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The Constitution of the Practical Christian Republic

Adin Ballou

1854

A new order of human society is hereby founded to be called THE PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN REPUBLIC. It shall be constituted, organized and governed in accordance with the following fundamental articles, to wit:

ARTICLE 1. OBJECTS.

The cardinal objects of this Republic are and shall be the following, viz.:

To institute and consolidate a true order of human society, which shall harmonize all individual interests in the common good, and be governed by divine principles as its supreme law.

To establish local Communities of various grades and peculiarities, all acknowledging the sovereignty of divine principles, and so constituted as to promote the highest happiness of their respective associates.

To confederate all such local Communities, wheresoever existing throughout the earth, by an ascending series of combination, in one common social Republic.

To ensure to every orderly citizen of this Republic a comfortable home, suitable employment, adequate subsistence,

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congenial associates, a good education, proper stimulants to personal righteousness, sympathetic aid in distress, and due protection in the exercise of all natural rights.

To give mankind a practical illustration of civil government maintained in just subordination to divine principles; which shall be powerful without tyranny, benignant without weakness, dignified without ostentation, independent without defiance, invincible without resorting to injurious force, and pre-eminently useful without being burdensome.

To institute and sustain every suitable instrumentality for removing the causes of human misery, and promoting the conversion of the world to true righteousness.

To multiply, economize, distribute and apply beneficently, wisely and successfully, all the means necessary to harmonize the human race, with each other, with the heavenly world, and with the universal Father; that in one grand communion of angels and men the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

ARTICLE 2. PRINCIPLES.

We proclaim the absolute sovereignty of divine principles over all human beings, combinations, associations, governments, institutions, laws, customs, habits, practices, actions, opinions, intentions and affections. We recognize in the Religion of Jesus Christ, as he taught and exemplified it, a complete annunciation and attestation of essential divine principles.

We accept and acknowledge the following as divine Principles of Theological Truth.

We hold ourselves imperatively bound by the sovereignty of these acknowledged divine principles, never, under any pretext whatsoever, to kill, injure, envy or hate any human being, even our worst enemy.

Never to sanction chattel slavery, or any obvious oppression of man by man.

Never to countenance war, or capital punishment, or the infliction of injurious penalties, or the resistance of evil with evil in any form.

Never to violate the dictates of chastity, by adultery, polygamy, concubinage, fornication, self-pollution, lasciviousness, amative abuse, impure language or cherished lust.

Never to manufacture, buy, sell, deal out or use any intoxicating liquor as a beverage.

Never to take or administer an oath.

Never to participate in a sword-sustained human government, either as voters, office-holders, or subordinate assistants, in any case prescriptively involving the infliction of death, or any absolute injury whatsoever by man on man; nor to invoke governmental interposition in any such case, even for the accomplishment of good objects.

Never to indulge self-will, bigotry, love of preeminence, covetousness, deceit, profanity, idleness or an unruly tongue.

Never to participate in lotteries, gambling, betting or pernicious amusements.

Never to resent reproof, or justify ourselves in a known wrong.

Never to aid, abet or approve others in any thing sinful; but through divine assistance always to recommend and promote, with our entire influence, the holiness and happiness of all.

ARTICLE 3. RIGHTS.

No member of this Republic, nor Association of its members, can have a right to violate any of its acknowledged divine principles; but all the members, however peculiarized by sex, age, color, native country, rank, calling, wealth or station, have equal and indefeasible rights, as human beings, to do, to be and to enjoy whatever they are capable of, that is not in violation of those Principles. Within these just limits no person shall be restricted or interfered with by this Republic, nor

by any constituent Association thereof, in the exercise of the following declared rights, viz.:

The right to worship God, with or without external ceremonies and devotional observances, according to the dictates of his or her own conscience.

The right to exercise reason, investigate questions, form opinions and declare convictions, by speech, by the pen and by the press, on all subjects within the range of human thought.

The right to hold any official station to which he or she may be elected, to pursue any avocation, or follow any course in life, according to genius, attraction and taste.

The right to be stewards under God of his or her own talents, property, skill and personal endowments.

The right to form and enjoy particular friendships, with congenial minds.

The right to contract marriage, and sustain the sacred relationships of family.

The right to unite with, and also to withdraw from any Community or Association, on reciprocal terms at discretion.

In fine, the right to seek happiness in all rightful ways, and by all innocent means.

ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP.

Section 1. Membership in this Republic shall exist in seven Circles, viz. the Adoptive, the Unitive, the Preceptive, the Communitive, the Expansive, the Charitive, and the Parentive.

