



Saksbehandler: Beate Fagerli

Saksdokumenter:

Rapport nr. 45/2010 **Marit Bunkholt**

Rapport fra konferansen "*Theologische Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt in GEKE*", 2. konsultasjon, Wien, 19.-21. november 2010 (vedlagt)

Pressemelding - CPCE General Assembly 2012 on Church Reform Processes (vedlagt)

Church of Norway Response to Stand Up for Justice (vedlagt)

Church of Norway Response to Scripture Confession Church (ettesendes)

Saker i de økumeniske organisasjonene

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

Sammendrag

CPCE har de senere år igangsatt en rekke høringsprosesser knyttet til kirkereformer og sosiale utfordringer i forbindelse med samfunnsreformer. I arbeidet med utarbeidelse av høringssvar har MKR engasjert KISP og TN. To høringssvar er vedlagt.

Flere høringsprosesser skal gjennomføres frem mot CPCEs generalforsamling i 2012, bl.a. om etikk, embetet, utdanning og om kirkereformer. Generalforsamlingens hovedtema er "Free for the Future – Protestant Churches in Europe". Det er ventet at hovedfokus på generalforsamlingen vil være kirkelige reformer i møte med nye samfunnsutfordringer.

Forslag til vedtak

Følgende saker tas til orientering:

1. Rapport fra konferansen "*Theologische Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt in GEKE*", 2. konsultasjon, Wien, 19.-21. november 2010
2. Pressemelding - CPCE General Assembly 2012 on Church Reform Processes
3. Church of Norway Response to Stand Up for Justice
4. Church of Norway's response to Scripture Confession Church

Rapport fra konferansen

“Theologische Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt in GEKE”

2. konsultasjon, Wien, 19.-21. november 2010

v/Marit Bunkholt

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)/Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE) arrangerte 19.-21. nov 2010 andre konsultasjon omkring tematikken “Theologische Ausbildung für das ordinationsgebundene Amt in GEKE” i Wien. Jeg deltok fra Den norske kirke, etter også å ha deltatt på første konsultasjon i Berlin for to år siden.

Konsultasjonen var en del av en prosess som har pågått siden 2003. Da var det en lignende konsultasjon som denne og den i 2008, som konkluderte med at det ville være fornuftig å finne fram til felles grunnholdninger til hva slags utdanning man ønsker seg for dem som skal inn i den ordinerte tjeneste i GEKE/CPCE-kirkene. GEKE/CPCEs 6.generalforsamling i 2006 bekreftet ønsket om å fortsette denne prosessen. Konferansen i Berlin i 2008 ble fulgt opp av et arbeid i en mindre gruppe som hadde til oppdrag å utarbeide utkast til et felles dokument. Vi som nå møttes i Wien, fikk presentert et utkast til drøfting fra den lille gruppen, med sikte på å bli enig om noe som kan gå ut på høring i kirkene før overlevering til neste generalforsamling i GEKE/CPCE.

Konsultasjonen i Wien innledet, etter en presentasjon av utkastet til tekst, med noen utvalgte reaksjoner fra forskjellige land og kontekster. Det viste seg raskt at det var forholdsvis stor enighet om dokumentets oppbygning og innhold. Teksten tok stort sett god høyde for forskjeller mellom kirker og utdanningstradisjoner, samtidig som den fastholdt tydelig det man er felles om. Reaksjonene i plenum ble fulgt opp med arbeid i grupper, og deretter videre arbeid i plenum. Diskusjonene dreide seg særlig om forholdet mellom tysk tradisjon og språk og andre tradisjoner/språk, hvordan man kan beskrive fromhet/spiritualitet på en måte som inkludere forskjellige tradisjoner og profiler, og hvordan kirke og academia best samvirker i utdanningen av prester. Uttalelsen fra konsultasjonen samler godt opp diskusjoner og enighet (se: <http://www.leuenberg.eu/daten/File/Upload/doc-12126-2.pdf>).

Jeg meldte ved forrige korsvei (konsultasjonen i Berlin) at det hadde vært fornuftig å forberede sin utsending bedre enn man da gjorde. Jeg var denne gangen langt bedre forberedt til å delta på konsultasjonen. Både deltakelse på den forrige konsultasjonen og en forberedende samtale med Beate Fagerli bidro til dette.

Arbeidsgruppen møtes igjen på nyåret for å ferdigstille teksten før utsending til høring.

10.12.10

Marit Bunkholt



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communión d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

“Preparation for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe”

The second international consultation on **“Preparation for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe”** took place at the Kardinal-König-Haus in Vienna from 18 to 21 November 2010. Work was continued on a project on theological education commissioned by the General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in Budapest in September 2006. The aim of the project is to reach a comprehensive agreement on common principles for the training of ministers in the 105 member churches of the CPCE. Representatives of 23 Protestant churches from 16 European countries participated in the consultation which was prepared and organised by the Vienna-based secretariat of the CPCE and by the EKD's Joint Commission for the Reform of Theological Studies (Commission I).

The Leuenberg Agreement - by which pre-Reformation, Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches in Europe declared pulpit and table fellowship in 1973 - includes the mutual recognition of ordination. In the member churches, which now include Methodist churches, questions are increasingly raised regarding the practical consequences of this recognition. It is important to work towards common standards in theological education which facilitate the transfer of students from one educational establishment to another within Europe, mutual recognition of educational achievements, compatibility of different educational paths, as well as the exchange and acceptance of ministers from other CPCE churches.

The consultation debated the first draft of a text setting out foundations and a broad outline of ministerial formation for the churches of the CPCE. The draft was based on the conclusions of the preceding consultation in Berlin in 2008. In agreement with the CPCE Council, a working group was established to draft the text. The first section of the text, dealing with the foundations for ministerial formation, explains that, although the CPCE churches are very diverse, they share a basic understanding of a good preparation for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. On this basis, the second part of the text develops guidelines which sketch a shared understanding of good formation that serves as a guide for member churches.

In plenary sessions and working groups, this draft was thoroughly discussed. The draft met with general agreement and the goals and layout of the paper were welcomed. The discussion provides a stimulus for further work. It was agreed that the paper should acknowledge the regional particularities and should not seek to produce normative guidelines nor intend a over-standardization of training and continuing education within CPCE churches. It does, however, intend to promote good educational practice, offer guidance for the member churches, and facilitate mutual recognition of different educational parts. It was agreed that academic study, reflective practice, and the integrity of life and faith should

be related to each other in a balanced way. No particular expression of spirituality should determine a person's suitability for the ministry. Rather a broad range of forms of protestant spirituality was affirmed.

The third section of the paper will contain recommendations for the member churches of the CPCE which were discussed at length. It needs to be said more strongly than before theological graduates should be able to integrate the various disciplines of theology. The perspectives of biblical studies, church history, systematic theology and practical theology should be more clearly related to each other. There should be a stronger interdisciplinary component in all areas of education.

The draft emphasizes the relevance importance of continuing professional development of ministers. In a contemporary context, there needs to be a clear educational goal and church support. To achieve this, the CPCE has the potential to offer suitable opportunities: pan-European exchange programmes for continuing education, an international institute for continuing ministerial education, and the development of multilateral partnerships for programmes for continuing education. Furthermore, suitable instruments of coordination need to be established.

Studies abroad as part of academic education are already a matter of course in many churches of the CPCE, but this opportunity should be more extensively promoted and taken up. Ministers in training should also be given the opportunity to complete part of their church based training in another member church of the CPCE. Another goal is the temporary exchange of ministers. Long term transfer of ministers from one member church to another will be facilitated, if there are programmes that help them to become familiar with their new context.

It is intended that, by January 2011, the paper will have reached a state in which it can be sent to the member churches of the CPCE and their institutions of theological training for their responses. The paper will be given its final form on the basis of these responses to be presented to the General Assembly in Florence in 2012.

