

**THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH;  
OR, THE CHURCH OF THE NEW  
TESTAMENT A REPUBLIC, AND THE  
ONLY POSSIBLE REPUBLIC TRULY  
DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIAL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649547746

The Christian Commonwealth; Or, the Church of the New Testament a Republic, and the Only Possible Republic Truly Democratic and Social by Anonymous

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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*Vive la Republique, Democratique et Sociale.*

EDINBURGH: JOHN MACLAREN.  
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.  
MDCCLXI.

*100. c. 249.*

## PREFACE

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THE opinions expressed in the following pages have long been present to my mind, and have in various forms partially found an utterance. A few years ago I got a small tractate printed, which is the foundation of the present essay, and which contained very much the same views in another form; after about thirty copies had been disposed of, finding that a particular and offensive application had been given to an expression which I meant merely to be the expression of a general truth, the whole edition was destroyed, choosing rather to suffer the loss than hurt the feelings of one whom I would be the last to offend.

Building on this tractate as a foundation, I have appropriated for the superstructure, without scruple and without remorse, whatsoever I found suitable to my purpose in the course of a promiscuous and very desultory reading. Like as I have read that the architects of Venice, on account of the poverty of the soil in building materials, and on account of the unaptness of the workmen for the work, had to build

with precious blocks of marble, and shafts and capitals ready sculptured, taken from the buildings of other lands; so have I had, on account of my own barrenness, to borrow largely from various sources, and on account of my want of skill in literary composition, to exhibit my ideas in borrowed phrases and expressions, rather than send them forth more meanly clad in a garb of language of my own manufacture.

I believe, however, that my poverty is my riches, and my weakness my strength, and that any power this essay may have either to confute or to persuade, will rather be found to lie in the materials I have appropriated than in those I have produced. I am not, therefore, very anxious to claim the parentage of a work which can confer so little credit on its Author, but I am very anxious that the spirit of the work should go forth,—that the principles of it should be broadcast,—and that the opinions to which I have endeavoured to give expression should find acceptance.

I am aware that the opinions I entertain are as yet covered with the haze of obscurity, as with a mantle; they show not a very distinct or definite outline; they are but as the seed which is enveloped in the husk, or as the diamond (it may be of the first water) which is encrusted with the rude and worthless materials of the matrix wherein it was formed. The faith thus enveloped in this little essay is, that at the beginning the Church of the New Testament was a



veritable republic, democratic and social, and that at the last it will resume its primary form, and constitute the only truly democratic and social republic of which humanity is capable. But to arrive at right ends we must use right means, and begin from right principles. This essay attempts to exhibit the true principle of the Church's organization, separate and apart from all the vain imaginations of man, and from all the products of his ingenuity, pride, prejudice, and ambition, and to show how, by basing the structure on the sure foundation of justification by faith, and building it up of those "lively stones" which, having life in themselves, authenticate the profession of their faith by their lives and conversation, the Church will come forth a glorious Church, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Did these views, which are seemingly so much opposed to public opinion, and certainly to public practice, find favour in public estimation by reason of the excellency of speech or of wisdom with which they were promulgated, or by means of the influence or social position of their advocate, the probability is, that that which adventitious circumstances had caused so rapidly to grow up and flourish, would, like the gourd of Jonah, as rapidly fade and fail. In vital organizations, whatsoever is enduring is of slow growth, and of a gradual progression. A handful of corn upon the earth may, by the blessing of God, if the sun shines upon, and the clouds of heaven descend upon it, awaken to newness of life; for it is not dead, but

sleepeth, and in the time of the harvest produce a crop of prosperous fruit, like the trees that be in Lebanon; for so long as life remains it is continually going forward from strength to strength, absorbing, transmuting, and assimilating congenial particles from the soil in which it is embedded, until that which was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory, coming forth in a new form, a glorious resurrection, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, in which the form and quality of the original seed reappears multiplied a hundred-fold.

I do not expect that my views will find many supporters, nor that my little volume will find many readers. What, then, it may be asked, are my expectations regarding it, or what is the object of the publication? I expect no immediate good from it, but I hope and trust that that which is perhaps now only the germ of an idea in one particular mind, may, if it have life in itself (which I believe it to have), and happen to fall upon good soil, upon hearts prepared for its reception, take root, gain strength, spring up in a new form and fashion, after the writer of the tractate and his tract have disappeared off the stage, forgotten and unknown, and bring forth fruit abundantly of the form and quality of the original seed, until the little one shall become a thousand, and that shall become public opinion, which at the first was but the faith of a few. "If a thing be a true thing (says Mr. Carlyle), no matter though it be a small

thing, it will grow ;" and this is my hope, and this is my only desire respecting it.

"Thou fool (says the Apostle), that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." Though it tarry wait for it, because it will *surely* come, it will not tarry.

EDINBURGH, 1861.