The Adoptive Circle shall include all members living in isolation, or not yet admitted into the membership of an Integral Community.

The Unitive Circle shall include all members of Rural and Joint Stock Communities.

The Preceptive Circle shall include all members specially and perseveringly devoted to teaching; whether it be teaching, religion, morality, or any branch of useful knowledge, and whether their teaching be done with the living voice, or with the pen, or through the press, or in educative institutions. All

Whenever one-fourth of all the members of this Republic shall subscribe and publish a written proposition to alter, amend or revise this Constitution, such proposition, of whatsoever nature, shall be submitted to each Community for consideration. Returns shall then be made of all the votes cast in every Community, to the highest organized body of the Republic for the time being. And the concurrence of two-thirds of all the votes shall determine the question or questions at issue. If the proposition shall have been a specific alteration or amendment of the Constitution, it shall thenceforth be established as such. If a Convention shall have been proposed to revise the Constitution, a Convention shall be summoned and hold accordingly. But no alteration, amendment or revision of this Constitution shall take effect until sanctioned by two-thirds of all the members present and acting thereon in their respective Communities, at regular meetings duly notified for that purpose.

such teachers, after having proved themselves competent, devoted and acceptable in the Communities to which they belong, shall be considered in the Preceptive Circle.

The Communitive Circle shall include all members of Integral Common Stock Communities, and Families, whose internal economy excludes individual profits on capital, wages for labor, and separate interests.

The Expansive Circle shall include all members who are especially devoted to the expansion of this Republic, by founding and strengthening new Integral Communities; who have associated in companies for that express purpose, and are employing the principal portion of their time, talents or property in that work.

The Charitive Circle shall include all members who are especially devoted to the reformation, elevation, improvement and welfare of the world's suffering classes, by furnishing them homes, employment, instruction and all the requisite helps to a better condition; who are associated in companies for that express purpose, and are employing the principal portion of their time, talents or property in such works.

The Parentive Circle shall include all members, who, on account of their mature age, faithful services, great experience, sound judgment or unquestionable reliability, are competent to advise, arbitrate and recommend measures in cases of great importance. They shall be declared worthy of a place in the Parentive Circle by their respective Integral Communities in a regular meeting notified for that purpose by a unanimous vote.

Section 2. The members of no Circle shall ever assume to exercise any other than purely moral or advisory power; nor claim any exclusive prerogatives, privileges, honors or distinctions whatsoever, over the members of other Circles; but shall be entitled to respect and influence in consideration of intrinsic worth alone. Nor shall there be any permanent general organization of these Circles as such. But the members of either may unite in cooperative associations, companies and partnerships

for the more efficient prosecution of their peculiar objects; and may also hold public meetings, conferences and conventions at pleasure in promotion of those objects.

Section 3. Any person may be admitted a member of this Republic by any constituent Community, or other authorized public body thereof in regular meeting assembled. And any twelve or more persons, adopting this Constitution from conviction, may render themselves members of the Republic by uniting to form a constituent and confederate Community thereof.

Section 4. Any person may resign or withdraw membership at discretion, or may recede from either of the other Circles to the Adoptive Circle, by giving written notice to the body or principal persons concerned. Any person uniting with a Society of any description, radically opposed in principle, practice or spirit to this Republic, shall be deemed to have relinquished membership; likewise any person who shall have ceased to manifest any interest in its affairs for the space of three years.

Section 5. Any constituent Community, or other organized body of this Republic, competent to admit members, shall have power to dismiss or discharge them for justifiable reasons. And no person shall be retained a member after persistently violating or setting at naught any one of the sovereign divine principles declared in Article 2. of this Constitution.

ARTICLE 5. ORGANIZATION.

Section 1. The constituent and confederate bodies of this social Republic shall be the following, viz.: Parochial Communities, Integral Communities, Communal Municipalities, Communal States, and Communal Nations.

Section 2. Parochial Communities shall consist each of twelve or more members belonging chiefly to the Adoptive Circle, residing promiscuously in a general neighborhood, associated for religious and moral improvement, and to secure such other social advantages as may be found practicable.

It shall be the fundamental, uniform and established policy of this Republic:

To govern, succor and protect its own people, to the utmost of its ability, in all matters and cases whatsoever, not involving anti-Christian conflict with the sword-sustained governments of the world under which its members live.

To avoid all unnecessary conflicts whatsoever with these governments, by conforming to all their laws and requirements which are not repugnant to the sovereignty of divine principles.

