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1659

The Christian Commonwealth: or The Civil Policy Of The Rising Kingdom of   
Jesus Christ.   
An Online Electronic Text Edition.

John Eliot

Paul Royster ( editor & depositor) University of Nebraska-Lincoln,   
[proyster@unl.edu](mailto:proyster@unl.edu)

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JOHN ELIOT

The Christian Commonwealth (1659)

John Eliot (1604-1690), the Puritan missionary to the New   
England Indians, developed this plan of political organiza­-  
tion for the Christianized tribes that he converted. In the   
late 1640s, he adapted it for English use and sent a manu-  
­script copy to England, where it appeared in print 10 years   
later, in 1659, following the death of Cromwell and before   
the accession of Charles II.  
  
Eliot's "Preface" to the work was far more radical and   
troublesome than the utopian theocracy described in the   
main body. "Much is spoken of the rightful Heir of the   
Crown of England, and the unjustice of casting out the   
right Heir: but Christ is the only right Heir of the Crown   
of England, and of all other Nations also." He proposed to   
the English nation, "That you would now set the Crown of  
England upon the head of Christ, whose only true inheri­-  
tance it is," and set their "civil polity" on the model given   
by God to Moses in the wilderness (in Exodus 18), so that   
"then shall the will of God be done on earth, as it is done   
in heaven." The work throughout anticipates an imminent   
start of the millennium.  
  
Within three years the book had been banned, and El-  
­iot was forced to issue a public retraction and apology. His   
unique and fascinating work has been called the first book   
of political theory written by an American and also the first   
book to be banned by an American government.  
  
This online edition reproduces the full text of the origi­-  
nal, including the contemporary spellings and punctua­-  
tion. A few typographic errors have been corrected and are   
noted. The entire work can be printed out on 30 sheets of   
letter-size paper.

The Christian

COMMONWEALTH:

OR,

The Civil Policy

Of

The Rising Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Written

Before the Interruption of the Government,   
 by Mr. John Eliot, Teacher of the Church   
 of Christ at Roxbury in New-England

And

Now Published (after his consent given) by a Server   
 of the Season.

LONDON:

Printed for Livewell Chapman, at the Crown in Popes-  
 ­Head-Alley,

[1659]

To the Chosen, and Holy, and Faith-  
 ­ful, who manage the Wars of the Lord,   
 against Antichrist, in great Britain;   
 and to all the Saints, faithful Breth-  
­ ren, and Christian people, of the Com­-  
 monwealth of England: Grace and   
 Mercy, with Peace and Truth be mul­-  
 tiplied, through Jesus Christ our So-  
­ veraign Lord and King.

Ever Honoured, and Beloved in Christ,

He late great Changes, which have fallen   
 out in great Britain and Ireland, have so   
 amazed the most of men; and the black, and   
 confused Clouds, which have over-spread   
 the whole Land, have so darkened the   
 way of those wheels of Providence by which   
Christ is coming to set up his Kingdom, that they whose eyes the   
Lord hath begun to open, to see Christ coming in power and in

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great glory, according to his Promise, do also see the other part   
of his Word verified, namely, that the coming of Christ is in   
the Clouds of darkness; by means whereof it is long ere all men   
can see him, or be persuaded that it is he, who is now coming;   
though afterwards, they shall see that even those Clouds were   
needful a while to obscure the bright appearance of his design.  
 Lately reading a Book called a Plea for Non-subscribers,  
or the grounds and reasons of many Ministers of Cheshire   
and Lancashire, &c. though I had before heard of the sad   
differences, distances of spirit, and dissatisfactions among   
the people of the Lord: yet then my heart bled to see such pre-  
­cious holy men, pleading ( as they believe) for God, with a pure   
and sincere Conscience, and yet in so doing strongly to speak   
against the glorious work of the Lord Jesus, in casting down   
Antichrist, and setting up his own Kingdom foretold in Scrip-  
­ture, and now fulfilling, as also strongly and sharply speaking   
against those whom the Lord hath pleased to employ, and im­-  
prove as his Instruments in accomplishing thereof.  
 On the other side, those writings which that Book An-  
­swereth, have so missed the Principles on which the Cause stan-  
­deth, whereby the Consciences of others should be satisfied, who   
oppose; as that the Answerers have clearly the upper ground of   
them in many things: and therefore stand firme in that which   
they suppose to be a right Cause, and weaken those who have   
indeed a right Cause in hand, insomuch as that hereby the   
difference i's exceedingly encreased and sharpened.  
 Now though I am the most unmeet of all men, to undertake   
to interpose and speak unto such learned, grave, holy, and em­-  
inent persons, every way beyond me in all accomplishments for   
the Lords work, and in a Cause so much above me; yet was I

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pressed in my spirit, considering whose Cause I plead, to take   
the boldness to propound that unto them, which I believe to be   
the true state of the Cause, and which (by the blessing of God)   
may reach to their satisfaction; when they see that they, into   
whose hands the Lord (to the wonderment of men) hath been   
pleased to put power, do follow the Lord, and accomplish his  
Word, aim at the fulfilling of his ends and design, denying   
themselves, that they may advance Christ Jesus in the Throne,   
and let him reign over them. The prayers, the expectation,   
and faith of the Saints, in the Prophecies and Promises of holy   
Scripture, are daily sounding in the ears of the Lord, for the   
downfall of .Antichrist, and with him all humane Powers, Pol­-  
ities, Dominions, and Governments; and in the room thereof,   
we wait for the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, who   
by his Divine Wisdom, Power, Government and Laws, given   
us ( although hitherto sealed up in a great measure) in the holy   
Scriptures, will reign over all the Nations of the earth in due   
time: I mean, the Lord Jesus will bring down all people, to be   
ruled by the Institutions, Laws, and Directions of the Word   
of God, not only in Church-Government and Administrations,   
but also in the Government and .Administration of all affairs   
in the Commonwealth. And then Christ reigneth, when all   
things among men, are done by the direction of the word of his   
mouth: his Kingdom is then come amongst us, when his will   
is done on earth, as it i's done in heaven; where no Humane   
or .Angelical Policy or Wisdom doth guide any thing, but all is   
done by Divine direction (a); and so it shall be on earth, when,   
and where Christ reigneth.  
  
(a) Psal. 103. 20. Angels do his commandment, hearkening to the   
voice of his word.

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Dan.2. 34, 35, &c.

It is Prophesied, (b) Dan. 2. 34, 35, &c. Thou sawest till   
that a stone was cut out, without hands, which smote   
the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and   
brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay,   
the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces   
together, and became like the chaff of the summer   
threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away,   
that no place was found for them: and the stone that   
smote the image, became a great mountain, and filled   
the whole earth, &c. Which Prophecie doth clearly foreshew   
the forenamed points: for there is an epitomy of all the Monar-  
­chies, Governments, and Polities of men, who have had their   
Humane Glory in this world: the last, and strongest of all   
which Dominions is the Roman; so mixed and interwoven   
in many States, by the combining of that dirty Roman Reli­-  
gion, with civil Powers, as that when that stone Christ, by his   
faithful Instruments, shall overthrow, and beat in pieces that   
Religion, they must and shall according as it is written, beat   
down withall the strongest Iron sinews of civil States, which   
are propagators, and supporters thereof, whether professed or   
secretly.

(a) Dan. 2. 43. They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron   
is not mixt with clay.

Yea, moreover, when Christ that stone, shall by his chosen   
Instruments, smite in pieces all the Romish Religion, and civil   
States, which are complicated with it, and supporters of it,   
(who though they greatly care not for it (a), yet for   
their own ends they are supporters of it) then, down   
cometh the whole Image from top to bottom; all   
Dominions and Governments of man, by Humane   
Policy, formes of Government and Laws in all

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places whatsoever, in Gods order and time; who by their fall   
shall be so dashed in pieces, that though they were before, a ter-  
­rour to men, yet now they shall be light and contemptible things,   
of no more account with men then dust or chaff: because Di-  
­vine institutions, both of Government and Laws, arising in   
the room of Humane, they will be quite darkened, even as the   
Stars are by the rising-Sun: for in the room of them shall arise   
the Government of the Lord Jesus, who by the Word of his   
Mouth, written in the holy Scriptures, shall order all affairs   
among men; And great shall be his Dominion: for the Stone   
Christ shall grow to be a mountain filling the whole earth: all   
men submitting to be ruled by the Word, in civil as well as   
Church-affairs.  
 Now it seemeth to me that the Lord Christ is now ac­-  
complishing these things in great Britain. The faithful Breth-  
­ren in Scotland gave the first blow at the dirty toes, and   
feet of this Image; with whom the faithful brethren in Eng-  
­land, presently concurred. But the Iron of the Civil State, stuck   
so fast to the miry clay, that according to the Word of Christ,   
they are (beyond all the thoughts of men) both fallen together;   
they are fallen, they are fallen, they are both fallen together:  
Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord, for his faithful   
Word, and goodness for his mercy endureth for ever! and all   
his faithful Word shall be accomplished. Amen, Amen.  
 There be many other Prophecies of holy Scriptures touching   
these things ( as the Saints well know) the application whereof   
to what is now done in England, I will not undertake, it be-  
­ing a worke rather for a Treatise then a Preface. Tea, some   
Prophecies, (as I apprehend) do more particularly describe what   
is now done; but I shall not mention them, hoping that others

