

**THE CENTRE OF
UNITY; PP. 4-39**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649240234

The Centre of Unity; pp. 4-39 by Connop Thirlwall

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CONNOP THIRLWALL

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The Centre of Unity

BY

CONNOP THIRLWALL

EDITED BY

JOHN E. B. MAYOR

Cambridge

DEIGHTON BELL & CO.

1901

2000 copies printed.
100 for sale; price 1s. each net.

THE CENTRE OF UNITY

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

CONSECRATION OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
LLANELLY

ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1850

BY

CONNOP THIRLWALL, D.D.

BISHOP OF ST DAVID'S

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CLERGY
THEN PRESENT

London

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON
ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD AND WATERLOO PLACE

1850

BX
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1761

It is certain that there is not a country on the face of the earth whose institutions are so directly opposed to the principles laid down by the Infallible Teacher in the Syllabus as those of Great Britain. If the Pope knew anything of English history, he would say that the epoch which was the happiest and most glorious for England was that in which King John knelt before Pandulph to make himself the Pope's tributary vassal. The subversion of our present constitution ought to be the object which every faithful Romanist proposes to himself. If there are any with whom this is otherwise, it can only be the effect of ignorance, thoughtlessness, and inconsistency. No doubt the inconsistency is an amiable and honourable one. It does credit to their natural feelings, which rebel against the false teaching of their priests. But it is not the less lamentable that this discordance between their principles and their practice should be the only security they have to offer, and that in proportion as they are good Catholics they must be bad, disloyal citizens.

"From all who really love our free institutions they are now for ever separated by an impassable gulf. The Duke of Norfolk is going to pay his homage to the author of this calamity. Will he be placing himself in an enviable or honourable position? Only in the eyes of those who do not know what he is doing, which I hope may be the case with himself."—CONNOR THIRLWALL, 27 March 1871 (*Letters to a Friend*, ed. by A. P. Stanley, London R. Bentley, 1881, pp. 251-2).

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?

IT may seem at first sight, my brethren, as if these words had but little to do with the joyful occasion which has brought us together here this morning. But I am afraid that there is a very close connexion between the two subjects; so that it would hardly be possible to meditate much upon the one without having our thoughts turned toward the other. I say, I am afraid; for the subject referred to in the text is one which we should wish to banish from our minds, if by doing so we could make the thing itself cease to have a place among the realities of our being, and especially if we could shut it out of the Church of God. No doubt it was with great reluctance, with deep sorrow, that the Apostle addressed the Corinthians on this subject; though but for this, we should, at

this day, have wanted all the instruction contained in this most precious epistle. It was not a subject which he chose, but one which was forced upon him by the exigencies of the time. And perhaps it might have been reasonable to hope that what he was thus compelled to write might have saved the necessity of ever returning to the subject again; if we did not know that the evil, which he strove to repress and extirpate, is so deeply rooted in the nature of man, and springs up and spreads so fast, that it cannot be expected to disappear altogether, until He who sits upon the throne shall say, "Behold, I make all things new." And so we are not permitted to rejoice even in this glad solemnity, without being reminded of that which saddened the Apostle's heart; without remembering that the plague which he tried to stay is still raging around us, yea amongst us; without observing that the words which it drew from him eighteen centuries ago are still applicable for our admonition.

We have been engaged this morning, my brethren, in a simple but expressive rite, by which this new house of prayer has been solemnly set apart for the perpetual service—

so far as anything here may be called perpetual —of Almighty God. But the very name of the material edifice leads our thoughts at once to the spiritual building, of which it is both an emblem and an instrument; without which it would have no sanctity, no worth, no use, no title to the smallest degree of veneration or respect. We call the material and the spiritual temple by the same name; and this is well, if it serve to impress upon us the entire subordination of the one to the other, as of the body to the soul. But, according to the original and proper signification of the word, *church* means *the Lord's house*; a very fit description for a building in which the Lord's people come together, to seek His face, to honour His name, and to hear His word. This, however, is not the sense in which the word is used in the New Testament. There it always means the assembly of the faithful, whether in the narrower or the larger sense. Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, there was a Church. And if they were separated from one another by the distance of the poles, they might still be within the same Universal Church. And as the material fabric is a lively image of the