

## SECTION I.

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### THE STANDARD OF CHURCH ORDER.

*Ques.*—Is the particular form of a Church's government a matter of importance?

*Ans.*—The spirit and tendency of one system may be more congenial with the principles of Christianity and the proper character of its disciples than others—machinery when wanted should be so constructed as to answer the purposes for which it was intended. If for instance, true religion involves a direct reference to the authority of Christ in all our opinions, feelings and actions, that church organization is most appropriate to it which most frequently calls upon the people individually to consult Christ's word, and most fully leaves them to act upon their own views thence derived. So also one system may be superior to others in separating saints from the mass of the world,—in giving conspicuousness to their profession,—in developing and employing their energies—and in excluding an ungodly ministry. The question of *form* is thus manifestly one of very great importance.

*Q.*—What appear to have been the influences which have given rise to variety in the forms of church government?

*A.*—Sometimes a desire to fit the churches for incorporation with civil institutions;—at other times a regard to the promotion of particular political feelings;—then again the indulgence of clerical ambition, covetousness or indolence,—and not unfrequently, a worldly jealousy and fear respecting the independence and power of the Lord's people.

*Q.*—Does it appear that any individual system of church order is of scriptural authority?

*A.*—The opposite opinion disparages the sufficiency of Christ's word by which we "may be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work," imputes to himself a neglect of