

## The Doctrine of Ecclesiology by Christopher Warrington

I believe that the Church is the visible (1Co 1:2; Php 1-2) and invisible (1Ti 2:19; 1Sa 16:7); a community of all true believers, local (Ro 16:5; 1Co 1:2) and universal for all time (1Co 12:28). I believe that individual visible groups are true manifestations of the Church if they are **marked by** the attempt to function as a church and have pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments. I believe that the **purpose** of the Church is to provide a balance of giving glory to God (Col 3:16), providing means of growth for believers (Eph 4:11-13) and performing ministry to the World through evangelism and mercy (Mt 28:18-20; Lk 6:35-36).

I believe that the individual manifestations of the Church can vary in degrees of **purity** (Php 1:3-11; Ga 1:6-9) to which we should strive to increase. I believe that the Bible teaches that the Church should be **unified** as one body in Christ (1Co 1:2; Eph 4:3-6) and that its members are commanded to live in unity amongst each other (1Co 1:10; Ro 16:17-18). I believe that there have been many reasons for separation within the church, of these are doctrinal reasons and matters of conscience (2Co 6:14).

I believe that the Church has been given **power** and authority by God in the areas of spiritual matters, state and earthly affairs and internal church discipline. In the matter of **spiritual power**; I believe the Church has been given weapons to fight against the devil's schemes (2Co 10:3-4; Eph 6:10-18) and tools to proclaim salvation throughout the world (Ro 2:15-16; Mt 28:19-20; Ac 1:8). In the matter of power between **Church and State**; I believe that God has appointed the earthly rulers (Ro 13:1) and has given them the right to bear the sword of God to do His will (Ro 13:2-7). I believe that Jesus taught us to obey those in authority over us and pay taxes when taxes are due (Mt 22:21). But as Jesus did not use force to compel people to believe (Lk 9:54-55; Jn 18:3), neither should we use the earthly authorities to force belief onto others. Though we are not to use force to bring others to salvation; I do believe the Church is to be a light in this world to do good and bring glory to the Heavenly Father (Mt 5:14-16).

In the matter of **Church discipline**; I believe that the Church has been given power **in order to**: restore and reconcile a believer who is going astray (Heb 12:6; Ga 6:1; 2Ti 4:2), keep sin from spreading (Heb 12:15; 1Co 5:6-7; 1Ti 5:20), and to protect the purity of the Church - thus honoring Christ (2Pe 3:14;

1Co 5:1-2). I believe that **any sin**, which is public or has the ability to hinder the work of the Spirit, should be cause for Church discipline. These sins could include divisiveness (Ro 16:17; Tt 3:10); incest (1Co 5:1), laziness (2Th 3:6-10), disobedience (2Th 3:14-16), blasphemy (1Tm 1:20) and the teaching of heretical doctrine (2Jn 10-11). I believe that the Church should follow the proper **order** to carry out discipline (Mt 18:15-18) except in times when the sin is already made public, in which case the sin should be dealt with publicly, and in cases of church leadership (1Tm 5:19-21). I believe that as soon as a genuine repentance has occurred, reconciliation should happen as quickly as is healthy (2Co 2:7-8; Ga 6:1).

I believe that there are many “offices” within the **church government**. I believe that the office of “apostle” was last held by Paul (1Co 15:5-9) and did not continue. There are three main **forms** of church government: Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregational. In each of these types of government is the use of an elder, pastor (Ac 20:28; 1Pe 5:2-4), bishop and/or overseer (1Tm 3:1-2; Tt 1:5-7). I do not believe that there is one right way, or biblical way, for governing the church, but there is a right way for choosing its leaders. I believe that the leaders of the Church should meet the qualifications given by Paul (1Tm 3:2-7; Tt 1:6-9), they should be affirmed and chosen by the congregation (Ac 6:3; 2Co 8:19) and installed publicly (1Tm 3:10; Ac 6:6, 13:3). I do not believe that **parachurch organizations** should need to follow these guidelines as they are a means of support to the church; not an organization trying to act like a church.