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will do it, according as the Lord shall please to open that door.  
 Now these things being so, it doth deeply concern those holy   
and faithful ones of the Lord, who have been Instruments in   
his hand, to accomplish these great and glorious works, whether  
by Councils or Wars, or otherwise, to be wise, and discerning of   
the times, to know what Israel ought to do, in this great work   
of bringing about the Kingdom to David, to lay the Govern-  
­ment upon his shoulders : that after all these clouds and storms,   
the peaceable Kingdom of Christ may rise up, and the Lord may   
reign in England. Much is spoken of the rightful Heir of   
the Crown of England, and the unjustice of casting out the   
right Heir: but Christ is the only right Heir of the Crown of  
 England (a), and of all other Nations also (b);   
 and he is now come to take possession of his Kng-  
 making England first m that blessed work  
 of setting up the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus: and   
 in order thereunto, he hath cast down not only the   
 miry Religion, and Government of Antichrist, but   
 also the former form of civil Government, which   
 did stick so fast unto it, until by an unavoidable   
 necessity, it fill with it; which while it stood, and   
 as it stood, was too high to stoop to the Lord Jesus,   
 to he ruled by his command. Now therefore by these  
preparations made by the naked Arm of the Lord Jesus, to set   
up his Kingdom in England, he calleth upon those Worthies   
into whose hands he hath betrusted the managing of this great   
work, now to advance Christ, not man; not themselves, but   
Christ; which doing, taketh off those heavy imputations of in­-  
vesting themselves with Authority, of taking the Inheritance to   
themselves-God forbid, God forbid, that it should enter into

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our hearts, to think so unworthily, so unchristianly, so dishonor-  
­ably of such renowned servants of the Lord, who have so gra­-  
ciously, and humbly ever given unto the Lord, all the glory of   
all their Victories, that now at last they should rob him of his   
Crown, Dominion, and Government; which to set up in Eng­-  
land, hath been the mark and Scope of all these late great works   
of God; and if it he not yet done, surely it is either because the   
Lord hath not yet fully revealed to them, what his will is they   
should do in the midst of these confusions, or because the unquiet­-  
ness of the times permits them not to go about it.  
 That which the Lord now calleth England to attend, is   
not to search humane Polities and Platformes of Government,   
contrived by the wisdom of man; but as the Lord hath carried   
on their works for them, so they ought to go unto the Lord, and   
enquire at the Word of his mouth, what Platforme of Govern­-  
ment he hath therein commanded and prescribed; and hum­-  
ble themselves to embrace that as the best, how mean soever it   
may seem to Humane Wisdom. Faith can see beauty, power   
and glory in any Divine institution, when Humane Wisdom   
may think it weak and contemptible.  
 There is undoubtedly a forme of Civil Government instituted   
by God himself in the holy Scriptures; whereby any Nation may   
enjoy all the ends and effects of Government in the best manner,   
were they but persuaded to make trial of it. We should dero-  
­gate from the sufficiency and perfection of the Scriptures, if we   
should deny it. The Scripture is able thoroughly to furnish the   
man of God (whether Magistrate in the Commonwealth, or El-  
­der in the Church, or any other) unto every good work.  
 And when a Christian people are to choose their Gov­-  
ernment, should they take their Patern from the Nations of the

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(a) I Sam. 8. 5. Make us a King to judge us like all the Nations.

World (a), we know what an offence that would be   
 to Christ, who intends to Rule them himself, by his   
 own Divine Patern and Direction. Christ is now   
 about to ruine the Roman-Image; Wisdom therefore   
it is, to look above all such Paterns to find out a Divine Plat-  
forme, taught by God himself, which he will delight to bless   
unto such men as shall submit unto it.  
 And if there be a Divine institution of civil Government   
that may suit the State of England, I doubt not but all the   
godly in the Land would chuse that way of Government before   
any other in the World: for every Divine institution hath a   
Divine blessing in it. Yea, God himself is more eminently pres­-  
ent, ruling thereby; and the Spirit of God doth breath in and   
bless every institution of the Word, to make it powerful and   
effectual to attain its end better, and more effectually then any   
Humane Ordinance and Institution in the World can do. The   
Promise also of God’s blessing and protection is unto all those,   
who walk in Scripture-ways and Ordinances. Moreover, that   
uncomfortable difference among the people of God about that   
great business of changing the Government in England, would   
hereby be reconciled, and all things brought unto an holy peace,   
every one readily yielding that the Lord Jesus should assume   
the Sovereignty, to appoint them what Government to set up   
over them: and would most readily embrace that, whereby the   
Lord himself, should reign in England.  
 I think it needful to insert this word of Apology for my self;   
That it pleased the Lord of his free mercy to me (in myself being   
no way fitted for such a work) to put me on, to instruct our poor,   
blind, and dark Indians, in the good knowledge of the Lord:

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who when (through grace) they tasted of the knowledge of God,   
of themselves, of Christ and redemption by him; they desired to   
leave their wild and scattered manner of life, and come under   
Civil Government and Order; which did put me upon search,   
after the mind of the Lord in that respect. And this VOW I did   
solemnly make unto the Lord concerning them; that they being   
a people without any forme of Government, and now to chuse;   
I would endeavour with all my might, to bring them under the   
Government of the Lord only: Namely, that I would instruct   
them to imbrace such Government, both Civil and Ecclesias-  
­tical as the Lord hath commanded in the holy Scriptures;   
and to deduce all their Laws from the holy Scriptures, that so   
they may be the Lords people, ruled by him alone in all things.   
Which accordingly they have begun to do through grace, cove-  
­nanting with the Lord, in a day of fasting and prayer, to be the   
Lords people; and to receive that forme of Government, which   
they had learned to be a Divine institution in the holy Scrip­-  
tures. This occasion did first put me upon this Study, who am   
no Statesman, nor acquainted with matters of that nature;   
but only spend my time in the Study of the holy Book of God.   
But having collected by the Lords help out of the holy Scripture   
this following forme of Government: and seeing the excellent   
harmony and order thereof, both in the several Courts, gradu-  
­ally ascending one above another, and all cases among the peo-  
­ple coming under such a certain, and orderly way of receiving   
speedy issue; and all Appeals, having such a free and unpreju­-  
diced passage, in their gradual ascent, even to the highest, and   
final determination: These and such other things made me   
think, that it i's a most desirable, and peaceable forme of Gov-

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ernment, and suitable to any Christian people, who reverence   
the Word of God; yea, the more eminent and Christian they   
be, the more suitable it i's for them.  
 Especially also considering, that though the single form of   
tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, will be but of small ca-  
­pacity in great Commonwealths, and populous Cities: yet the su-  
­perior orders, of Myriades or ten thousands, fifty thousands,   
hundred thousands, and thousand thousands, are exceeding   
comprehensive, to extend Government to the greatest people;   
and yet with that certain and peaceable order (without any in-  
­terfering or confusion) for speedy Justice, and determination   
of all Causes, as that it seemeth to me to be the most excel-  
­lent Government that ever was in the World . And adding to   
this, above all considerations and commendations, that it is a   
DIVINE INSTITUTION, sprung from heavenly wis­-  
0dom commanded in Scripture, filled with the Spirit of God,   
which i's able to carry on the Wheels of this Government, with   
a most irresistible and successful force and power, to the at-  
­tainment of all the ends of Government among men most   
effectually. Yea, it seemeth to me, that this i's that forme of   
Government, by which Christ meaneth to rule all the Nations   
on earth according to the Scriptures. Yea farther, repenting-be­-  
lieving Israel and Judah, I believe, shall serve and obey Christ   
in this way of Civil Government; and who knoweth but our   
obedience hereunto, may hasten and farther their coming in?  
 I would not exceed bounds of humble modesty; yet let me   
make bold to adventure the producing a farther Meditation,   
touching the Divinity and heavenly excellency of this Govern­-  
ment of the Lord; namely, that the Angels of Heaven are gov­-  
erned by this order of Government, according as it i's applyable

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to their condition. It i's past all doubt, that there i's an heavenly   
order, (I do not say Judicature, as with us) among the An-  
­gels: for as Hell is a place of confusion, so heaven of order;   
and if God is the God of order in the Church, whereby the place   
of his feet is beautified; much more is heaven beautified, by a   
most heavenly order of the Church there residing. And if Solo-  
­mons Court was in that respect of a ravishing glory, namely,   
by the order of it, and of his attendants: much more is heaven   
in an excellent order, and all the Angels the holy attendants   
of God’s Throne, attending in comely order. And if the order   
of Solomon’s Court, was one effect of his great wisdom, can   
we think that the infinite wisdom of God, attended by Angels,   
Spirits of such wonderful wisdom, should not be attended in a   
most glorious order, and his attendants excellently beautified,   
by walking in an heavenly order ( therefore there is an heav-  
­enly order among them. And that it i's this order of tens, hun­-  
dreds, thousands, &c. doth appear in several Scriptures, where   
we find mention made of them in this order; wherein it is ob­-  
servable, that so great is the number of them, that they are not   
mentioned in their single order; but the lowest that I have ob-  
­served, is Myriades of Angels, Heb. 12. 22. and so the Saints   
shall find them ordered when they come to heaven (a). They are   
also mentioned by the highest degree of the Superior   
order, viz. thousands of thousands; and not only so,   
but by a Supreme order, viz. Myriades of Myriades,   
Rev. 5.11 which I call Supreme, being the highest I  
find mentioned in Scripture: but whether that be the   
highest order of Angels, is not revealed that I know   
of: but thus it seemeth unto me, that the Angels are   
in this order of Government. Likewise the Saints in  
  
(a) Mat. 26.53. Christ makesth mention of twelve Legions of Angels,  
 for his present assistance, if he though good; which is all one   
 with Myriades.

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heaven seem to be in the same order; for when Christ cometh   
to Judgement, and all the Saints with him, 1 Thes. 4. 13. they   
shall come in this order, Jude, vers. 14. With Myriades of his   
Saints, behold the Lord cometh.  
 Now if this be the order of Government in Heaven, what   
an heaven upon earth shall that be, when all the Kingdoms   
and Nations on the earth shall be so ruled? and then shall the   
will of God be done on earth, as it is done in heaven, when he   
reigneth over men on earth, in the same order of Government   
as he doth in heaven (a).

(a) It is not nothing, that when Christ fed the people miraculously, he set   
them down by hundreds, and by fifties, Mar. 6. 40. as if Christ delighted   
in that order.

