

Essay on the Law.

I. What part of the Law now binds everyone in the New Testament?

The speaker answers this question in the following sentences:

1. The law that binds everyone, even in the New Testament, is solely the natural law originally written in the hearts of all people.

2. Therefore the holy Ten Commandments, which God once revealed through Moses from Mount Sinai, as well as all other laws contained in the Old Testament, insofar as they contain the natural law, are binding on everyone. <[page 13](#)>

3. Not only everything else in the Old Testament, but also everything in the holy Ten Commandments that relates solely to the Old Testament covenant people and to their particular constitution and household, namely to their particular ceremonial or ecclesiastical laws, as well as to their police or civil laws, has lost its power to bind the consciences in the New Testament and has been abolished by Christ; therefore we do not find the Ten Commandments quoted anywhere in the New Testament in the Old Testament form, but in a New Testament form. Thus, for example, the apostle Paul modifies the words of the fourth commandment in the Old Testament: "That thou mayest live long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," Exodus 20:12, thus: "That thou mayest prosper and live long on the earth," Ephesians 6:3. The outward Sabbath of a special day of physical rest commanded in the third commandment of the Old Testament is expressly declared abrogated in Colossians 2:16-17: "Let no man therefore make you conscience of meat, or of drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of new moons, or of sabbaths: which are the shadow of things to come; but the body itself is in Christ." The only reason why the

Reformed insist that the holy Ten Commandments should also be included in the Christian catechism entirely in the form in which Moses received them from God and gave them to the Jews, is therefore lack of a proper understanding of the Law; while the New Testament way in which the Lutheran Catechism presents the holy Ten Commandments is a glorious testimony to the pure knowledge and deep understanding of Luther and the Lutheran Church regarding this matter. [~~-----~~ This explains my own question when I read the **Small Catechism** on the Ten Commandments!]

4. Neither the holy Ten Commandments nor any Old Testament law binds Christians because they were revealed by God through Moses, for as a written law they were imposed only on the separated people of the old covenant, the Jews.

5. What belongs to the natural law in the holy Ten Commandments and in all the other laws contained in the Old Testament, Christ indicates first by saying that in the two commandments, to love God and neighbor, hang the whole law and the prophets (Matt. 22:36-40), and in another passage that the Law and the Prophets are this Word: "Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do that to them." Matt. 7:12: So what belongs to this summary and main commandment also belongs, according to Christ's revelation, to the natural law that unites all men in the New Testament. But because the writing of the law engraved on the human heart at the first creation is very much faded after the fall and is not completely restored in the Christian in this life even after the rebirth and renewal, we have, secondly, to recognize whether a law in the Old Testament belongs to the natural law, whether God punishes the transgression of it also in the Gentiles as sin and abomination through his prophets; and finally, thirdly, whether the Law [page 14](#) is repeated and confirmed in the New Testament as one that also binds Christians.

6. It is true that believing Christians, as such and insofar as they are, are no longer under the law, but are free from all Law, for, says St. Paul, no law has been given to the righteous; but not so that they could or would live freely against the eternal holy will of God revealed in the Law, but insofar as they, whom Christ has redeemed from the curse and compulsion of the Law, have become a law to themselves through faith and the new birth, and therefore keep and fulfill the law not as a law, but out of the impulse of their new nature in free love, not because they

ought to, but because they want to, since God's will has become their will. (Luther's Works, Erl. ed. VII, 289. 290. Walch's ed. XII, 343 [[StL XII. 253-254](#); [Am. Ed. 57](#)] — Erlangen ed., vol. XXXVI, pp. 32-101. Hall. A. III, 1546. f. [[StL 3. 1031 - 1092](#); [Am. Ed. 62, 335 ff. \(339, 345, 346, 353, 361, 376, 379, 383\)](#)] — Erlangen ed. Vol. XXIX, pp. 150-157. Walch. Vol. XX, 203-211 [[StL 20. 146-153](#); [Am. Ed. 40, p. 92-98](#)] — Erlangen edition XXXII, 443. 444. Walch's edition XX, 2305. 2306 [[StL 20. 1854-1855](#); [Am. Ed. 47, 91-93](#)].)