I believe that God created both **man and woman** with equal importance and value (Gen 1:27; Ga 3:28) but different in nature. I believe that, through the apostle Paul, God declared that some positions within the Church are meant to be filled by men only (1Tm 2:11; 3:1-2; Tt 1:5-6). I also believe that it is God’s ultimate goal to have His glory declared among the nations and that He will use whomever He chooses; meaning that both men and women can teach (Ac 18:26; Tt 2:3-5) and prophesy (Ac 2:17-18; 1Co 12:7) in His power. I believe that God has given manifestations of the Spirit to everyone, male and female, as He sees fit and as is for the common good of the Church (1 Co 12:7; 1Pe 4:10).

I believe that there is a “**means of grace**” by which God bestows further blessings upon His church through discipline (2Co 7:10; 1Tm 5:20), various ordinances (see below), spiritual gifts (see below), and methods to increase sanctification (see below). In the matter of **ordinances**, I believe that God has given us

baptism (Mt 28:19; Co 2:112) and the Lord's Supper (1Co 10:16-17, 21; Jn 6:55-56). I believe that **baptism** is to be a symbol of the union that we have with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Ro 6:3-4; Col 2:12) and should be an outward expression of the inward life change (Ac 10:44-48; Ga 3:27). I believe that the **Lord's Supper** was instituted by Jesus (Mt 26:26-29) and serves as a symbol to remind us of His death (1Co 11:25-26) as well as to act as spiritual nourishment (Jn 6:53-57) and a way for believers to show their unity (1Co 10:17). I believe that the act of partaking of the Lord's Supper should bring to the mind of the believer: 1) their affirmation of faith, 2) their participation in and the benefits of His death (Ro 6:3-4), and that Christ loves them. Because of the nature of the Lord's supper, I believe that only those who have put their trust in Christ for the salvation of their sins, should partake in the Lord's Supper.

In the matter of **spiritual gifts**; I believe that spiritual gifts are abilities that are given by the Holy Spirit to empower believers for ministry (1 Cor 1:7; 13:10; 14:12) and edification of the Church (1Co 14:5). I believe there are many spiritual gifts (1Co 7:7, 12:8-28; Eph 4:11; Ro 12:6-8; 1Pe 4:11), but these lists are not meant to be all encompassing. I believe that the gifts may vary in strength among believers (Ro 12:6; 1Co 12:11, 14:18) and may not be permanent in nature (1Co 13:8-13). When seeking out spiritual gifts, a believer should ask God (1Co 14:13), have the right motives (1Co 14:1), and seek opportunities to try the gift and be content using the gifts which they are given (Lk 19:16-23). And I believe that all of the gifts needed at this period in history are present (1 Cor 1:7).

In the matter of methods to increase sanctification; I believe that God has given us prayer (Ac 4:24, 31; Eph 6:18), meditation (Ps 1:2; Mt 4:4), worship (Jn 4:23-24; Jam 4:8), fellowship (Ac 2:42, 46-47; Jn 15:12), evangelism (Ac 2:4, 14-36, 4:8, 31) and self-control (Ga 5:23; Tt 1:8). I believe that **worship** is a direct expression of our ultimate purpose in life, that is to "glorify God" (Is 43:6-7, 48:11b; Eph 1:12), for He alone is worthy of worship (Re 22:8-9). I believe we are to enter genuine worship by the Holy Spirit (Jn 4:23-24) and with an attitude of reverence (Mt 14:33; Heb 12:28-29). I believe that when there is genuine worship, we delight in God (Ps 16:11, 73:25; Lk 24:52-53) and He in us (Ze 3:17; Is 62:1-5), we draw near to God (Heb 10:19-22, 12:18-24) and He with us (Ja 4:8, Ps 22:3), God ministers to us (1Co 14:26; Heb 4:16) and the Lord's enemies flee (2Ch 20:22; 1Co 14:25).