Let me be yet farther bold to propound another Meditation,   
under the correction of better Judgements, according as I do the   
former, upon that text Dan. 7. 10. where is set forth the judge-  
­ment of God executed upon Antichrist. Many things might be   
shewed out of the context, to prove, that it is not the last judge-  
­ment, which is there spoken of. The means of execution of that   
judgment, is by the Wars of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, as ap-  
­pears in the Book of the Revelation; and the people executing   
those Wars, by this text seem to be a people ruled by this order   
of Government: which if it be so, may it not give some light to   
find out the ten Kings, which shall hate the Whore, make her   
desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire?  
 These things considered, touching the excellency of this   
forme of Government, and especially the Divinity of it, and   
now also by a wonderful work of God, England being in a ca­-  
pacity to chuse unto themselves a new Government, and in such   
deep perplexity about that great Question, where to set their

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foot in peace; some pleading for the unjustice of casting off the   
Kingly Government, others unsatisfied with the present, and   
all expecting what will be the conclusion. And seeing no Hu-  
­mane Forme, quiet and safe, to set down their foot upon, in   
rest and tranquillity, hereby all hearts are perplexed, sighing   
up to heaven for direction what to do, and where to find rest   
and quiet to the Land. By this means, all hearts are prepared   
to embrace any help or counsel from the Lord; and when they   
have wearied themselves with differences, they will gladly all   
concur together, to set open the door, to let in the Lord Jesus,   
to give them rest; who hath been all this while knocking at the   
door, by these perplexing troubles: that his Government might   
be on all hands gladly embraced, and himself find a free and   
peaceable enterance, to begin his blessed and waited-for reign   
over the Nations of the earth, according as it is Prophesied in   
the holy Scriptures.  
 Therefore in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King   
of Sainsts (whose Kingdom I desire to advance, with all my   
might and heart) I do beseech those chosen, and holy and faith-  
­ful Saints, who by Councils at Home, or by Wars in the field,   
have fought the Lords Battels against Antichrist, and have   
carried on the Cause of Christ hitherunto, That you would now   
set the Crown of England upon the head of Christ, whose only   
true inheritance it is, by the gift of his Father (a): Let him   
be your JUDGE, Let him be your LAW­-  
GIVER. Let him be your KING! take the pat-  
­ern and form of your Government, from the Word   
of his Mouth, which will have power over the Con-  
­sciences of all the people of the Land, and compose all   
differences about that point, into a sweet harmony

(a) Psa. 2. 8. Ask of me, and I will give thee the ut­termost   
parts of the earth for thy possession.

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of obedience and subjection to Christ our Lord and King, with   
one heart and consent; and will bring about all the people with   
one heart, and shoulder, to promote the designs of Christ, and   
yours also, when they see that yours are not for your selves, but   
for the Lord, to accomplish all the remainder of the great works   
of the Lord, even until Antichrist be destroyed, and the Throne  
of the Beast burnt with fire, and the Kingdom of the Lord Je­-  
sus set up in many Nations.  
 You blessed ones of the Lord, who have so eminently, beyond   
the wont of Conquerors, humbled and abased your selves, as no-  
­bodies in the work, and ascribed all the praise and glory of your   
Valiant Achievments, unto the Lord Jesus, whom by faith you   
did always see fighting for you, and (to your admiration) get-  
­ting the Victory for you! You that have with an holy boldness of   
faith, made those dreadful appeals (unheard of in other stories)   
unto the Lord Jesus, to witness to the sincerity of your Cause  
and Conscience by his own arm, and in all your straights have   
never found him to foil you, or forsake you; but still made you   
Conquerors, not only of your Enemies, but (which is more) of   
your selves also, not to arrogate praise unto your selves; nor to   
improve your Victories beyond the bounds of Christian patience   
and love to the conquered; and all for the honour and glory of   
Christ, and his grace; that his Name and Cause might find   
room and acceptance in the hearts of your Enemies, whom you   
therefore used like Christian Brethren, and not like Enemies.  
 Shall such holy ones as you, need persuasion to set that   
Crown upon the head of Christ, which he hath put into your   
hands to dispose of? where can you make a better choice, then   
to take the Lord to be your King? and where can you think to   
find, a better patern of Government, then in the Word of God?

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and where can you think to finde better Laws, then in the holy   
Scriptures?  
 This following Platform of Government, I do no farther   
urge, then you shall finde it to be purely deduced from the holy   
Scriptures. It is the holy Scriptures of God onely that I do urge,   
to be your onely Magna Charta, by which you should be ruled   
in all things; which being, Christ is your King and Soveraign   
Law-giver, and you are his people ruled by him in all things.  
 And you my dear Brethren, the faithful Ministers of the   
Gospel of Christ, and all Christian Brethren, who do not yet see   
cause of submitting, and yielding unto this Change; I do be-  
­seech you to consider the times, and compare the Prophecies of   
Scripture, with the present providences; and see if you find not   
all things to come to pass, according as it is written; and that   
these wonderful providences are not without Scripture-author­-  
ity, and much to be regarded by the people of God. Nor be they   
the executions of Divine wrath upon either Church or World, by   
prophane hands, who act their own wills and lusts, though they   
accomplish Gods ends; but they be the pouring out of the wrath   
of God upon Antichrist, for his destruction, and overthrow of   
his Kingdom, by the hands of holy Saints, according to the com-  
­mand of Christ; Christ himself riding forth Victoriously among   
them, and performing his great works, written and foretold   
in the holy Scriptures. May not Queen Maries coming to the   
Crown by the help of the Saints, be seasonably called to remem-  
­brance for if not, yet now the time is come, to change Govern-  
­ments, and to cast down all at the foot of Christ, that he may   
Reign, and fill the Earth with the glory of his Government.  
 No Oaths or Covenants of Gods People are against Christ,   
but in subordination to him, and to the advancement of his

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Kingdom. If therefore these great Changes are carried up to that   
head, that i's the true scope, and end of those Vows and Prom­-  
ises. It were not lawful to terminate such a Vow or Covenant,   
as that is, upon any Person, Family or Creature; it were Idola­-  
try; nor was it so; nor is it now broken, by breaking all Crea-  
­tures in pieces, that stood in the way of obtaining the true end   
thereof, namely, the advancement of the Lord Jesus, and his   
Kingdom.  
 I beseech you therefore help forward this work, which Christ   
hath put into the hands of those whom he hath made emi-  
­nent, in accomplishing the works of his glorious coming to set   
up his Dominion on earth. Be not behind in bringing Christ to   
the Throne in England! You, you, the holy Watchmen of the   
Lord, have given God no rest by your uncessant Prayers, for the   
bringing about what is now done; follow on therefore to follow   
the Lord, and, as Antichrist falleth, with whatever else stood   
in the way of Christ : so now let Christ come in, and help ye for-  
­ward the setting up of his Kingdom.  
 I am bold to present this Scripture-Platform of Government,   
to publique view, ( if advice so carry it) at this season; because   
I do believe it to be a Divine Institution of a Civil Govern-  
­ment; and seemeth to me to be such, as will well suit the pres-  
­ent condition of England, Scotland, and Ireland, or any   
other religious people in the World, who fear the command of   
God, and tremble at his Word: and being persuaded in my   
heart, that it is the minde of the Lord, that Nations should be   
governed by Scripture-Institutions, the time being come that   
the Lord is about to shake all the Earth, and throw down that   
great Idol of Humane Wisdome in Governments, and set up

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Scripture-Government in the room thereof. It may please God   
to give acceptance unto this poor beginning and move the hearts   
of such as are wise, to prosecute this design of Christ, and more   
accurately to search the Scriptures, to finde out the perfect will   
of God in this point, which yet i's but in its birth, and dawn-  
­ing; many things being yet dim, and dark: in the morning twi­-  
light, we cannot see for before us, nor round about us; but the  
 Rising-Sun, will through grace, bring greater light with him.  
 As for such wholsome, just, and wise Laws, as any Nation   
hath already made, the Wisdome of the Lord will teach his   
People to refer them to their Scripture-principles, demonstrat­-  
ing the truth and equity thereof, by the Word of God, whereby   
they will appear to be the deducts from the Word of God; and   
hence they that are governed by them, are governed by the   
Lord; they that break them sin against the Lord, by breaking   
his Commandment and Law.  
 It were a Work worthy the labours of the best Divines, and   
the best of Men, to demonstrate the equity of all the wholsome   
and wise Laws of ENGLAND by the Word of God; the   
effects of which Work would be of admirable consequence to   
sanctifie the whole Land, to make the Rulers more expresly to   
govern for the Lord, and the People to obey the Lord, in obey-  
­ing their Governours; and so the Lord himself should Reign   
over them.  
  
 My continual Prayer in this behalf, at the Throne of Grace   
is, that the Lord would so for scatter those black Clouds, which   
do darken the mindes of God's People in ENGLAND, that   
they may see some Beams of the brightness of CHRIST his

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coming to Reign; and that the Lord would please to bow their   
divided hearts, to meet with one consent and accord, to make   
CHRJST their LAW-GIVER, and JUDGE, and   
KING, in whom alone they shall finde settlement and as-  
­sured peace.

Amen, Amen.

THE

CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH:

OR,

The Civil Polity of The Rising Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

CHAP. I.

IT is the Commandment of the   
 Lord, that a people should enter   
 into Covenant with the Lord to   
 become his people, even in their   
 Civil Society, as well as in their   
 Church-Society(a). Whereby they   
submit themselves to be ruled by the Lord in all

(a) Deut. 29.10, 11, 12, 13.

You stand this day all of you, before the Lord your God; your Captains of your Tribes,   
your Elders, and your Officers, with all the men of Israel, (n.) Tor little ones, your   
wives, and the stranger that is in thy Camp, &c. ( 12.) That thou shouldest enter   
into Covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath which he maketh with thee   
this day, (13.) That he may establish thee to day far a people unto himself, and that   
he may be to thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy   
fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

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(a) Isai. 33.22 The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord   
is our King, he shall save me.   
  
things, receiving from him, both the platform   
of their Government, and all their Laws; which   
when they do, then Christ reigneth over them in   
all things, they being ruled by his Will, and by   
the Word of his Mouth (a).

