

1.9 Doctrinal Review

Definition

- 1.9.1 Doctrinal review is the exercise of the Synod's responsibility to determine that every doctrinal statement made in its or any of its agencies' or auxiliaries' materials is in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Material Subject to Doctrinal Review

- 1.9.1.1 The following materials are subject to doctrinal review:

- (a) All official periodicals and journals of the Synod as well as any material with doctrinal content issued publicly by boards, commissions, or other subordinate groups of the Synod except as stipulated in these Bylaws shall be subject to doctrinal review.
- (b) The right to produce study documents and exploratory material plainly designated as such and published by boards, commissions, or other subordinate groups of the Synod is recognized, and such material is not required to be submitted to the doctrinal review process. Publication of such study material that is not submitted for doctrinal review shall always include this notice on or immediately following the title page: "This material is being released for study and discussion purposes, and the author(s) is(are) solely responsible for its contents. It has not been submitted to the process for doctrinal review stipulated in the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and does not necessarily reflect the theology of the Lutheran Confessions or the doctrinal position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod."
- (c) Each district is accountable to the Synod through its respective president and board of directors for the content of all of its published materials.
- (d) Each of the Synod's schools is accountable to the Synod through its respective president and board of regents for the content of its professional journals and all of its published materials that are not the official publications of the Synod (paragraph [a] of Bylaw 3.8.5.2.3). The editorial boards of such publications shall serve as their own doctrinal reviewers.
- (e) Auxiliary organizations recognized by the Synod shall be held directly accountable for their material. However, in accord with his office as defined in Article XI B 1 of the Synod's Constitution, the President of the Synod shall require doctrinal review.
- (f) In the case of broadcasts over the Synod's radio station by other than staff members, individuals must be held responsible for their own material since it is not feasible to apply the process of doctrinal review to such broadcasts.
- (g) Official reports of the boards, commissions, task forces, and committees of the Synod prepared in response to directives from the Synod shall not be subject to doctrinal review.

Procedure

- 1.9.2 Before materials stipulated in Bylaw 1.9.1 are published, they shall be submitted to (a) doctrinal reviewer(s). Reviewers shall make a careful evaluation of the doctrinal content of all items submitted. Materials are to be reviewed in a prompt manner and completed in no longer than four weeks. Exceptions shall be arranged by mutual agreement between the reviewer(s) and the originating entity.

- (a) The primary responsibility for doctrinal supervision and review lies with the President of the Synod (Constitution, Art. XI B 1).

(1) Each board, commission, and other subordinate group of the Synod shall advise the President of the Synod of the number and desired competency of doctrinal reviewers needed by it and may suggest a list of qualified persons. The President shall appoint reviewers for each group according to its needs. They shall be broadly representative of the ministry of the Synod.

(2) Reviewers shall be appointed for renewable three-year terms. An appointment may be terminated prior to the completion of the appointed term if the reviewer is unable or unwilling to carry out the reviewing tasks assigned. In the event of such termination, the President of the Synod shall appoint another reviewer to complete the unexpired term.

(b) Each agency of the Synod, synodwide corporate entity, or auxiliary shall establish procedures that will insure that its material as specified in Bylaw 1.9.1 will be submitted for doctrinal review to one of the reviewers referred to in Bylaw 1.9.2 (a).

(c) Since time requirements vary according to the type of material being reviewed, the procedure in each case shall be worked out to the mutual satisfaction of the sponsoring group and the doctrinal reviewer(s).

(d) The identity of authors and reviewers shall not be disclosed without the approval of the President. Consultation may at times be advisable, however, where clarification is necessary.

(e) The reviewer's primary concern is that items submitted to him be in agreement in their doctrinal content with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

(f) The reviewer(s) shall also be concerned that the items submitted do not contain statements that are inadequate, misleading, ambiguous, or lacking in doctrinal clarity.

(g) The reviewer(s) shall further be concerned that resolutions of the Synod be honored and upheld and that positions deviating from the doctrinal resolutions of the Synod be clearly identified as such.

(h) When the author is also a reviewer, his material shall be assigned to another reviewer. In order to avoid any conflict of interest, no author shall be involved in any way in the selection or assignment of reviewer(s) for his or her own work.

(i) The reviewer may request that specific material assigned to him also be reviewed by another reviewer.

(j) Where changes appear to be necessary, the reviewer(s) shall submit a thorough and clearly written documented critique that shall be made available to the author, the sponsoring group, and the publisher. The documentation provided by the reviewer(s) shall provide a thorough and detailed explanation, with all appropriate biblical and confessional references used to support the opinion offered.

(k) The author shall consider the critique and make necessary revisions until there is agreement between the author and the reviewer(s).

(l) Should any problem arise between an author, the reviewer(s), the publisher, or any other party involved with respect to the material submitted for review, the sponsoring group shall endeavor to resolve it to the satisfaction of the reviewer(s). If it cannot do so, the problem shall be submitted to the Commission on Doctrinal Review which shall follow the appeals procedure and criteria stated in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.1.

Commission on Doctrinal Review

- 3.9.3 The Commission on Doctrinal Review exists to assist the President of the Synod in the exercise of his responsibility that all doctrinal content in its or any of its agencies' materials be in accord with the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.
- 3.9.3.1 The Commission on Doctrinal Review shall consist of five members appointed by the President of the Synod from the total number of doctrinal reviewers.
- (a) The commission shall elect its own officers.
 - (b) The commission shall effect its own organization.
- 3.9.3.2 The Commission on Doctrinal Review functions in accordance with Bylaw section 1.9 and shall meet as often as necessary to provide guidelines for the work of doctrinal reviewers and to concern itself with problem areas in the procedures of doctrinal review and appeals.

Appeals Prior to Publication

- 3.9.3.2.1 Appeals regarding materials not yet published may be initiated by an author, the sponsoring group, or an executive staff member of that group and submitted to the chairman of the Commission on Doctrinal Review.
- (a) Within seven business days after receipt of an appeal, the chairman of the Commission on Doctrinal Review shall inform all concerned and shall appoint three members of the commission to serve as a review panel and shall designate one as its chairman. A panel member shall disqualify himself on the basis of any kind of personal involvement in the issue.
 - (b) The review panel shall provide a copy of the appeal to the author and the sponsoring group and invite them to provide a response to the appeal. All parties to the appeal shall be given 14 days to provide their response.
 - (c) To aid objectivity, the identity of author and review panel shall ordinarily not be disclosed. However, consultation may at times be necessary for clarification.
 - (d) In making its recommendation, the panel shall decide within 30 days whether the item in question
 - (1) is suitable for publication; or
 - (2) may be published after alteration; or
 - (3) may be published as a study document; or
 - (4) shall be denied publication.
 - (e) The decision of the panel shall be determined by a majority vote and shall be final so far as the Commission on Doctrinal Review is concerned. A report together with the panel's minutes shall be submitted to the chairman of the Commission on Doctrinal Review.
 - (f) The chairman of the commission shall report the decision within seven business days to the author, the original reviewer(s), the sponsoring group, and the President of the Synod.

Appeals Following Publication

- 3.9.3.2.2 A challenge to the doctrinal review certification of a published item may be initiated by any member of the Synod and shall be submitted in writing via mail or personal delivery to the chairman of the Commission on Doctrinal Review.

- (a) In order for the Commission on Doctrinal Review to consider a challenge, the challenger is obliged to provide specific references demonstrating how the published item is not in agreement with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.
- (b) After receipt of the challenge, the chairman of the commission shall within seven business days inform the President of the Synod, the sponsoring group, and, if applicable, Concordia Publishing House, shall appoint three members of the commission to serve as a review panel, and shall designate one as its chairman.
- (c) The chairman of the Commission on Doctrinal Review shall provide a copy of the appeal to the President of the Synod, the sponsoring group, and, if applicable, Concordia Publishing House, and offer them the opportunity to respond to the appeal within 14 days from the date of notification.
- (d) To aid in maintaining objectivity, the identity of the challenger and the identity of the panel will ordinarily not be disclosed. There shall be no publicity given to the appeal, nor an effort made to circularize the Synod on a pending appeal.
- (e) The panel shall after reviewing the published material declare, within 45 days following the expiry of the 14-day response period provided in Bylaw 3.9.3.2.2 (c), whether the doctrinal review certification is affirmed or revoked based on whether the published material is in agreement with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.
- (f) If the panel revokes the doctrinal review certification, it must identify the part(s) of the item in need of clarification, amplification, and/or deletion in order to bring into agreement with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and withdraw the publication until such agreement is reached.
- (g) The panel will appoint one of its members to be the doctrinal reviewer for the recycling of the revised material to assure the item's agreement with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions if republished.