The participants in the consultation hope that this document will facilitate cooperation and convergence on questions regarding preparation for the ministry of Word and Sacrament so that churches in the CPCE can deepen their fellowship. They propose the evaluation of the process by which the document is received in appropriate time.

Vienna, 21 November 2010

From: CPCE-GEKE-CEPE [mailto:news@leuenberg.eu]

Posted At: Tuesday, November 23, 2010 3:56 PM

Posted To: KR-Postmottak

Conversation: CPCE General Assembly 2012 on Church Reform Processes - CPCE-press release

Subject: CPCE General Assembly 2012 on Church Reform Processes - CPCE-press release

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Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE
Press release

CPCE General Assembly 2012 on Church Reform Processes

"Free for the Future" is the theme of the 7th CPCE General Assembly from 20th to 26th September 2012 in Florence - for the first time a Stewards Programme for young adults - Council calls liturgical and legal advisors and members of expert groups.

"Free for the Future - Protestant Churches in Europe" is the theme for the coming 7th General Assembly of CPCE, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, from 20th to 26th September 2012 in Florence. The meeting of the highest decision-making body of the 105 member churches in more than 30 countries will have processes of church reform as its main material theme, decided the Council of CPCE yesterday during its meeting in Vienna. "What varying experiences with the social changes in their home countries can our churches bring in? What are the shared theological and practical contributions of the protestant churches to a changing Europe? The discussions of the General Assembly should issue in a call to the churches on the way to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017", said CPCE President Thomas Wipf.

For the first time CPCE will conduct an international stewarding programme for twenty students up to 27 years of age. The stewards will be used in the conference office, in the working groups and in publicity as well as in the services and meditations. "The emphasis in the accompanying framework programme lies on training up the next ecumenical generation on the European level", stressed CPCE General Secretary Michael Bünker: "We wish to motivate young adults for work in CPCE." CPCE will approach its member churches to delegate suitable stewards.

The Council extended the call of Dr. Peter Bukowski as Liturgical Consultant and Dr. Joachim Christoph as Legal Advisor until the coming CPCE General Assembly in September 2012 in Florence. Bukowski is Moderator of the Reformed Alliance in Germany and a member of the Council of CPCE. Christoph is a retired Vice-President of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany.

Prof. Hans-Peter Grosshans of the University of Münster was called to be a new member of the Expert Group on Ecumenism till the coming General Assembly in 2012. This expert group observes and accompanies the inter-confessional relations of CPCE and is intended to clarify and deepen its theological model. Prof. Parush Parushev of the International Baptist Seminary in Prague was called as a new member of the Expert Group on Ethics until the General Assembly. This body advises CPCE on current issues in politics and society and is meant to extend the presence of the protestant churches on the European level.

Vienna/Bern, 23rd November 2010

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CHURCH OF NORWAY

National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations, Sami Church Council

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
Severin-Schreiber-Gasse 3,
A-1180 Wien
Austria

Date: 20.12.2010

Our ref: 06/16-81 G.AL.

Your ref:

Church of Norway Response to Stand Up for Justice

Greetings from Oslo!

We want to thank you for the opportunity to respond to the document "Stand up for justice: Ethical Discernment and Social Commitment of the Protestant Churches in Europe". The document has stimulated fruitful discussions in the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations and its sub-committees. Please find attached our response document, which we hope will be useful in the further process in preparations for the 2012 General Assembly.

With wishes for a blessed Christmas!

Kind regards,

Berit Hagen Agøy
General Secretary
Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

Guro Almås
Advisor

Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on "Stand up for Justice!" – Ethical Discernment and Social Commitment of the Protestant Churches in Europe

We appreciate the work done by the group of younger delegates at the General Assembly of CPCE in 2009, who, through preparations, consultations, and drafting, presented a draft document. Church of Norway warmly appreciates the opportunity to appoint a member to the drafting group.

The Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations has read with interest the document *Stand up for Justice*. The response to the document has also been treated within the Committee on International Relations, with some input from the Theological Commission. In both these committees the document has raised important deliberations on a number of issues. It is of key importance that the churches constantly reflect critically on the implications of its call to stand up for justice. It is also important that churches consider how they can stand together and advocate for justice in contemporary society, while taking into account the complexity of such issues. Finally, the document also raises a number of socio-political and ethical issues related to being church and being in church fellowship.

1. On the sighting of the church statements

Two documents from the Church of Norway are considered in *Stand up for Justice: The Church and Economic Globalisation* and *Economic Globalisation as a Challenge to Churches* (Synod Statement), both from 2007. We appreciate that these, relatively recent documents, have been considered in the document. Both of them, however, are related to the issue of economic globalization. We realize that from our side, other publications that could have been included are *The Consumer Society as an Ethical Challenge* from 1992, *Vulnerability and Security* from 2000, and the Synod statements *Consumption and Justice* from 1996 and *Threatened Life – A Faith Response* from 2007. We therefore note that a large number of the statements considered in the document come from churches in Germany or Hungary. Thus there is the danger of a certain bias in the material discussed, which may mean that some of the issues discussed may be of less relevance to some churches.

We note that the analysis in *Stand up for Justice* relies on a descriptive method. The documents analyzed are largely described through a considered content analysis. The analysis is not primarily normative in its orientation – though the document also invites this kind of reflection.

2. On the theological foundations

The document treats the ecclesiological basis of the ethical commitment of the churches based on the material contributed by the churches. It must be noted, however, that the background documentation cannot be expected to give a full ecclesiological basis for ethical commitment, since most of the documentation mainly focus on concrete ethical challenges. Ethical issues related to ecclesiology, such as what constitutes the being of the church, the unity of the church and spirituality of ethics and worship are therefore not treated in-depth. Questions on

the relation between faith and good deeds, ethical engagement and salvation, the relationship between sacraments, liturgy and diakonia are hardly treated at all. We would not have expected this to be treated thoroughly in this document. It is, however, important to note that the material cannot provide sufficient theological foundations for a thorough ecclesiological basis on the ethical commitment of the churches.

The analysis concludes that there is no divisive confessional difference between the Protestant churches in their defining of the relationship to state and society. We would like to comment that this conclusion is based on an analysis of documents that only to a varying degree address or highlight confessional stands in opposition to other denominations. The analysis too therefore risks becoming superficial, and we note a harmonizing tendency in the document. This seems to relate to the method chosen, with an explicit aim at identifying common traits. There seems to be reason to explore the relationship between church and state and the understanding of status confessionis further and in more detail than what can be found in the present text.

3. On ethical orientation: Examples of Church of Norway statements and follow-up

When the Church of Norway takes up issues of social justice on a Synod level, it is generally done with a stated intention to inspire and guide continued work on the issue from congregational to national level in the years to follow. This also often involves concretizing the recommendations in the Synod Statement into more specific recommendations.

This is true for the three Synod Declarations mentioned: *Consumption and Justice* (1996), *Economic Globalization as a Challenge to the Churches* (2007) and *Threatened Life – A Faith Response* (2007).

After the adoption of *Consumption and Justice* in 1996, the Church of Norway together with other civil society actors initiated the formation of Max Havelaar Fair Trade Norway as well as the Norwegian Coalition for Debt Cancellation (later Jubilee 2000), and took active part in policy formation as well as lobbying a campaigning work especially related to the debt issue.

Economic globalization as a challenge to the churches (2007) has been followed up in particular with recommendations on responsible lending, development friendly trade policies, and investing the Government Pension Fund for development and environment, in participation in public debate and in direct addresses to the government parties who formed a government coalition in 2009. The Church is currently looking into how it can strengthen its work on tax havens and mobilize its constituency on this issue.

The Synod statement *Threatened Life – A Faith Response* from 2007 marked the beginning of an ecumenical project entitled *Creation and Sustainability – a Decade for Changes in Church and Society*, where the Church of Norway together with the Christian Council of Norway and Norwegian Church Aid aims at strengthening the churches' involvement in climate change and environmental issues. The church sees its main mission here as raising the ethical and principled questions related to climate justice, and does not go into the details of environmental policies in the way that environmental NGOs will do. On the other hand, the church risks becoming irrelevant if it limits itself to uncontroversial statements, and so has for example raised the question about the ethical implications of a continued heavy reliance on the petroleum sector.

4. Recommendations of the doctrinal discussion group

On the deepening of the church fellowship:

The document provides quite clear recommendations on the need for the churches to consult each other when formulating positions and to work together as closely as possible when presenting their positions to decision makers and the guidelines for responses focuses on this point.

From a pragmatic point of view, we agree with the document's analysis that the churches have a better chance of being heard by decision makers and in political debate if they present joint positions. The churches should thus coordinate their advocacy efforts when approaching the European Union as well as other European institutions, institutions at a global level and individual countries.

For example in areas like climate policies, immigration or economic justice issues, churches are likely to have more impact in influencing individual countries if they manage to be internationally coordinated. This usually involves strategic cooperation not only with church partners in the wider ecumenical movement, but also with other civil society actors. The form and content of strategic cooperation may vary from case to case, but a closer cooperation within the Protestant fellowship will give a better basis for developing strategic cooperation from case to case.

On the other hand, there is a potential danger that a pragmatic understanding of church cooperation is understood as equal to church fellowship. The danger lies in giving an impression of Protestant churches forming a politicized union aiming at achieving certain political and social goals. This may become problematic if a Protestant church fellowship is perceived as standing in opposition to wider ecumenical cooperation.

On the obligation to take a clear stand

The discussion group recommends that in cases where careful analysis of the situation as well as judgment in light of theology leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to take a clear stand, this should be followed by advocacy and strengthening the voice of the marginalized. It would have been useful to explore how this can be done in the context of economic globalization. How can European churches do advocacy based on the voices of those marginalized through globalization processes, who are the most negatively affected by global structures of injustice? Is it possible for churches in the rich part of the world to do ethical considerations on global justice issues without first having listened to challenges and analyses from the churches and people of the south? Does the "preferential option for the poor" also imply that European churches have an obligation to listen to the churches of the south before formulating positions on global justice issues?

The Church of Norway's publication *The Church and Economic Globalisation* (2007) reflects on how the church on the one hand should be a prophet, who sees clearly and banishes injustice from prevailing systems, and on the other hand is no privileged actor and must participate with other actors in the public discussion using general knowledge and insight. While we agree with the present document's recommendation of being cautious of the limits of our own competence, we miss a reflection around the churches' call to be prophetic, speaking clearly against injustice in a divided world. The danger for the churches of being pacified and "scared away" from our world's most serious challenges by the complexities of

current global development trends is as great a danger as the temptation to decline to constant activism.

Shape and Shaping of Protestant churches in a Changing Europe

It is not quite clear to us why questions based on another doctrinal conversation, "Shape and Shaping of Protestant churches in a Changing Europe", has been brought specifically into the given guidelines for response. We cannot see that this doctrinal conversation is reflected in "Stand up for justice" in a way that makes these questions relevant.

First of all, "Stand up for justice" basically deals with the tasks of ethical discernment and social commitment. There is therefore a question whether its task is to provide sufficient ecclesiological background material for thoroughly discussing church fellowship. Secondly, the document itself states that only a small part of the background documentation use ecclesiological images. Thirdly, the churches may have responded differently to the call for documents, if they were to share documentation specifically related to the deepening of church fellowship.

We would therefore kindly recommend that the questions related to the deepening of church fellowship be treated in relation to the study process on "Scripture, Confession, Church", or even in a separate study process. In this regard, the document "Stand up for justice" provides useful insights on the socio-political and ethical dimensions of church fellowship.