(b) Deut. 26. 1. ad 12. I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I   
am come into the Countrey, which the Lord thy God sware unto thy   
fa­thers to give us, &c. vers. 5. And thou shalt speak, and say before   
the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my fa­ther, and he went   
down into Egypt, &c. vers. 7. And when we cried unto the Lord, he   
heard us, &c. ver. 8. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with   
a mighty hand, &c.

The substance of which Covenant, and sub-  
­jection of themselves unto the Lord, to be ruled   
by him in all things, is this. That they do hum­-  
bly confess their corruption by nature, and lost   
 condition; that they acknowledge the   
 free grace (b) of God, in their redemp-  
 ­tion by Christ, and in the promulgation of   
 the Gospel unto them, and making appli­-  
 cation thereof effectually unto their souls:   
 and therefore the Lord hath shewed his ev­-  
 erlasting Love unto them, and caused them   
 inwardly by faith, to give up themselves   
 unto him, to be for ever his, to love, serve,   
 and obey him, in all his Word and Com­-  
 mandments: so now they do outwardly, &   
 solemnly with the rest of Gods people joyn   
 together so to do in their Civil Polity, re-  
 ­ceiving from the Lord, both the platform   
 of their civil Government, as it is set down   
 (in the essentials of it) in the holy Scrip-  
 ­tures; and also all their Laws, which they   
 resolve through his grace, to fetch out of   
 the Word of God, making that their only   
 Magna Charta; and accounting no Law,   
 Statute or Judgement valid, farther then it   
 appeareth to arise and flow from the Word of God.

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(a) 1 Cor. 16. 31. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatso­ever ye do,   
do all to the glory of God.

Such as with a lively faith enter into or walk in   
this Covenant, do perform every Act (wherein they   
are free from temptation) of civil conversation   
among men (a) by faith in obedience unto   
God. Instructing, that all should do so, who   
take this Covenant; and if they do not, they   
are guilty of breach of Covenant, before God.   
A willing subjection of a mans self to Christ in   
this Covenant, is some hopeful sign of some   
degree of faith in Christ, and love to God;  
and as a good preparative for a more neer ap­-  
proach to Christ in Church-fellowship, and Cove­-  
nant: he that is willing to serve Christ by the Pol-  
­ity of the second Table civilly, is in some degree   
of preparation to serve him, by the Polity of the   
first Table Ecclesiastically.

(b) Deut. 29. 14, 15. Nei­ther with you onely do I make this Co­venant this day,   
but with him that standeth here this day before the Lord our God, and with him   
that is not here with us this day.

The Child is implicitely comprehended in   
the Fathers Covenant (b), the Wife is explicitely   
comprehended in her Husbands, insomuch that in   
her Widowhood she and her Family are one, un­-  
der the order of the Government of God.

(c) Exod. 18. 23. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so.

(d) Exod. 18. 24. Mom hearkened, and did all. (e) 18. 21. Thou shalt provide   
able men. With Deut. 1. 13. Take ye wise men, and I will make them Rulers.

The particular form of Government, which is ap-  
­proved of God (c), instituted by Moses (d)   
among the sons of Israel, ( and profitable to   
be received by any Nation or People, who   
reverence the command of God, and tremble   
at his Word) is this; that they chuse (e) unto

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(f) Exod.18.2. Dent. 1. 15.

themselves Rulers of thousands (f), of hundreds,   
of fifties and of tens, who shall govern according   
to the pure, holy, righteous, perfect, and good   
Law of God (g), written in the Scriptures of the   
Old and New Testament.

(g) Deut. 1. 17. Fear not the face of man, far the judgement is God’s. 2 Chro. 19. 6.   
And said to the Judge, Take heed what ye do :far ye fudge not far man, but far the   
Lord, who is with you in the judgement: Ezek. 44. 24. They shall fudge it according   
to my judgement.   
  
 The forming of which Platforme of Govern­-  
ment, deduced from Scriptures, is as followeth.

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CHAP. II.

THe several degrees of tens, fifties, hundreds,   
and thousands; may be fitly called orders of   
men, governed by God, the God of order (a).

(a) Isa. 9. 7. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,   
upon the throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it.

Which orders { 1. Those of the single Platforme.  
 of men are { 2. Those of the Superior arising  
 upon the first.

First for the single Platform, which is Gods   
Standard, according to which the Superior is de-  
­lineated, or measured out. God hath commanded   
that ten men should chuse unto them a Ruler of   
ten.  
 Hence, if they be not ten, they cannot chuse   
unto them a Ruler of ten. Hence also the Ruler   
maketh the eleventh man; or rather, is the  
head (b) of the order of ten.   
  
(b) Exod. 18. 25. Make them beads of the people, Rulers of tens, &c.

Hence also one Ruler of ten, may Rule over   
nineteen men; but if they become twenty, then   
by Gods institution, they must chuse another   
Ruler of ten; for God hath said, Chuse you Rulers   
of tens.  
 Servants, or Sons living with their Parents,   
as in the condition of Servants (c), they may not   
explicitely, politically, personally, chuse pub-  
­lick Rulers; while they live under the Authority

(c) Gal. 4. 1. The heir so long as he is a child, differeth   
 nothing from a ser­vant.

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of Family-government, they are not personally ca­-  
pable of interest in publick Political Elections: it   
is enough to attain Gods ends, that they be virtu-  
­ally comprehended in their Fathers Covenant.  
 But if they Marry, or live in the state of al-  
­lowed publick Free-men, then are they capable   
of, & are bound personally to act, in the choice   
of their publick Rulers. The Rulers of the Father   
are virtually Rulers of the Child: but when the   
child putteth forth an act of choice, he hath lib-  
­erty to chuse, in due order, another Ruler of ten,   
unto whom he doth personally submit himself:   
for all men are commanded to chuse unto them­-  
selves Rulers.  
 By that one act of chusing his Ruler of ten, and   
subjecting himself unto him, he doth chuse, and   
subject himself unto all the Superior orders, un-  
­der whom his Ruler of ten is ruled.  
 No man may lawfully, or without sin, live out   
of the order of Gods Government: and should   
any man refuse to chuse and subject himself unto   
the same, he cannot justly challenge any privy-  
­ledge, benefit, or protection thereby, though his   
virtual interest (in such as have it) hath hold upon   
him, until his actual choice doth more expresly en­-  
gage him, and Love will improve every thing for   
the good of those, who know not what is good   
for themselves. He is beneath the condition of a   
stranger, who shall Apostacize from the Govern-  
­ment of the Lord; yea, beneath the condition of   
Barbarians, who are not yet come in, either by   
themselves, or their Progenitors.  
 As the Ruler of ten may rule over more then   
ten, even any number under twenty: so it is with

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the other orders, One Ruler of fifty, may rule  
 over nine orders of ten; but if they become ten,   
then they must chuse another Ruler of fifty: for   
the Lord hath said, Chuse you Rulers of fifties; that   
is, every five orders of ten shall chuse a Ruler of   
fifty.  
 Again, one Ruler of an hundred, may rule over   
three orders of fifties; but if they become four   
orders of fifties, then two of them must chuse an­-  
other Ruler: for God hath said, Chuse Rulers of hun-  
­dreds; that is, of ten orders of tens.  
 Again, one Ruler of a thousand, may rule over   
nineteen orders of an hundred; but if they be­-  
come twenty orders, then they must by Gods in-  
­stitution chuse another Ruler of a thousand: for   
the Lord hath said, Chuse you Rulers of thousands.  
 Hence one Ruler of a thousand may, in case all   
the orders under him be at the fullest, rule over   
8436. men; which ordinarily, amounteth to 33687   
souls: which doth thus appear.

One Ruler of ten may rule over nineteen men.   
  
 One Ruler of fifty may rule over nine orders of   
 ten; and nine times nineteen, maketh one   
 hundred seventy one.

One ruler of an hundred, may rule over three   
 orders of fifty; and thrice 171, maketh 413.

One Ruler of a thousand, may rule over nine-  
 ­teen orders of an hundred; and nineteen   
 times 413, maketh 7847.

Add therefore to the people, their Rulers, thus:

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One Ruler of 50. with his nine Rulers of ten,   
 make ten Rulers.

One Ruler of an 100. may rule over three or-  
 ­ders of 50. which maketh 30. Rulers.

One Ruler of a thousand, may have under him   
 nineteen Rulers of an hundred. So that 19.   
 times 30. and 19. added to them,   
 makes 589 Rulers  
 Add to them 7847 People  
 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   
 Summa totalis is 8436

And generally among mankind, for one head   
of a Family, there be at least three more souls   
of women and children: so that four times 8436.   
amounteth to 33 687. soules. But it will be rare for   
all orders to be full at once.  
 Again, these orders of men, may be multiplied   
thus: when such as are Supernumerary in sev­-  
eral orders, agree together to make another or­-  
der. For example, if two Rulers of ten, have each   
of them fifteen men under them, then five men of   
one order, and five of the other order, may agree   
together to make another, a new order: and so in   
all other orders it may be.  
 But if they do this, if they make a new order   
because they desire it, and not because the Word   
of the Lord commandeth it; when they multiply   
orders by choice, and not by necessity of institu­-  
tion: then their next Superiors shall guide and   
direct them in peace and mutual love: for Moses   
guided the people in all their Elections (d).

(d) Exod. 18. 21, 25. Thou shalt provide able men. 25. Moses chose able men.   
Deut. 1. 15. So I took the chief of your Tribes.

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 If they cannot agree, then they may appeal to   
their next Superiours, and so unto the highest ( e)   
Council, if need be: For the Council is (in ordi­-  
nary dispensation) in Moses stead; and the Scrip-  
­tures are the Mouth of God, at which they must   
enquire, and by the guidance thereof determine   
of all Cases, so far as the Lord giveth light; and   
until the mind of God be known, the Case must   
stay, whatever it be (f).

(e) Deut. 1. 17. The case that is too hard for you, bring it unto me.

(f) Num. 15. 34. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared   
what should be done unto him. Numb. 9. 8. Stand still and I will hear   
what the Lord will command concerning you.

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CHAP. III.