To abstain from all participation in the working of their political machinery, and to be connected as little as possible with their systems of governmental operation.

To protest, remonstrate and testify conscientiously against their sins on moral grounds alone; but never to plot schemes of revolutionary agitation, intrigue or violence against them, nor be implicated in countenancing the least resistance to their authority by injurious force.

If compelled in any case, by divine principles, to disobey their requirements, or passively to withstand their unrighteous exactions, and thus incur their penal vengeance, to act openly, and suffer with true moral heroism.

Never to ask their protection, even in favor of injured innocence, or threatened rights, when it can be interposed only by means which are condemned by divine principles.

To live in peace, so far as can innocently be done, with all mankind outside of this Republic, whether individuals, associations, corporations, sects, classes, parties, states or nations; also to accredit and encourage whatever is truly good in all; yet to fellowship iniquity in none, be enslaved by none, be amalgamated with none, be morally responsible for none, but ever be distinctly, unequivocally and uncompromisingly the Practical Christian Republic, until the complete regeneration of the world.

ARTICLE 12. AMENDMENT.

merce, to demand, as a price for anything sold or exchanged, more than the fair cost value thereof, as nearly as the same can be estimated, reckoning prime cost, labor or attention, incidental expenses, contingent waste, depreciation and average risks of sale; nor to demand for the mere use of capital, except as partners in the risk of its management, any clear interest or profit whatsoever exceeding four per cent. per annum.

Section 3. It shall not be deemed compatible with the welfare and honor of this Republic, for the people thereof to owe debts outside of the same exceeding three-fourths of their available property, rated at a moderate valuation by disinterested persons; nor to give or receive long credits, except on real estate security; nor to manufacture, fabricate or sell shammy and unreliable productions; nor to make business engagements, or hold out expectations, which are of doubtful fulfillment

Section 4. Whenever the population and resources of this Republic shall warrant the formation of the first Communal Nation, and the government thereof shall have been organized, a uniform system of Mutual Banking shall be established, based mainly on real estate securities, which shall afford loans at the mere cost of operations. Also, a uniform system of Mutual Insurance, which shall reduce all kinds of insurance to the lowest terms. Also, a uniform system of reciprocal Commercial Exchange, which shall preclude all needless interventions between producers and consumers, all extra risks of property, all extortionate speculations, all inequitable profits on exchange, and all demoralizing expedients of trade. Also, Regulations providing for the just encouragement of useful industry, and the practical equalization of all social advantages, so far as the same can be done without infracting individual rights. And all the members shall be considered under sacred moral obligations to cooperate adhesively and persistently in every righteous measure for the accomplishment of these objects.

ARTICLE 11. POLICY.

Section 3. Integral Communities shall consist each of twelve or more members, inhabiting an integral territorial domain so held in possession and guaranteed that no part thereof can be owned in fee simple by any person not a member of this Republic.

There shall be three different kinds of Integral Communities, viz.: Rural, Joint Stock, and Common Stock Communities.

Rural Communities shall hold and manage the major portion of their respective domains in separate homesteads, adapted to the wants of families and to small associations, under a system of Individual Proprietorship.

Joint Stock Communities shall hold and manage the major portion of their respective domains in Joint Stock Proprietorship, with various unitary economies, under a system of associative cooperation; laying off the minor portion into village house lots, to be sold to individual members under necessary restrictions.

Common Stock Communities shall hold and manage their respective domains and property in Common Stock, without paying individual members profits on capital, or stipulated wages for labor. Common Stock Families may also be formed within Rural and Joint Stock Communities, when deemed desirable and practicable; in which case such families shall not be considered Integral Communities, but as constituent portions of the Communities on whose domains they respectively reside.

Section 4. Communal Municipalities shall consist each of two or more Communities, whether Parochial or Integral, combined, as in a town or city, for municipal purposes necessary to their common welfare and impracticable or extremely difficult of accomplishment without such a union.

Section 5. Communal States shall consist of two or more Communal Municipalities, combined for general purposes necessary to their common welfare and impracticable or extremely difficult of accomplishment without such a union.

Section 6. Communal Nations shall consist each of two or more Communal States, combined for national purposes necessary to their common welfare and impracticable or extremely difficult of accomplishment without such a union.

Section 7. When there shall be, two or more Communal Nations, they shall be represented equitably, according to population, in a Supreme Unitary Council, by Senators elected for the term of - years.

