

## THE GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

The **fifth question** persons are asked when they become members of a Presbyterian church is this: *Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?* In order to answer this question honestly, a person must know several things about the government of the church. Christ is the Head of the church. Members of the church look to Him alone as the Supreme Authority. The task of the church, then, is to teach, explain, and enforce the law of Christ as we find it in the Scriptures. The Presbyterian church has a constitution—a statement of what we believe the Bible teaches. This constitution has two main parts. The first is doctrinal—the teaching of the Bible about what we are to believe and how we are to live. This doctrinal part, sometimes called the Confession of Faith, is actually divided into three parts: The Confession of Faith proper, the Larger Catechism, and the Shorter Catechism. But the constitution also has a section on government, expressing what we believe the Bible teaches about how the church should be governed. The divisions of this *Book of Church Order* are: the *Form of Government*, *Rules of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Worship*. What does it mean when the Presbyterian church member promises to submit to the government and discipline of the church and to study its purity and peace? It means that he should know and obey the constitution of the church, and that he should honor the officers of the church as they teach and enforce the constitution. Into this fellowship, perhaps, the Lord Jesus has called you who read these pages. If so, may He, the great and only Head of the Church lead you into ever fuller experiences of His grace and ever increasing usefulness in His kingdom, and to Him be the glory.