

**ON CHRISTIAN  
COMMONWEALTH**

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On Christian commonwealth by Heinrich W. J. Thiersch

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CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH.

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ON  
CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH.

Translated and Adapted,

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE AUTHOR,

FROM THE GERMAN OF

DR. HENRY W. J. THIERSCH,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHURCH IN THE APOSTLES' TIME," "CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE,"  
"THE PARABLES OF CHRIST," ETC.

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1877.





## PREFACE.

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THE other works written by the same author are too well known to require any apology from me for bringing this, one of his latest works, under public notice. I could only wish that he had found some one more capable than myself of rendering his clear, terse, and classic style of writing. However, I hope that my language will convey with accuracy the meaning of the author.

I have termed this an adaptation, for the sole reason that the greater portion of the notes with which the original is furnished have been omitted. Consisting, as they do, mainly of references to German writers, they are of more interest to German than English readers. Such portions of the notes as I have deemed indispensable to the meaning, I have incorporated into the main text.

The subject of the work is one which, in some shape or another, is at the present time occupying the minds of all those who take an interest in our national prosperity; and my desire is that, by giving easier access to the ideas of so deep a thinker, I may be the means of enabling some one, who has the power as well as the will, to apply those ideas to England.

The object of the work is of a strictly pacificatory nature. It treats of the proper moral appreciation due to the various political and social parties. No attempt has been made to show that any are entitled

to unalloyed praise on the one hand, or to unmitigated censure on the other. An endeavour has been made to bring to light such features in each of the various systems as appear to be capable of justification.

Special attention is called to those chapters which show how all Christian principles are opposed to oppression and misuse of power; how those principles promote and favour liberty of conscience, civic freedom, and the material as well as the spiritual prosperity of the people. True liberty and political advancement can only exist where there is mutual confidence; and such confidence can only be established upon a durable basis when the various component parts of the commonwealth and of society are convinced that all other parts may be justified upon and deduced from Christian principles.

The nature of our subject itself shows us that, in considering it, we must recognise two primary divisions. In the one division we have those universally admitted truths,—such as, the derivation of all authority from on high; the duty of the government to care for the well-being of the people; the duty of subjects to be faithful, respectful, and obedient; the difference between temporal and spiritual power; the duty of making all legislation to accord with the divine commands. All who honestly hold to the Holy Scriptures and ancient Church tradition, will probably be of one mind on these points, and be prepared to admit and uphold them.

In the other division, we must place all attempts to apply the above axioms to the course of history. For a due consideration of these points, we require an exact knowledge of facts, practical intelligence, and, so to say, a discerning of spirits. Here individual opinion comes into play. Take, for example, the ideas

expressed in this work about absolute monarchy, about what is right and what is wrong in the latest ecclesiastical strifes, about social reforms, and about the right of punishment. All these are mixed and intricate questions, regarding which every one may hold his own opinions. It may be that, in the variety of aspect from which the subject can be regarded, some of the historical facts, or even cognate axioms of other affinitive sciences, may seem to require correction; but no intelligent critic will assert that the need of such adjustment impugns the principles which we are discussing. Any thesis derived from Christian verity continues to be true, although the hypotheses taken from history may contain an element of error.

In the present day, every citizen has a recognised right to express his opinion and to make use of the freedom of the press, if he believes that he can thereby advance the good of the commonwealth. This work does not pretend to treat its subject in an exhaustive manner, but the rapidity with which events are passing around him has warned the author not to delay its publication any longer, for fear of being overtaken by the current; and the applicability of many of the arguments it contains to our island home has appeared to me a sufficient reason for desiring that its contents may be more widely known amongst us.

The Established Church of England is being attacked on all sides; her foes without are ever looking for a weak point against which to direct their assault; whilst the garrison to whom her defence is entrusted are either quarrelling amongst themselves as to some minor point of ritual, or lulled to sleep by the whisperings of the arch enemy, who proclaims peace when there is no peace: they rely upon the strength