II. What is the proper understanding of these words: You shall love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself?

In particular, it is the commandment: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, which is at issue here, since it is this commandment in particular whose correct understanding is now often not achieved, indeed which is grossly perverted by many. In fact, there are two main misconceptions about this commandment.

1. First of all, it is thought that if one is to love one's neighbor as oneself, this means that one must measure one's demonstrations of love in such a way that one's neighbor does not gain more advantage and benefit from us than we gain for ourselves, that one therefore shares with one's neighbor in this and therefore takes great care that one does not harm oneself in one's demonstrations of love toward one's neighbor, and even if one's neighbor gains advantage through us, that we do not lose an equal share of it. In the words, "Love your neighbor as yourself," two things are implied: first, that you love yourself, and second, that you love your neighbor as yourself. Hence it is customary in common life to say: Every man is his own neighbor, which some of the Church Fathers (and even some Lutheran theologians have followed them in this, although they reject this saying) express thus: *Caritas incipit a se ipsa*, that is, love begins with oneself. [[The rule of today's psychologists' therapy](#).] From this one draws the conclusion that one does not love one's neighbor as oneself, but more than oneself, which God does not demand if one's works of love, e.g. in hiding a sum of money, are only a loss to oneself and a gain to one's neighbor; whereas God's Word demands as a sign of true love for one's neighbor that one should not look to what is one's

own, but to another's, Phil. 2:4, not to seek what is his, but what is another's, 1 Cor. 10:24, [page 15](#) not to seek what is good for ourselves, but what is good for many, 1 Cor. 10:33, yes, to be willing to lay down one's life for the brethren. 1 John 3:16. The only correct interpretation of the word "love your neighbor as yourself" is therefore that which the Lord Himself gives with the words: "Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do to them; this is the Law and the Prophets." Matt. 7:12. Our self-love should therefore be the pattern for our love for our neighbor; just as we love ourselves, so sincerely, so fervently, so actively and so constantly, we should also love our neighbor; just as we always begin with ourselves according to our innate self-love, so we should rather begin with our neighbor according to the law and the prophets. (See Luther's works, Walch's ed. IX, 297-305 [[StL 8, 1590-1597](#); [Am. Ed. 27, 351-357](#)] — Walch's ed.. VIII. 2695-97 [[StL 9, 668-669](#); [Am. Ed. 27, 56-58](#)].

2. Another misconception and misapplication of the phrase, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself', is that one believes one must draw the conclusion from it that it is therefore against the love of one's neighbor that I am rich or a master and let my neighbor remain poor or a servant. This would in fact abolish equality, because I would then necessarily have to love myself more than my neighbor, for if I loved him as I love myself, I would also make him equal to me. But this principle is just as troublesome and confusing to the conscience as it would, if it were carried out, overthrow all orders in the world. For if this alleged understanding of the words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself', were correct, then, first, no man could in good conscience have and enjoy anything that his neighbor would not also have and enjoy, and, secondly, absolute Communism would be the only right relation among men in regard to their goods. But the words: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, have a completely different meaning. Their interpretation, as already noted, is given by the Lord Himself in the words: "Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do to them," Matt. 7:12. These words do not mean that I should put my neighbor in my place, but that I should put myself in my neighbor's place and do to him as I would want him to do to me if I were in his place, that is, if I thought it fair and right for him to

do to me. If, for example, my neighbor is poor and I am rich, I should act towards him as I would think fair, [<page 340>](#) that he should act towards me if I myself were poor and my neighbor rich. But what would I then want and consider it fair and right to do to me? Not that the other should share with me all that he had, and make himself equal to me, for then a second poor man would come, a third, a fourth, and so on, and thus there would be an eternal sharing, and neither human nor divine order could exist. Not only would such sayings of the Word of God then lose their validity: "The rich and the poor must be among themselves, the Lord has made them all," