

For the unity of the church

The task of the Christian church is to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ. This message, which is given in the Bible and which our Church confirms through her creedal statements, defines the doctrinal and ethical foundation of the Church. In addition, the bishops have in the Church of Norway a particular obligation to maintain the unity of the Church in doctrine and practice. There is thus in the Church a common foundation which can never be abandoned either by clergy or laity, and we can never as a Christian fellowship maintain as a common doctrinal obligation what cannot be argued from the Bible and the Confessions.

This doctrinal foundation unambiguously understands the monogamous and lifelong marriage between one man and one woman as the only acceptable framework for the full manifestation of human sexuality. From the time of the apostles ecumenical Christendom has considered this as the basic guideline for teaching and counselling, and has therefore maintained the persuasion that the holiness of the church will only be upheld where a confession of sin and forgiveness through unconditional grace is the way to forgiveness and restoration where this framework has been violated.

By arguing for another attitude toward homosexuality in the church, then, one introduces an openness toward other sexual relations that is at variance with the biblically informed doctrinal foundation of the Christian church. In this way, one reveals an understanding of the task of the church that differs from what is found in the Bible and the Confessions. This is in our opinion the obvious implication when half of the Doctrinal Commission of the Church of Norway concludes that the traditional and the new positions are incompatible, and that they therefore cannot both at the same time inform doctrine, order and liturgy in the Church.

This thus reveals is that there is in the Church of Norway a fundamental disagreement concerning what constitutes the church. It is already a fact that this disagreement alienates many from the Church where they were baptized and taught, and that this therefore already creates a lot of tension and division in the congregations. If the authoritative bodies of the Church should actually change the Church order in this respect, divisions will undoubtedly be deepened.

In our opinion, it is in this difficult situation of utmost importance to think and act according

to the following three principles of church law:

- \$ The obligation of the ministers to preach according to their promise in the ordination to preach the word of God clearly and purely as it is given in the Bible and confirmed by the Confessions of the Church.
- \$ The obligation of the bishops to maintain the apostolic doctrine according to the Confessions of our Church . . . and preserve the unity of the church of God.
- \$ The admonition of the Augsburg Confession article 28 not to obey bishops who establish anything contrary to the gospel.

The judicial foundation of these principles are given in the present order of the Church of Norway, and we will therefore assert both the possibility and the necessity to act accordingly. To avoid these being left as empty principles, and in accordance with the statement of the Doctrinal Commission concerning the two incompatible positions, we will therefore act as follows:

- \$ Relinquish the supervision of bishops who divide the church by their disobedience toward the witness of the Bible and the Confessions in relation to the problem that now more than any other divides the Church of Norway. We will, however, still maintain a relationship with the bishops within the order of the administration of the Church.
- \$ Demand and work for an alternative episcopal supervision that can confirm the apostolicity of the church and her message in a legitimate and undisputable way.
- \$ Defend the right to abstain from worship and altar fellowship with bishops and ministers who publicly promote the new doctrine.
- \$ Look for a broader fellowship that brings our Church closer to sister Churches who maintain and seek the unity, holiness, apostolicity and catholicity of the church. In this way we want to promote the visible unity of the church.

We do not act in order to divide the church. On the contrary, we do this to issue a call for unity on the apostolic foundation of the church and to fulfil our obligation before God to work for the salvation of humans. In our view, division is caused by those who violate the unanimous tradition of the church. Our goal is to gather and liberate for the sake of Christian unity! We hereby admonish all members of the Church of Norway (laity and clergy) to stand together in this request.

Our vision and confession is found in the document “Carissimi - a foundation for the request ‘For the unity of the church’”. We ask those who sign to read this document carefully. Both this document and “Carissimi” can be read and downloaded from the website www.carissimi.nu.

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