

APPENDIX F

Overture to Council Regarding Several Questions of the Written Exam for Ordination (Pending Referral from Tyndale Presbytery)

A Request for Clarification.

We, the session of elders of Trinity Evangelical Church, Tyndale Presbytery, are asking Council to clarify whether or not an ordination candidate's answers to the questions below must conform to certain statements of our recognized confessions pertinent to those questions. We are offering this request largely in response to current debates taking place within our Communion. Those debates have caused us to question whether or not we are in accord with CREC standards, specifically in regard to the doctrinal concerns reflected in the questions below. It is our hope that Council's response to our request will lead to greater unity and like-mindedness with our brethren.

The questions under consideration are recorded on page thirty-six of Appendix B in the CREC Book of Procedures and are written as follows:

41. What does Scripture teach concerning the value, sufficiency, efficacy, and extent of application of the atonement?

42. What does Scripture teach concerning the efficacy of God's work in calling and drawing sinners to Christ for salvation?

46. What does Scripture teach concerning the preservation and perseverance of the saints?

The Rationale for Our Request.

1. Since the churches in Council have prescribed these questions for all ordination candidates in the CREC, in that they may not be removed from the written exam (see App. B, Sec.3, Phase Two. 1, p. 29, CREC BOP), it is reasonable to expect Council to be willing and able to provide clarity as to what qualifies as satisfactory answers to the questions they have prescribed. Therefore, we are asking Council to provide such clarification in regard to the questions under consideration for the reasons stated below.
2. According to Article VII.B. of the CREC Constitution, the CREC “holds generally to the system of doctrine reflected in the great creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the Reformation.” Since that general system of doctrine arises from our recognized confessional standards (Art. III.C., CREC Const.), any amendment or exception made to a statement of one of those confessions must be examined in order to determine whether or not it is “at odds” with CREC standards (Art. III.E., CREC Const.). Thus, it follows that there are specific statements made by our confessions that are essential to CREC standards and the system of doctrine from which those standards arise, and that no member church or her ministers may therefore amend or take exception to them.
3. It is not clear to us whether or not certain confessional statements pertaining to the above mentioned questions are indeed essential to CREC standards, or if they are to some extent non-essential and are thus open to amendment or exception. Examples of such statements are WCF, LBCF, and Savoy 10:1, 4; 11:1, 5; 17:1; as well as the Canons of Dordt II:8; V:8; V: rejections I, III, and VII (see below). If these statements are essential to CREC standards, then to be “at odds” with them is to be “at odds” with CREC standards, and no satisfactory answer to the written exam will contradict them. However, this determination should not be left up to the consciences of ordination committees, as they do not determine what is essential or non-essential to CREC standards.

Thus, we are asking Council to provide clarification by simply answering questions 41, 42, and 46 according to CREC standards.

4. Should Council determine that satisfactory answers to questions 41, 42, and 46 may amend, take exception to, or otherwise contradict the aforementioned statements, we would ask Council to identify those specific confessional statements which are essential, as written, to satisfactory answers to the listed questions.

In summary, we are asking whether or not it is in accord with CREC standards to contradict the confessional statements above in answering exam questions 41, 42, and 46.