Vedlegg til MKR 02/11: CPCE (Saker i de økumeniske organisasjonene)

Hørings svar til CPCE-dokumentet ”Skrift, Bekjennelse, Kirke”

To: CPCE

On the document ”Scripture, Confession, Church”

Introduction

With this, Church of Norway wishes to express its gratitude to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe for initiating a process on the themes of Scripture – Confession – Church. We particularly want to thank both working groups who have committed time and energy into the writing process, and the CPCE secretariat for arranging the large consultation in 2008, and for providing support to the process.

Process

The Council on Ecumenical and International Relations in Church of Norway discussed the document before sending it to further work in the Theological Commission. The Theological Commission has treated the document in two meetings before sending a draft proposal back to the Council for finalisation.

Vice President of the CPCE, Revd Dr Stephanie Dietrich, is a member of the Theological Commission and has provided insights into the process. A member of the Theological Commission, Revd Dr Idar Kjølsvik, participated in the larger consultation of church representatives in Berlin 2008. So did the secretary for the Commission, Ms Beate Fagerli.

General comments

The consultation in 2008 provided a good starting point for discussion. At the time, the consultation could not agree on a common text, thus the original document was sent back to be reworked. The first version of the reworked document was shared with the CPCE Council in January 2009, and once again sent back for revision. We wish to point this process out, precisely to commend it! It has been an important revision process, and we believe the current document to be a better document for a constructive discussion on Scripture, Confession and Church within the member churches.

Although there are still issues of some controversy to be pointed out, the document also brings with it statements we believe to be important for churches in Europe to say together at this time and age.

In general we find that the paragraphs on Scripture to a large extent are to be recommended, as we believe it possible for a wide range of churches to agree on a well

structured description of Scriptural use in our churches. We do, however, wish to question some of the reflections on hermeneutics, and we find elements regarding the confessions of the Church more difficult to recognise. The last paragraphs of the document regarding the Church are found to be more controversial, and we question whether this part should belong to the document at all.

The contents of our discussions will be described thematically, related to the three overall themes; Scripture – Confession – Church, before a final conclusion.

To the Introductory part

We find it crucial that the dialogue with other Christian traditions is presented in this chapter. It may, however, be a little misleading to refer to a fundamentalist interpretation the way it is being done in line 33 ff, page 2. It seems too easy to name certain Christian traditions as fundamentalist and then draw the conclusion that this often leads to legalism contradictory to the gospel. Likewise, we also find that the paragraph on dialogue with Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches suggests that these churches only build on tradition in understanding e.g. the ordained ministry. This is not the case, as Scripture remains normative for these churches, also in their understanding of ministry. We agree that there are differences among the churches in the understanding of the role of tradition as normative. This should, however, be clarified with more accurate descriptions of the different understandings of the role of tradition. As it now stands, it may mislead the reader to think that tradition in these churches per definition has a normative role beyond the witness of Scripture (cf. line 13).

In point 3), the question of magisterium is brought up. Is there a magisterium (*German: Lehrstuhl*) in evangelical churches? It is not quite clear whether the question refers to the responsibility of oversight and doctrinal authority within each church, or whether it refers to the possibility of a magisterium with an authoritative role for a community of Protestant churches.

In a reformed tradition the magisterium would normally be connected to the congregation, in a Roman Catholic tradition it belongs to the episcopate. This is not the case for most Lutheran churches. For Church of Norway neither of these options would be easily compatible with the combined structure of a Synod and a Bishops' Conference. Even if the Synod is the final instance for binding doctrinal decisions, it cannot be understood as the magisterium per se. Within the concept of a synod there is a certain liberty of authority, which allows interpretation by the individual conscience. This freedom of every Christian person is an important part of Protestant heritage, although it does not imply any binding doctrinal authority. We therefore believe further reflections are needed on a church's responsibility to interpret Scriptures in a binding way, and whether this needs to end up being named a magisterium.