THe Lord hath given this Commandment in   
the ordering of his Government, that judg-  
­ment should be executed speedily (a) ; and also   
that it should be managed with the greatest re-  
­spell: to the ease, both of the Governours, and   
People (b).

(a) Ezra7.26. Let judgment be executed speedily upon them. Eccles. 8. 11.   
Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore   
the heart of the sons of men, is fully set in them to do evil. (b) Exod. 18. 17,   
18, 22, 23. This thing is not good; thou wilt surely wear away, both thou   
and this peo­ple that is with thee: ver. 22. So shall it be easier: ver. 23. Thou   
shalt be able to en­dure, and all the people shall go to their place in peace,   
viz. having judgement among themselves in their own Quarters, and places   
of abode, and not be troubled to come to the chief Court, with every cause.

(c) Exod. 18. 22. Let them fudge the people at all seasons.

But particular times, means and other circum-  
­stances, the Lord hath not particularly com­-  
manded (c). Hence it is left unto the wisdom of   
the Rulers, to order time, means and other circum­-  
stances, for the best, and most effectual attain-  
­ment of the forementioned speedy and easie deter-  
mination and execution of Judgement, in all Cases   
whatsoever, and in all places, Cities, or Towns   
where the people dwell (a).   
  
(a) Exod. 18. 23 All the people shall go to their own place in peace.

Hence again, it well accordeth with Gods in  
­stitution, that every order do co-habit together  
(b) as neer as may be; because that doth tend to   
facilitate both the watch, and work of the Lords   
and made them Government.

(b) Deut. 1.15, I took the chief of your Tribes, and made them heads over you.

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Hence also limits of place (c) (in a general ob-  
­servation with allowance to some particular ex­-  
ceptions, as prudence and piety may require) may   
be useful to attain this end.

(c) Deut. 21. 2, 3. Thy El­ders and Judges shall measure unto the Cities about, and the  
City which is next unto the slain man. Deut. 16.18. Judges shalt thou make in all thy   
gates throughout thy Tribes.

Hence again, if any shall remove his habita­-  
tion to a more remote place; meet it is that he do   
change his Rulers, by chusing a Ruler of ten in   
the place whither he goeth to dwell: and hence   
it is meet that such removings and changes be   
made by a due approbation of the Rulers whence   
he goeth, and with the acceptance of those to   
whom he removeth, lest by such unstable changes,   
as some may affect, they may slip out from under   
the Government of the Lord, at least from under   
the watch and use thereof, though from the right   
thereof they cannot, because it is a general com-  
­mand to honour thy Father and thy Mother; and   
lest by the confluence of unruly persons to a place   
more remisly governed, the Government of the   
Lord should be undermined, and scandalized.  
 Because sin will grow apace, like ill weeds, if   
it be not always watched, and often weeded out;   
and fire of strife will soon flame out, if it be not   
speedily suppressed and quenched: and it edifieth   
many ways, that justice should be speedily done;   
especially it promoteth peace and piety.  
 Hence it is meet, that Rulers of ten appoint   
one day in a week, solemnly to hear and determine   
Causes, and guide the common Affairs of his ten,   
for the more orderly, easie, and speedy proceed-

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1. Exod. 18. 26. They judged the people at all seasons: עת doth frequently   
   in Scripture signifie a stated time.

ing of justice and peace, which are facilitated and   
expedited, by a stated and appointed time (a).  
 Again, it is meet that the Ruler of fifty keep   
the Court of six, consisting of five Rulers of ten,   
and himself the Ruler of them, once in a moneth,   
for the more solemn proceeding of Justice, & Ap­-  
peals, if need be: because the higher Cases as-  
cend, the more solemnity is in them (b); and need   
the more time and deliberation.  
  
(b) Exod. 18.22. Every great matter they shall bring unto thee.  
(c) Psal. 82. 1.

I call these a Court, because they are an Assem­-  
bly of Judges, among whom God promiseth to   
stand (c). Six is the lowest number of this Court;   
but they may be more, according as the orders of   
ten be more under a Ruler of fifty; but they can­-  
not exceed ten; because a Ruler of fifty cannot   
by Gods institution, have more then nine orders   
of ten under him.  
 Again, it is meet that the Ruler of an hundred   
keep the Court of three, consisting of two Rulers   
of fifty, and himself the Ruler of them, four times   
in the year, upon the former grounds.  
 Three is the lowest number of this Court, and   
it cannot exceed four; because by Gods institu­-  
tion, he cannot have more then three orders of   
fifty under him.  
 Again, it is meet that the Ruler of a thousand   
keep the Court of eleven, consisting of ten Rul­-  
ers of an hundred, and himself the Ruler of them,   
twice in a year: and here judgement runneth with

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greatest Solemnity and Majesty; I say, Greatest   
in the single platform.  
 Eleven is the lowest number of this Court;   
but there may be more, according as orders of an   
hundred under him be multiplied; but they can-  
­not exceed twenty, because he cannot have above   
nineteen orders of an hundred under him.  
 It is necessary that every Court have such Offi­c-  
ers (a) to attend, as are necessary to accomplish   
and execute those ends for which the Lord hath   
instituted those Courts: because the appointment   
of the end, doth command all means requisite for   
the attainment of that end, being such as accords   
with Justice and Prudence.  
 It is also necessary to have persons ( b), and   
all other Instruments, for the inflicting of all   
kindes of Punishments, which the Law of God   
appointeth.  
 But touching the several Punishments of Cost,   
Shame, or Smart; and touching the several ways   
of putting to Death, by Stoning, Burning, Stran-  
­gling, or by the Sword; as also touching Banish­-  
ment, I am here silent. They more properly ap-  
­pearing in the handling of such Laws which do   
inflict several punishments, according to the de­-  
merit of the sin, or use of terrour unto others,   
proportioning them to the Standard in the holy   
Scriptures.

(a) Dent. 16. 18. Judges and Officers shalt thou make, Vide Ainsworth in Loc.  
(b) Lev. 24. 12. Num. 15. 34. They put him in ward.

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CHAP. IV.

(a) Lev. 19. 17. Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him.

UPon the forenamed grounds of speedy Jus-  
­tice, for the stablishing of firme peace, all   
Causes betwixt man and man, pertaining to the   
Cognizance of the Ruler of ten, must be put upon   
Suit or Tryal, within the space of one moneth (a).   
Cases belonging to the Court of six, must be   
put upon Suit or Tryal within the space of three   
moneths. Causes belonging to the Court of three,   
must be put upon Suit or Tryal, within the space   
of nine moneths. Causes belonging to the Court   
of eleven, must be put upon Suit or Tryal, in the   
space of one year and half; or else to be frustrate,   
and lose the priviledge of receiving judgement by   
man; unless it appear that the providence of God   
did hinder, or that the Defendant or Delinquent   
party did disappoint it: in those cases it may be   
admitted to Tryal, and receive Judgement, though   
it be of a longer standing.  
 But Criminal Offences are to be judged, at the   
time when, and in the place where they be discov­-  
ered, and that with the most speed that may be.  
 Such Cases as are difficult, weighty, and wor-  
­thy such attendance, and cannot attain an ac­-  
ceptable issue in the Court where they firstly ap­-  
pertain, may ascend from Court to Court, either   
by Appeal, or by Transmission to the Court of   
eleven. And whatsoever Cause of weight cannot   
receive issue there, may yet ascend either by Ap-

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(a) Exod. 18. 22. Great mat­ters they shall bring to thee. 26. Hard matters they brought  
to Moses. Deut. 17. 8, 9. If there arise a matter too hard for thee, &c. thou shalt come   
to the Priests, Levites and Judges that shall be in those days. (b) And thou shalt do  
according to the sentence, &c. Deut. 17.10.

In lesser Commonwealths, where there be no   
Rulers or Courts of the Superiour order, Cases   
ascend to the highest Council from the Court of   
eleven: but where there be Rulers and Courts of   
the Superiour order, there the Cause must ascend   
from the Court of eleven in the single Platform,   
to the Court of one Myriade, or the lowest Court   
in the Superiour order; and so proceed until it   
come to the Supreme Council.  
 Every Appeal in this Platform of Government   
which the Lord hath instituted, doth ascend to an   
higher Court, and to other Judges. There is one   
of the Judges from whom he appealeth, a mem-  
­ber of the Court to which he doth Appeal, truly   
to inform the Court of the Reasons of their Judge-  
­ment: and but one, lest they should sway over-  
­much, and the Appealant want the priviledge of   
new and unprejudiced Judges.  
 Whosoever shall trouble the free passage of   
Justice in the ending of Causes, through a per-  
verse will, or base ends, or captious and quar-  
­relsome wit, besides the charges of such agita-  
­tions, he is worthy of some other medicine, as may   
most effectually do him good, and warn others.  
 In all Courts, he that hath power to call the   
Court, hath a double Vote: as for example, in the

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Court of Three, if the Ruler of an hundred differ   
from the two Rulers of fifty, the Court is equally   
divided: if there be three Rulers of fifty, and one   
of them concur with the Ruler of an hundred,   
their sentence standeth.  
 When the Court is equally divided, it is a   
difficult Case, and must ascend to the Court next   
above them by Transmission; or if the lesser   
part of the Court oppose the sentence of the   
Court, as judging it sinful, then it must ascend by   
Transmission.  
 If a Judge of any Court shall oppose the rest   
in point of sin, without weighty and considerable   
grounds, in the judgement of the Court whither it   
ascends or is transmitted; his first offence shall be   
corrected with the charge of such transmission, and   
admonition from the higher Court: after, offences   
in like kind are to be considered and judged, by   
proportion to the process of Christ in the Church,   
even unto rejection from his Place and Office.  
 The highest Council is to consist of a convenient   
number of the most holy and able men (a) orderly   
chosen for that purpose, by all the orders of (b)   
men under their jurisdiction, every man in order   
having an equal voice therein, from among all the   
Elders of the people: both in the Commonwealth,   
and in the Churches (c), the biggest number being   
civil Elders ( d).

