joined with the building of Solomon's
294 Temple is of a simple kind; perhaps it relates purely and solely to the proper Temple
295 itself. But the second Temple rises with a different structure of prophecy upon it.
296 Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi have each delivered some symbolical prediction,
297 connected with it, or with its priesthood and worship. Why this difference in the two

298 cases? I think the answer is clear; it is a difference obviously relating to the nearer
299 connexion which the second Temple has with the Gospel. When God gave them their
300 first Temple, it was doomed to fall, and rise again, *under* and *during* their first economy.
301 The elder prophecy, therefore, was directed to the proper history of the first Temple. But
302 when He gave them their second Temple, Christianity was then nearer in view; through
303 that second edifice lay the Gospel prospect. Its restoration, therefore, was marked by a
304 kind of prophecy, which had its vision towards the Gospel.—DAVISON
305 ON PROPHECY, Discourse vi. part 4.
306

307