Synod Declares Kinism a Heresy



Andrew Hanson, Classis California South: "Kinism is the Americanization of apartheid."

Synod 2019 declared kinism a heresy. The decision came as a result of requests from two regional groupings of churches across the continent from each other, one from California and the other from New Jersey.

Kinism teaches that the races should be kept separate in racially pure "religio-ethnic states," supporting white supremacy. A former CRC pastor, now dismissed from the denomination, espouses kinism and did so for many years while he and his church were part of the CRC.

Reggie Smith, director of the denominational Race Relations office, introduced the discussion with a story. Word had come to him that the pastor of a CRC church was teaching kinism. Smith, who is African American, decided to visit the church. He went alone, but, he said, "if I had taken my wife Sharon, who is white, we would have been heretical in the eyes of this pastor." Kinism forbids interracial marriage.

The delegates were unified in their condemnation of kinism. Joel Renkema, Classis Central California, said, "Kinism says that people of color are less than human."

Jacob Boer, Classis Alberta North, said what makes Kinism a heresy is that it distorts the central Christian teaching that all humans are created in the image of God.

Some wondered how kinism could have been tolerated for so long in the CRC. Tyler Wagenmaker asked, "How does a pastor like this not get disciplined?" He presented a motion passed by synod that "councils and classes be admonished to promote confessional fidelity."

The language of the synod declaration on kinism calls it a "twisting" of Reformed teaching.

In condemning kinism, synod wanted a firmer definition of heresy. When is a teaching something one can disagree with but not condemn the people who hold it? And when does it pass over into the category of heresy? Synod worked with a definition of heresy that defines it as "a grievous deviation from sound doctrine." Synod also requested the COD to study the meaning and application of the word "heresy" in church pronouncements. The COD will report back to Synod 2020.

Coming back to the podium, Smith led a prayer of lament and hope. Synod concluded the discussion of kinism singing a new song based on 1 John 4:20. The song goes, "How can I say that I love the Lord whom I've never, ever seen before, and forget to say that I love the one I walk beside each and every day?"

—Clay Libolt

Prayers for Reconciliation in the Middle East



John Tenyenhuis, Classis Toronto: We must not look away from "a tsunami of human horror."

Asked by East Hills, a congregation in Vernon, B.C., to deepen awareness in the denomination of the plight of the Palestinians and plead their cause to the governments of Canada and the U.S., Synod 2019 took note that the justice ministries of the CRC are already working in various ways to bring reconciliation in the Middle East.

Delegates, particularly those who have traveled to the Middle East, urged the delegates not to look away from Palestine, which John Tenyenhuis, Classis Toronto, called "a tsunami of human horror."

Theo Beels, Classis Grand Rapids North, said when he got to the Middle East, the plight of the Palestinians shocked him. "It was worse than I thought."

Tenyenhuis called the synodical statement "approximate," but, he said, "To say nothing isn't right. It seems to me that we should say something."

—Clay Libolt