(a) Num. 11. 16. Whom thou knowest, to be Elders of the people. With Exod. 18. 21.   
Able men, such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness. (b) Deut. 1.13. Take ye  
wise men. (c) Deut. 17. 9. And thou shalt come to the Priests, Levites, and Judges that   
shall be in those days, and enquire, and they shall shew thee, &c. 2 Chro. 19. 8.   
Moreover, in Jerusalem did Je­hosaphat set of the Levites, and of the Priests, and of the   
chief of the fathers in Isra­el, far the judgement of the Lord, and far controversie. Deut.   
21. 2. Then thy Elders and Judges shall come forth, and shall measure, & c. ver. 5. And   
the Priests the sons of Levi shall come neer, and by their word shall every stroke and   
every controversie be tryed. Deut. 19. 17. Both the men between whom the controversie   
is, shall stand before

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The Lord commanded Moses that seventy Eld-  
­ers should stand with him before the Lord; hence   
there were seventy one of the Council, and Moses   
was the chief, and ordained the rest.  
 According to which patern, the people are to   
chuse their chief Ruler first; who being installed   
by some, instead of the whole people, must instal   
the rest, and is chief Ruler of the Supreme Coun­-  
cil, who must call and manage their Assemblies.  
 As the overburdensomness of the work of Gov-  
­ernment by one man, was the ground of the insti­-  
tution of the forenamed orders of Government:   
so the overburdensomness of the work for one   
man to hear all hard Cases, and Appeals, together   
with other Cares to provide for the welfare of the   
people, was the ground of the institution of the   
Supreme Council (a).

(a) Deut. 1. 9. I spake to you, and said, I am not able to bear you alone. Numb. 11. 11. ad 16. ver. 11. And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant, and wherefore have I not found fa­your in thy sight, that thou layeth the burden of all this people upon me r ver. 14. I am not able to bear all the people alone, because it is too heavy far me.

The conveniency of the number of this high   
Council, is thus to be measured, and judged by   
Gods Standard. Israel had at least three Millions   
of people, (though not one Million of men in or-

the Lord, before the Priests and Judges. Ezek. 44. 24. And in controversie they shall   
stand in judgement, and they shall judge it according to my judgement. (d) Numb.   
11.16. Gather to me seventy men of the Elders of Israel. Vide Ainsw. in Loc. Hence   
the Hebrews gather, that they were chose out of all the Tribes, and therefore there   
was not less then five of a Tribe, and so many of Levi, who before the institution of   
the Sanhedrim, were taken of God instead of the first born, to be Priests unto God:   
far they were taken to be Priests at Sinai: Numb. 3. 14. And this institution was at   
Kibroth-hattaavah, Numb. 11. 34. with Numb. 31.15, 16, 17.

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der, or not much more: for the Souldiers were but   
six hundred thousand) now their Supreme Coun­-  
cil consisted of seventy one; therefore that is the   
highest number that will be needed among men   
ordinarily; yea, though a people should be much   
bigger, I see not but that number may suffice: But   
that number is not limitted; because God deny-  
­eth not this Government to fifty who are the least   
Court, and a lesser number of men then the high-  
­est Council in Israel had, by Gods appointment;   
and if it be not limitted on the one side, so nor on   
the other.  
 Again, the lowest number of the Supreme   
Council that may be, is five; because that Coun-  
­cil must consist both of Magistrates, and El­-  
ders of Churches; Elders of both sorts; one of   
a sort sufficeth not, and the bigger part must be   
Magistrates.  
 This Council must alwaies be in being, per-  
­sonally or virtually, to give answer to all Cases   
propounded, touching the Law of God, and the   
application thereof, to any particular Person   
or Cause, and to take care for the general Pro­-  
tection, Provision, and Government of the whole,   
in truth, holiness, and peace.

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CHAP. V.

THe duties of all the Rulers of the civil part   
 of the Kingdom of Christ, are as followeth.   
The Office and Duty of all the Rulers, is to   
govern the people in the orderly and seasonable   
practice of all the Commandments of God, in   
actions liable to Political observation, whether of   
piety and love to God, or of justice, and love to   
man with peace.  
 Hence they are keepers of both Tables, and are   
so to look that all the Commandments of God be   
observed, as to compel men to their undoubted   
duty, and punish them for their undoubted sins,   
errours and transgressions.  
 A Case, a Duty, a Sin, is said then to be un-  
­doubted, when either it is expresly, or by general   
approved consequence, commanded or forbidden   
in the Scriptures; or when it hath passed the cir-  
­cuit of Gods Polity, and received its final determi­-  
nation according to the Scriptures; unto which   
not to submit, is capital presumption.  
 Hence again, Rulers are eminently concerned   
to maintain the purity of Religion, with all care   
and power; holiness, truth, and peace being much   
concerned herein.  
 Hence again, all Rulers must be skilful in the   
Scriptures; they must read and meditate in the   
same all the daies of their life, that thereby they   
may be enabled to do their Office faithfully, and   
religiously so long as they live.

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Hence again, they are to give counsel and   
command for the well ordering of all the Pub-  
­lick Affairs of their people; both in Education of   
Youth, whether in Schools or other Occupations;   
in walking in their Callings, in their Neighbour-  
­hood, commerce and converse with men, in sub-  
­jecting themselves to Government, with Religion,   
Justice and Peace.

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CHAP. VI.

THe Office of the Ruler of ten, is to see all   
 his people walk as becometh Gods people in   
their several places, furthering the same upon all   
occasions. And at appointed times to sit alone, to   
hear and determine Causes of Justice, and of evil   
conversation; to declare Gods sentence and coun­-  
sel in every Case, and see it executed.  
 Provided it be with the consent and submission   
of the party or parties concerned.  
 All difficult Cases, and Appeals, he shall binde   
over to the Court of six; and Capitals in life, limb   
or banishment, to the Court of eleven.  
 These Rulers are next the people; hence they  
see them\* most: and therefore they need be sin- \* Each other.   
gularly wise, patient, loving, faithful, and zeal-  
ously holy men. So great is his work and charge,  
that it had need extend but to a small compass. If  
he well perform his Office, it doth prevent much  
trouble to Superiour Courts.  
 The Office of the Ruler of fifty, is to see that   
all the Rulers of ten under him, be faithful in   
their Office and Duty; and to help on their work,   
in all Cases, and toward all persons, as he hath   
occasion.  
 As also to call and keep the Court of six in   
their seasons; where all Cases, pertaining to the   
publick good of all his order, and particular Cases   
betwixt parties of the several of the orders of ten   
under him, are nextly to be tryed and determined,

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together with Appeals from any of the Rulers of   
ten under him: and difficult Cases transmitted   
from them to this Court.  
 This Court hath power to end strifes, judge   
Causes, declare and pronounce the sentence of   
Gods Word, in mulcts, and punishments, and see   
them executed. Difficult Cases they shall trans-  
­mit; and also Appeals they shall bind over, unto   
the Court of three. But capitals in life, limb or   
banishment, to the Court of eleven.  
 The Office of the Ruler of an hundred, is to   
see that the Rulers of fifty under him, do per-  
­form their Office and Duty faithfully; to help   
them what lieth in him, in any of their works to-  
­wards their Rulers of ten, or any particular per-  
­son under him. Also all Causes which concern   
the Publick good of all Orders under him, are in   
his charge. And also to call and keep the Court   
of three, where Causes betwixt parties of his sev-  
­eral orders of fifty, are properly to be tryed and   
determined; with Appeals from the Court of six,   
and such difficult Cases as that Court shall trans-  
­mit to them.  
 This Court hath power to end all strifes, judge   
and determine Causes, declare and pronounce   
the sentence of Gods Word, in mulcts and punish-  
­ments, and see them executed. Also to take care   
of the Publick good of all their Orders. Appeals,   
difficult Cases, and capitals in life and limb, and   
banishment, they shall bind over and transmit to   
the Court of eleven.  
 The Office of the Ruler of a thousand, is to   
see that all the Rulers of hundreds under him, do   
perform their Office and duty faithfully; to help

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them what lieth in him in any part of their charge   
toward their Rulers of fifties, or Rulers of ten, or   
any person under him; also all Cases which con-  
­cern the Publick good of all the orders under him,   
are in his care and charge. As also to call and keep   
the Court of eleven, where all Causes betwixt per-  
­sons in several of his Hundreds, are properly be-  
­longing; with Appeals from the Court of three,   
and difficult Cases transmitted to them. Also all   
Cases which concern the Publick good of all the   
Orders under them.  
 Also all capital Cases of life, limb or banish-  
­ment, belong this Court: because it is the highest   
and most solemn Judicatory in the single Platform,   
and fullest of Majesty. The highest punishment   
is fitly pronounced, in a more solemn Judicatory,   
then is the Court of six, or three; unless the smal­-  
ness or paucity of the people have no higher.  
 Also Cases betwixt parties of several thousands   
belong to this Court: at the choice of the Plaintiff   
in which Court of eleven, either that which him­-  
self doth belong to, or that which his Adversary   
is under. But this consideration doth belong to  
 lesser Commonwealths, where they have no Gov-  
­ernour of the Superiour order, and yet more then   
one Ruler of a thousand.  
 This Court hath power to hear and judge all   
Causes brought before them; declare and pro­-  
nounce the sentence of Scripture, in all mulcts   
and punishments, even death itself, and see them   
executed.  
 Also to pronounce, and see executed, all such   
sentences as the Supreme Council doth deter-  
­mine, and remit unto them. Namely, thus it is in