If the question of a magisterium refers to a doctrinal authority for a fellowship of churches, suggesting synodal structures for the Community of Protestant Churches in

If the question of a magisterium refers to a doctrinal authority for a fellowship of churches, suggesting synodal structures for the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and a binding commitment to common “magisterial” statements (page 14), the question will be dealt with later in this document.

Scripture

In the first chapter we recognise a traditional understanding of the hermeneutics of Scripture. We find that chapters 2 – 5, dealing with Scripture, scriptural principles and hermeneutics contain useful insights. In the following we name a few points to which we would like further clarification.

In dealing with the question of hermeneutics, there seems to be a discrepancy between the understanding of revelation, and the understanding of the original intention of the Scripture. The question of God’s revelation, as dealt with in chapter 2, seems to be based on a Barthian understanding of revelation. This leaves little reflection around God’s revelation through creation. The question is how and whether a Barthian understanding of revelation can be combined with chapter 5, dealing with the interpretation of the Bible, and finding the original intentions of the texts (Page 8, ll. 7 – 13)? How does the document explain the discrepancy between “The word that bears witness to itself” and the hermeneutical rules that are decisive for the interpretation of Scripture?

We recognise the attempt to apply a historic-critical method for interpretation of the Scripture. But certain historical stories do not transfer to our own time. The model for interpretation presented in the document still seeks to establish the historical meaning of the texts. But, is it possible to establish a pre-historic hermeneutical intention of the texts? How, and to what extent the historical meaning of the texts can be found, could be explored further. In part, we are pointing to an increased complexity when dealing with scriptural interpretation. Today, this relates for instance to the interpretation of Scripture from a secular context, as well as interpretation from a more internal, and sometimes fundamentalist, church context. The result is that the tension between the intentions of the author on one side, and the empirical dimension on the other side, remains unclear. Which is the guiding principle for interpretation, - the intention of the author, or the intention of God? A dialogical approach to interpretation could be of help for the churches when encountering a critical secularist interpretation, or when answering to a fundamentalist Scriptural interpretation.

We find that the relation between the old and the new covenant and its influence on the interpretation of texts is not sufficiently discussed. A differentiation between the Old and the New testaments lack in the document. Reflections on the hermeneutical model, which already exists within the double scriptural canon, could be clarifying. In this context the paragraphs on law and Gospel are important and could be further explained.

It is however also suggested that ethical criticism may be applied. But it is not quite clear how far the document is willing to apply ethical criticism. If the paragraph on page 10,

point 3, ll. 6 – 15, suggests that ethical criticism of the texts can be applied if the text itself can be interpreted as oppressive, it is a controversial statement and would need further discussion.

We would follow further discussion on the interpretation of scripture with great interest, and hope that the questions and proposals above may be of use.

Confession

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the confession(s) of the Church. In these chapters we miss a more in-depth description of what the confessions represent, particularly since they have different roles and significance within different churches. In that sense the document does not provide a sufficient understanding of what a confession is.

Chapter 7 is titled "The authority of the Confessions of the Church". A Lutheran understanding of confession claims that it is *norma normata*. Although deriving from *norma normans*, the Scripture itself, it is still a binding norm for the Church. It is therefore insufficient to refer to confessions as "...rather a matter of stating the witness of Scripture anew under a new challenge" (page 12, ll. 1 – 8). We do understand the confessions of the reformation to be written in a given historic context, and as a reaction to false teaching. As such, the confessions themselves are historical documents that need interpretation. But the need for interpretation is connected to their own interpretative function with regards to Scripture, since it is only in this regard they have a normative function. This does not mean, however, that confessions are to be considered normative only for a limited period of time. And it is also not to be understood as an invitation to rewrite, or write new, confessions. From a Lutheran point of view, the confessions are of a more permanent, binding nature, and is thus to be regarded as normative. We believe these differing understandings of the confessions and their status within the Protestant churches in Europe represent a complexity, which it may be helpful to explore further in the document.

