

THE  
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THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF THE LOWER PROVINCES

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**CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT.**

FACTS AND PRINCIPLES REGARDED AS  
FUNDAMENTAL BY THE PRESBY-  
TERIAN CHURCH.

1. The Church is set forth by the Word, and is to be contemplated by us under two aspects: first, as invisible, and consisting of all those who have been, are, or shall be, united to Christ the Head, by the Spirit; second, as visible, and consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion together with their children. The church is called invisible, or visible, according as its members are spoken of as known to God,—the elect, the regenerate, the believing; or as they are to be regarded and treated as members by us.

2. The church is a Theocracy. That is, it is "the Kingdom of God," "the Kingdom of Heaven." The Lord Jesus Christ is its King and Head. The government is upon His shoulders; and all power pertaining to the church, by whomsoever exercised, is from Him, and is rightfully exercised only in His name and according to the precepts or principles set forth in His word.

3. External organization is secondary in the Scripture idea of the church: Christ has, however, fully provided for its external organization.

4. The church is an entirely distinct society or organization from the State. It has its own government, officers, and courts or councils. The judgments of its courts are as conclusive in their own sphere as are those of the State in theirs; and no appeal lies from the one to the other in matters pertaining to the province of each.

5. Church power is the authority or right which belongs to the church,—in virtue of its relation to Christ, the Head, and of the indwelling of the Spirit,—to perform church duties in obedience to the commands of Christ, and according to the precepts or the prescribed principles of His word.

6. Church power is, *primarily* or *fundamentally*, in the church itself as the community of the people of God and, *in its exercise*, in those who are especially called to exercise the same.

7. Church power is legislative, judicial, and executive; and the officers of the church are its organs for discharging all functional duties.

8. The power belonging to the church authorizes and obliges its members, first, to elect church officers according to the provisions intimated and the principles prescribed in the Word; second, voluntarily to submit unto them and co-operate with them, in the Lord, according as the duties pertaining to their several offices require.

9. The permanent Scriptural officers of the church are, Ministers of the Word, Elders of the people, and Deacons. Each office has its own special functions and all together constitute the one permanent ministry which Christ has instituted for the edification and service of His church.

10. The higher office includes the lower. Ministers are also, *ex officio*,—Elders and Deacons. Elders are also, *ex officio*,—Deacons. Elders join with the minister, aid and relieve him in the duties pertaining to their office. Deacons join with the