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lesser Commonwealths, where there be no Courts   
of the Superiour order, difficult Cases they must   
transmit to the highest Council, and bind over   
Appeals unto them, where there be no Courts of   
the Superiour order, betwixt the Supreme Coun­-  
cil and them.  
 The Office of the Supreme Council, is to see   
that all the Rulers of thousands, yea, all Rulers   
and Officers, of all orders and degrees, do their   
Office and Duty faithfully; and to receive difficult   
Cases and Appeals, from the Court of eleven; to   
search the Scriptures with all faithfulness, to find   
out the pure mind of God, impartially and sin-  
­cerely to apply the Cause propounded thereunto;   
to declare the will of God in the Case, and so re-  
­turn it to the Court of eleven, whereto it apper-  
­taineth, there to receive judgement accordingly.   
And whosoever will do presumptuously, and not   
hearken unto that sentence, shall be put to death,   
Deut. 17. n, 12.  
 In the single Platform, the Court of eleven is   
next to the Supreme Council, for transmission and   
remission of Causes; but where there be Courts   
of the Superiour order, it is not so.  
 Also they are to declare the Counsel and Will   
of God, touching War and Peace, and accordingly   
transmit the work to such of the Rulers as they   
judge most meet to accomplish the same.  
 Also to take care for, and provide means for   
Publick welfare and subsistence, by Trading, both   
Foraign and Domestick, Fishing, Tillage, &c.   
with all other necessary and useful Occupations.  
 Especially they are to take care for peace and   
truth in Religion, in all the Churches, and among

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all the people; and the propagation also thereof.   
As also the furtherance of all good learning in all   
the Liberal Arts and Sciences.  
 The Supreme Council, and all Courts, yea, and   
all Rulers, have power to bind Offenders, and Per­-  
sons concerned, to appear, or prosecute in due or­-  
der and season; punish for offences in that kind;   
and if need be, commit to prison for security.  
 If Rulers offend either morally or politically,   
by rigor, partiality or remisness, his or their next   
Superiours have power to correct such evils, ac-  
­cording to the Word of God; and as need may   
be, the Case may orderly ascend, from Court to   
Court, even to the highest Council. Heresie, Blas­-  
phemy, and other gross (especially if capital) sins,   
are just cause, in due order, of deposition from his   
Office, by the Supreme Council; the Cause com­-  
ing to them either by orderly ascent, or taken in   
immediately, as a notorious scandal, which calleth   
for speedy remedy.

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CHAP. VII.

SO much for the single Platform of Christ his   
Government: now followeth the Superiour,   
arising out of the first.  
 When the Lord shall bow the hearts of great   
Nations, to embrace this form of Government,   
there being populous Cities, Provinces, and   
Countries, where the Rulers of thousands will be   
greatly multiplied, and Causes frequently fall out,   
betwixt parties of several thousands; yea, and be-  
­twixt the Rulers of thousands sometimes, being   
so numerous, insomuch that the Supreme Council   
will be overburdened, even as Moses was.  
 Hence there will be a necessity of erecting the   
Superiour platform of the Lords Government:   
which by proportion unto the single Platforme   
(which is more fully exprest in Scripture) doth   
arise from it, and is builded upon it.  
 Namely, that every ten orders of thousands,   
should chuse a Ruler of ten thousand, or a Myr-  
­iade; and five orders of Myriades, a Ruler of   
fifty thousand, or five Myriades; and two orders   
of five Myriades should chuse a Ruler of an hun-  
­dred thousand, or ten Myriades: and ten orders   
of an hundred thousands, or ten Myriades, should   
chuse a Ruler of a thousand thousand, or an hun­-  
dred Myriades, or a Million.  
 I am led to believe, that this Superiour order of   
Rulers, is a Divine institution, not only by conse­-  
quence of proportion to the single Platform; but

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expresly, and that it was practised by Moses in Is-  
­rael: namely, that ten Rulers of thousands had   
a Ruler over them of ten thousands, or of a Myr­-  
iade; and that the order of Myriades or ten thou-  
­sands, were as duly & orderly observed, as the or-  
­ders of thousands were. For Numb. 10. 36. when   
they rested from their marching, Moses blessed   
them, and said, Return O Lord, to the Myriades of the   
thousands of Israel: therefore there were orders of   
Myriades, as well as of thousands.  
 Furthermore, it is expresly said, by Moses in his   
song, Dent. 33.2. The Lord came from Sinai (namely,   
where the order of Government was first insti­-  
tuted) and he came with myriades of Saints. There­-  
fore orders of Myriades were instituted and acted   
from the first foundation of this Government.  
 Likewise, Deut. 33.17. he speaketh of the or-  
­ders of Myriades among the Tribes, as familiarly   
observable, as the orders of thousands. So that we   
may see this Superiour order and platform of Gov­-  
ernment, observed in Israel, and expressed in the   
holy Scriptures.  
 The Ruler of a Myriade hath this eminency,   
above a Ruler of ten in the single Platform, that   
all his ten whom he immediately ruleth, are emi-  
­nent Rulers.  
 Hence they are an Assembly of Judges, and a   
Court, for number every way proportionable to   
the Court of eleven: but for eminency and dis-  
­tinction they are more properly called the Court   
of one Myriade.  
 The Ruler of fifty thousand or five Myriades   
holdeth a Court for number proportionable to

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the Court of six in the single Platform: but for   
eminency and distinction, they are more properly   
called the Court of five Myriades.  
 The Ruler of an hundred thousand, or ten   
Myriades, holdeth a Court for number proportion-  
­able to the Court of three in the single Platform:   
but for eminency and distinction, it is more prop­-  
erly called the Court of ten Myriades.  
 The Ruler of a thousand thousand, or an hun­-  
dred Myriades, holdeth a Court for number pro­-  
portionable to the Court of eleven; but for emi­-  
nency and distinction, it is more properly called   
the Court of one hundred Myriades.  
 The times or seasons, Officers or other means   
for the most effectual ordering of these Courts,   
will be most fitly discerned, and agreed, by such a   
people as may have use of them.  
 The Causes which most properly belong to the   
Court of one Myriade, are such as fall out betwixt   
parties of their several thousands; as also difficult   
Cases transmitted from the Court of eleven, and   
Appeals from them.  
 Also all such Cases as concern the Publick   
good of all under them.  
 All Courts of the Superiour order have power   
to judge all capital Cases whatsoever.  
 The Court of one Myriade hath also power to   
judge any Cause betwixt the Rulers of the thou-  
­sands of that Myriade, who are not to judge in the   
Court when their own Case is judged. Difficult   
Cases they transmit, and Appeals they bind over   
to the Court of five Myriades, if there be such a   
Court betwixt them and the Supreme Council:   
otherwise they transmit them to the Council.

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The Causes which properly belong to the   
Court of five Myriades, are such as fall out be-  
­twixt parties of the several Myriades under them.  
 I will ascend no higher, in describing the   
Courts of the Superiour order: partly because   
Gods Method is plain, and also it will be rarely of   
use in any Commonwealth; especially considering   
that which I farther propound.  
 Namely, seeing God himself was pleased to ap-  
­point a Prince, a chief Ruler, over every Tribe in   
Israel, who were distinguished, by that civil dis-  
­tinction of kindreds:  
 By proportion thereunto, in populous Nations,   
where there be other civil distinctions of societ-  
­ies and cohabitations of men, viz. by Cities, Prov-  
­inces, Countries, &c should not they chuse a   
Prince, a chief Ruler of those several Precincts   
of civil society?  
 Whose Office is chiefly to take care of the good   
Government, firstly, of all the Superiour Rulers   
under him; as also of all the rest, as he hath op­-  
portunity, that the Lord may rule among them.  
 Likewise to hold a Court, consisting either   
of the Rulers of Myriades, or of five Myriades,   
or of ten Myriades, or of an hundred Myriades,   
according to the greatness of the people in his   
Precincts.  
 This Court to be called the Court of the   
Prince, or Lord, or chief Ruler of such a Precinct;   
and to be next unto the Supreme Council: from   
which Court, onely difficult Cases and Appeals   
have access to the Supreme Council, and to which   
they remit the determinations of the Cause, to re-  
­ceive its judgement: Lest the Supreme Council

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be oppressed with business from so many Courts,   
and thereby the people with delays of hearing and   
issue, occasioned thereby.  
 It seemeth to be right Orders, and according   
to Gods institution, that these Princes of the sev­-  
eral Tribes or Societies of men should be mem­-  
bers of the Supreme Council: The whole Do­-  
minion being distributed unto the Supreme   
Counsellours, or to so many of them as may be   
meet. For the Princes of the Tribes of Israel (it   
seemeth to me) were members of the Sanhedrim   
or Supreme Council; because God commanded   
that they should be chosen very carefully from   
among the Elders of the people. Hence they will   
chuse the most choice of their Elders to send up   
with Moses to stand before God. Now they could   
not chuse better, fitter, and men more acceptable   
to God, out of all their Elders, then those whom   
God himself had chosen by name, to be Princes of   
the Tribes.  
 Besides, it is exceedingly harmonious, in the   
frame of this Government, that it should be so:   
for though whoever of the other Elders, whether   
of the single or Superiour Order, be chosen to   
the Supreme Council, it may seem requisite, they   
should leave the lower station, lest when Appeals   
have passed in the circuit of Gods Government,   
and come to the highest Council, there should be   
sundry of them, through whose judgement the   
Cause had formerly passed, which may prove prej­-  
udicial both to their persons, and to the Cause.  
 But when it hath lastly passed through the   
Court of the Prince of the Tribe, meet it is that   
one of the last Court through which it passed,

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should be present in the Supreme Council, to give   
true information, how they lastly after all former   
Tryals did find the Cause.  
 But this is to be observed in the distribution   
of the whole Dominion to the several Supreme   
Counsellours, that no such civil Dominion is to be   
put upon or accepted by such Elders of Churches,   
as are Members of the high Council; as being   
such whose only Office and Work is to search the   
holy Scriptures, and give all attendance to declare   
the Divine Oracle of God in such Cases as are in   
hand, of what nature soever they be: yea, and if   
the Council see need, to call Ecclesiastical Coun­-  
cils, greater or lesser, to search out the mind of   
Christ; for his presence and blessing is in every   
Ordinance; and all joyntly conspire the advance­-  
ment of his Kingdom, and the doing of his will.  
 The Election of all Superiour Rulers, is to be   
after the same manner as in the single form, viz.   
by all the people\*, over whom they are to rule. \*Or orders of men.  
 Some of the Princes of the Tribes of Israel,   
may seem to be Rulers of fifty thousands, or of   
five Orders of Myriades: yet the Office of the   
Princes was not onely under that notion, but also   
as an head of a civil society, a kindred, an eminent   
part, a division of the Commonwealth: for some   
of the Tribes had but four Myriades, and some but   
three, and therefore could not in that way and or­-  
der have a Ruler of five Myriades. Therefore they   
must needs be instituted under another considera-  
­tion, viz. as being the head or chief Ruler over an   
eminent part, or division of the Commonwealth,   
being civilly divided into such Societies.