Section 8. The several constituent bodies of this social Republic, herein before named, shall all be organized under written Constitutions, Compacts or Fundamental Laws, not inconsistent with this general Constitution, and shall exercise the governmental prerogatives and responsibilities defined in the next ensuing Article.

ARTICLE 6. GOVERNMENT.

Section 1. Self-government in the Individual, the Family, and the primary congenial Association, under the immediate sovereignty of divine principles, being the basis of moral and social order in this Republic, shall be constantly cherished as indispensable to its prosperity. Therefore all governmental powers vested in the confederate bodies of this Republic shall be such as are obviously beneficent, and such as cannot be conveniently exercised by the primary Communities, or their component circles. And such confederate bodies shall never assume to exercise governmental powers not clearly delegated to them by their constituents.

Section 2. Each Parochial, and each Integral Community, shall exert its utmost ability to insure all its members and dependents a full realization of the guarantees specified in Object 4, Article 1 of this Constitution, viz.: a comfortable home, suitable employment, adequate subsistence, congenial associates, a good education, proper stimulants to personal righteousness, sympathetic aid in distress and due protection in the exercise of all natural rights. And whereinsoever it shall find itself unable to realize the said guarantees, it may unite with other Com-

mestic habits, including personal cleanliness, order, propriety, agreeableness and generous social qualities - industrial executiveness and skill, in one or more of the avocations necessary to a comfortable subsistence - and, withal, practical economy in pecuniary matters. In fine, to qualify them for solid usefulness and happiness in all the rightful pursuits and relations of life.

Section 3. The Preceptive Circle of members shall be expected to distinguish themselves by a zealous, wise and noble devotion to this great interest of education. And every individual, family private association and constituent body of this Republic, in their respective spheres, shall cooperate, by every reasonable effort, to render its educational institutions, from the nursery to the University, preeminently excellent.

ARTICLE 10. PROPERTY.

Section 1. All property, being primarily the Creator's and provided by Him for the use of mankind during their life on earth, ought to be acquired, aided and disposed of in strict accordance with the dictates of justice and charity. Therefore the members of this Republic shall consider themselves stewards in trust, under God, of all property coming into their possession, and, as such, imperatively bound not to consume it in the gratification of their own inordinate lusts, nor to hoard it up as a mere treasure, nor to employ it to the injury of any human being, nor to withhold it from the relief of distressed fellow creatures, but always to use it as not abusing it, for strictly just, benevolent and commendable purposes.

Section 2. It shall not be deemed compatible with justice for the people of this Republic, in their pecuniary commerce with each other, to demand, in any case, as a compensation for their mere personal service, labor or attendance, a higher price per cent, per piece, per day, week, month or year, than the average paid to the first class of operatives in the Community, or general vicinity, where the service is rendered. Nor shall it be deemed compatible with justice for the members, in such com-

obligation to solicit or accept it. And it shall be considered the perpetual duty of the Preceptive and Parentive Circles to enlighten the public mind relative to the requisites of true matrimony, and to elevate the marriage institution within this Republic to the highest possible plane of purity and happiness.

Section 2. Marriage shall always be solemnized in the presence of two or more witnesses, by the distinct acknowledgment of the parties before some member of the Preceptive, or of the Parentive Circles, selected to preside on the occasion. And it shall be the imperative duty of the member so presiding, to see that every such marriage be recorded, within ten days thereafter, in the Registry of the Community to which one or both of them shall at the time belong.

Section 3. Divorce from the bonds of matrimony shall never be allowable within the membership of this Republic, except for adultery conclusively proved against the accused party. But separations for other sufficient reasons may be sanctioned, with the distinct understanding that neither party shall be at liberty to marry again during the natural lifetime of the other.

ARTICLE 9. EDUCATION.

Section 1. The proper education of the rising generation, being indispensable to the prosperity and glory of this Republic, it shall be amply provided for as a cardinal want; and no child shall be allowed to grow up any where under the control of its membership, without good educational opportunities.

Section 2. Education shall be as comprehensive and thorough as circumstances in each case will allow. It shall aim, in all cases, to develop harmoniously the physical, intellectual, moral and social faculties of the young. To give them, if possible, a high-toned moral character, based on scrupulous conscientiousness and radical Christian principles - a sound mind, well stored with useful knowledge, and capable of inquiring, reasoning and judging for itself - a healthful, vigorous body, suitably fed, exercised, clothed, lodged and recreated - good do-

munities to insure them, by such means as shall be mutually agreed on for that purpose. Each Community shall have the right to frame, adopt and alter its own Constitution and laws; to elect its own officers, teachers and representatives; and to manage its own domestic affairs of every description, without interference from any other constituent body or authority of this Republic; excepting, always, the prerogatives which it shall have specifically delegated, or referred to others.