There are a number of useful points made regarding the common call of the churches to witness and confession, confession of faith through liturgy, proclamation, diakonia and fellowship. We wholeheartedly commend the paragraphs on the importance of ecumenical doctrinal talks with regards to a changed understanding of the historic condemnations, and with regards to the Christian calling to common confession of the apostolic faith. It is, however, necessary to explain the role and nature of the confessions further in order to deal with an understanding of the Church, since a Lutheran understanding of the Church is also bound by its confessions.

Church

In our understanding, the main difficulties of the document lie in the understanding of Church and church fellowship. Firstly, a proposal to move towards more binding

structures of the CPCE, through establishing a common Protestant synod in Europe, would be contradictory to Church of Norway's explanations for signing the Leuenberg Agreement. The main reason for this was that we do not find it ecumenically sound in a broader ecumenical context, to which we are also committed. We already find that the Leuenberg Agreement itself, and the on-going dialogue and cooperation of Protestant churches in Europe, is highly useful and an important witness to the unity of the churches.

A consolidation of Protestantism in Europe through synodical structures would not only be a challenge in relation to the structure of the Church of Norway itself, it would also be a concrete challenge to the understanding of what a church fellowship is, and what constitutes church fellowship. If Protestantism is regarded as a constitutive element for church fellowship, it will represent an opposition to already existing ecumenical structures and established ecumenical dialogue in a broader ecumenical reality. In this context the CPCE document "The Church of Jesus Christ" was understood to be a binding document for the churches themselves, without being exclusive in its nature.

If "reconciled diversity" is to be understood as a very broad ecumenical model for church fellowship, one may see the need to further ecumenical cooperation among Protestant churches into more binding structures. But, if these binding structures are to be understood as political means for Protestantism within a wider ecumenical context, this may mean a dangerous polarisation of ecumenical dialogue, and for some Protestant churches in Europe it may create difficulties in their already established church relations.

We do recognise that member churches in CPCE differ from one another when it comes to the concrete local situation, size, ecumenical climate, social and political setting etc. We particularly recognise the difficulty of minority churches living under pressure in a continuously changing Europe. In this situation CPCE is already centrally placed to face great ecumenical challenges. We doubt that a synodical structure for the Protestant churches in Europe would be a good model to face these challenges. Although it may be a democratic model, a synod would create greater distance between the churches, and between majority and minority churches. We believe CPCE as a fellowship of churches should continue to provide space for creative ecumenical collaboration on local, regional and European levels. As such, we already understand CPCE as a binding church fellowship to which we are committed.

We believe that a discussion around synodical structures would need far more work regarding the understanding of Church and church fellowship. We would therefore strongly recommend that this issue be left out of the document entirely and treated separately.

Conclusions

Based on the above comments and reflections we would like to recommend that document be reworked according to the following:

1. That the use of the document as a study document in churches and congregations be reflected through language and structure. This may be done through linguistic reworking and possible guidelines and questions for further studying.
2. That the paragraphs on the interpretation and hermeneutics of Scripture be extended and revised along with the suggestions from the churches.
3. That the chapters concerning the understanding of the Confessions of the Churches be reworked, and that the different understanding of confessions be presented more in depth.
4. That the paragraphs concerning the understanding of Church and church fellowship be thoroughly reworked particularly with regards to the understanding of what constitutes the Church, its relation to confessions, the understanding of church fellowship and its relation to a broader ecumenical reality.
5. That the proposal of Protestant synodical structures in Europe be left out of the document and treated elsewhere.

We hope that these considerations may be useful for the continued process, and we will be happy to clarify any questions or contribute further in any way to the process.

With gratitude for all the work put into the process, giving churches an opportunity and an ecumenical platform for further ecclesiological and doctrinal studies, we express our sincere thanks to the community of Protestant Churches in Europe!

Signeres MKRs leder og generalsekretær

Økonomiske/administrative konsekvenser

Ingen