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CHAP. VIII.

SO much for the Platform of the Lords Govern-  
­ment. Now it remains to consider of the Laws   
by which these Rulers are to Govern the Lords   
people. The written Word of God is the perfect   
Systeme or Frame of Laws, to guide all the Moral   
actions of man, either towards God or man: the   
Application whereof to every Case according to   
its circumstances, must be by the wisdom and dis-  
­cretion of the Judges, guided by the light of the   
Scriptures, and a pure Conscience.  
 The judgement and determination of a Cause,   
is nothing else, but the particular application of   
the Cause, according to all its circumstances, unto   
the Rule and Standard of Gods Word.  
 The Records of which judgements, are equiva-  
­lent to Humane Laws. Which so far as the Case   
with all its circumstances considered is rightly ap-  
­plyed to the Rule of the Word, is a deduct from   
Scripture, and bindeth the Consciences, both of   
Judges alway so to judge in the like case, and the   
people so to walk.  
 Which Records to order wisely, and publish for   
common instruction and edification, is a work of   
great wisdom, and tendeth much to Gods glory,   
the good of the people, and the facilitating and   
expediting justice, among them. All Strangers, are   
to be accounted under the Government of those   
Orders where they reside, and where their busi­-  
ness lieth; so as to have the benefit of the Gov-  
­ernment of the Lord, as our own people have.

FINIS.

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 Editor’s Note

The Christian Commonwealth is believed to have been   
written before the execution of King Charles I on   
January 30, 1649, although not published until 1659.   
After the accession to the English throne of Charles   
II in May 1660, Eliot issued a retraction and apol­-  
ogy for the book on March 24, 1661, and the General   
Court of Massachusetts, on May 22, 1661, ordered its   
suppression and the destruction of all copies. (Tran­-  
scriptions of these documents are printed below.)   
There are nine known surviving copies.  
 This edition of The Christian Commonwealth follows   
the text of the first edition, published in London in   
October 16;9. That edition was accessed in the Early   
English Books Online series, derived from microfilm   
of a copy held by the British Museum. Spelling,   
punctuation, capitalization, and italics of the orig-  
­inal have been retained. The notes appearing in the   
margins of the original edition have been renum­-  
bered (i.e., re-lettered) as required. Otherwise, the   
layout and page design are based on those of the   
first edition. In deference to modern readers, the   
long s (for f) and its ligatures (fl, fl, ft, fi, ff, ff, fh,   
jb, ft, ff, fli, and ffi) are not used. Semicolons, colons,   
question marks, and exclamation marks are preceded   
by a word space.

The typeface used in this edition is the IM Fell   
English roman and italic, digitized and supplied by   
Igino Marini [http://iginomarini.com ], and based   
on late seventeenth-century samples. The ornaments   
and initials are copies of those in the first edition.

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34 Notes

The following typographical errors in the original   
(keyed to page and line numbers in this edition) have been   
corrected:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| page.line | 1659 edition | emended to |
| v.2 | pashed | dashed |
| v.23 | endurteh | endureth |
| vii.26 | throughly | thoroughly |
| xi.14. | attendantss | attendants |
| xiii.13 | galdly | gladly |
| xiv.18 | farsake | forsake |
| xvi.17 | for ward | forward |
| xvii.8 | graze | grace |
| 5:1 | CHAP II. | CHAP. II. |
| 10(note a,b).8 | vers. 13 | vers. 23 |
| 14.5 | Congnizance | Cognizance |
| 26.25 | heundred | hundred |
| 29.5 | party | partly |

Eliot's calculation of the maximum number of souls a   
Ruler of a thousand may rule over (pages 30-31) has not be   
altered, although it is generally acknowledged that 4 times   
8436 yields 33,744, rather than 33,687.  
  
 The only other published edition of this work was printed   
in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 3rd series,   
volume IX (1846), pp. 127-164. In May 1937, fifteen photo-  
­static copies were made from an original at the Boston Pub-  
­lic Library and distributed to libraries. A facsimile edition   
was issued by Ayer Publishing in 1972, in their Research Li-  
­brary of Colonial Americana. A manuscript copy of the work   
is held at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

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For discussions of Eliot's utopianism, millennialism, and   
mission to the Indians, see:

Richard W. Cogley, “John Eliot and the Millennium,” *Religion   
 and American Culture* 1:2 (Summer 1991), pp. 227-250.  
----, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians*. Cambridge, Mass.:  
 Harvard University Press, 1999.  
Dick Hoefnagel, “The Dartmouth Copy of John Eliot's Indian   
 Bible (1639): Its Provenance,” *Dartmouth College Library Bulle-  
 tin* 33:2 (April 1993);   
James Holstun, “John Eliot's Empirical Millenarianism,” Represen-  
 ­ tations, 1:4 (1983), pp. 128-153.  
----, *A Rational Millennium: Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-  
 ­Century England and America*. New York: Oxford University   
 Press, 1987.  
David Thomson, “The Antinomian Crisis: Prelude to Puritan   
 Missions,” Early American Literature 38:3 (2003), pp. 401-435.  
Zdenek Vancura, “Bringing the Gospel to the Indians of New   
 England,” *Philologica Pragensia* 14:3 (1971), pp. 81-90.  
Craig White, “Cross-Cultural Apocalypse in the Contact Genera­-  
 tion of Native America and New England,” *Journal of Millennial   
 Studies* 2:2 (Winter 2000).

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THE BIBLICAL SOURCES FOR ELIOT'S “INSTITUTION”   
 (King James Version):

Exodus, CHAPTER 18

13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the   
people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the   
evening.  
 14And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the peo-  
­ple, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why   
sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from   
morning unto even?  
 15 And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people   
come unto me to enquire of God:  
 16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge be-  
­tween one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of   
God, and his laws.  
 17And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou   
doest is not good.  
 18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is   
with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to   
perform it thyself alone.  
 19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God   
shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou   
mayest bring the causes unto God:  
 20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew   
them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.  
 21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men,   
such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such   
over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers   
of fifties, and rulers of tens:  
 22 And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be,

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that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small   
matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they   
shall bear the burden with thee.  
 23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then   
thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to   
their place in peace.  
 24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did   
all that he had said.  
 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them   
heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rul-  
­ers of fifties, and rulers of tens.  
 26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes   
they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged   
themselves.

DEUTERONOMY, CHAPTER I

8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the   
land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac,   
and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.  
 9 And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear   
you myself alone:  
 10 The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye   
are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.  
 11 (The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times   
so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)   
 12 How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your bur-  
­den, and your strife?  
 13 Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among   
your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.  
 14 And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spo-  
­ken is good for us to do.  
 15 So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and   
made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains

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over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens,   
and officers among your tribes.  
 16 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes   
between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man   
and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.  
 17 Ye shall not respell: persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the   
small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man;   
for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you,   
bring it unto me, and I will hear it.  
 18 And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye   
should do.

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JOHN ELIOT'S RETRACTION AND APOLOGY FOR   
 *The Christian Commonwealth*

*Order of the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony*,   
22 May 1661

This Court taking notice of a booke entitled the Christian   
Commonwealth, written, as is expressed in the said booke, by Mr   
John Eliot, of Roxbury, in New England, which in sundry passages   
and expressions thereof is justly offensive, & in speciall relating to   
kingly government in England, the which the said Mr Eliot hath   
also freely & fully acknowledged to this Court, it is therefore or­-  
dered by this Court & the authority thereof, that the said booke be   
totally suppressed, & the authors acknowledgment recorded, and   
that all persons whatsoever in this jurisdiction that have any of the   
said bookes in theire custody, shall, on theire perrills, within fow-  
­erteen daies after publication hereof, either cancel & deface the   
same, or deliver them unto the next magistrate or to the secretary,   
whereby all farther divulgment & improovement of the said offen­-  
cive booke may be prevented.  
 And it is further ordered, that Mr. Elliots acknowledgment,  
& the Courts order for the calling in of those bookes, be forth-  
­with transcribed by the secretary, & caused to be posted up in Bos­-  
ton, Charls Tonne, Cambridg, Salem, & Ipswich, that so all persons   
concerned therein may take notice of theire duties, & act accord­-  
ingly. All which was done accordingly.

Mr Eliots acknowledgments, word for words.

Boston, this 24 of the 3d mo. 1661   
  
 Understanding by an act of the honored council that there is   
an offence taken at a booke published in England by others, the

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copie whereof was sent over by myself about nine or tenn yeares   
since, and that the further consideration thereof is comended to   
this honnored Generall Court, now sitting at Boston.--upon perus­-  
all thereof I doe judge myself to have offended, & in way of satis­-  
faction, not only to the authority of this jurisdiction, but also unto   
any others that shall take notice thereof, I doe hereby acknowl-  
­edg to this honnored Court such expressions as doe too manifestly   
scandalize the government of England, by King, Lords, & Com-  
­mons, as anti Christian, & justify the late innovators. I doe sin-  
­cerely beare testimony against, and acknowledg it to be, not only   
an lawfull, but an eminent forme of government.  
 2. All formes of civil government deduced from Scripture, either   
expressely or by just consequence, I acknowledg to be of God, &   
to be subjected unto for conscience sake; and whatsoever is in the   
whole epistle or booke inconsisting herewith, I doe at once for all   
cordially disoune.

JOHN ELIOT.

From Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in  
 New England. Volume IV.- Part II. 1661-1674. Edited by Nathaniel B.   
 Shurtleff Boston, 1854.

Paul Royster  
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln   
 December 19, 2005  
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