Section 3. Each Communal Municipality shall be formed by a Convention of delegates, chosen for that purpose by the Communities proposing to unite in such a Municipality. The delegates shall be chosen equitably on the basis of population. These delegates shall form a Constitution or Fundamental Compact, clearly defining the governmental powers to be exercised by the Municipal authorities; which, having been submitted to the voting members of the Communities concerned, and adopted, the Municipality shall be considered established, and shall go into organized operation accordingly. But either of the Communities composing such Municipality shall have the right to secede therefrom, after giving one year's notice, paying all assessments due the corporation at the time of such notice, and relinquishing its share of the public property therein. Or the union of two or more Communities, constituting a Municipality, may be dissolved at any time by mutual agreement of the federative parties.

Section 4. Each Communal State shall be formed by a Convention of delegates from the Municipalities proposing to unite in the same, through a process substantially similar to the one prescribed in the preceding Section, but without the right of secession therein reserved. And each Communal Nation shall be formed by the States proposing to unite therein, in general accordance with the same process.

Section 5. The duties and powers of the Supreme Unitary Council shall be determined in a Fundamental Compact, to be framed by delegates from all the Communal Nations then exist-

ing, and adopted by at least two-thirds of the citizen members of this Republic present and acting in their respective primary Communities, at meetings duly notified for that purpose. And all questions throughout this Republic, excepting the election of officers, shall be determined by a two-thirds vote.

Section 6. No official servant of any grade in this Republic shall ever assume to distinguish himself or herself by external display of dress, equipage or other artificial appliances, above the common members; nor shall receive compensation for official services beyond the average paid to the first class of operatives at large, with a reasonable allowance for incidental expenses; but every official servant shall be considered bound to exemplify the humility, modesty and benevolence inculcated in the Christian precept, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be the servant of all." Nor shall it be allowable for any of the constitutional bodies of this Republic to burthen the people with governmental expenses for mere worldly show, or for any other than purposes of unquestionable public utility.

ARTICLE 7. RELIGION.

Section 1. Acknowledging the Christian Religion as one of fundamental divine principles, to be practically carried out in all human conduct, this Republic insists only on the essentials of faith and practice affirmed in Article 2 of its Constitution. Therefore no uniform religious or ecclesiastical system of externals shall be established; nor shall any rituals, forms, ceremonies or observances whatsoever be either instituted, or interdicted; but each Community shall determine for itself, with due regard to the conscientious scruples of its own members, all matters of this nature.

Section 2. Believing that the Holy Christ-Spirit will raise up competent religious and moral teachers, and commend them, by substantial demonstrations of their fitness, to the confidence of those to whom they minister, this Republic shall not assume to commission, authorize or forbid any person to preach, or to teach religion; nor shall any constituent

body thereof assume to do so. But each Community may invite any person deemed worthy of confidence, to be their religious teacher on terms reciprocally satisfactory to the parties concerned.

Section 3. It shall be the privilege and duty of the members of this Republic to hold general meetings, at least once in three months, for religious improvement and the promulgation of their acknowledged divine principles. In order to this, Quarterly Conferences shall be established in every general region of country inhabited by any considerable number of members. Any twenty-five or more members, wheresoever resident, shall be competent to establish a Quarterly Conference, whenever they may deem the same necessary to their convenience. In so doing, they shall adopt a written Constitution, subsidiary to this general Constitution, and no wise incompatible therewith; under which they may establish such regulations as they shall deem promotive of their legitimate objects. All such Conferences shall have power to admit members into the Adoptive Circle of this Republic; and also, for sufficient reasons, to discharge them. And each Quarterly Conference shall keep reliable records of its proceedings, with an authentic copy of this general Constitution prefixed.

ARTICLE 8. MARRIAGE.

Section 1. Marriage, being one of the most important and sacred of human relationships, ought to be guarded against caprice and abuse by the highest wisdom which is available. Therefore, within the membership of this Republic and the dependencies thereof, Marriage is specially commended to the care of the Preceptive and Parentive Circles. They are hereby designated as the confidential counselors of all members and dependents who may desire their mediation in cases of matrimonial negotiation, contract or controversy; and shall be held preeminently responsible for the prudent and faithful discharge of their duties. But no person decidedly averse to their interposition shall be considered under imperative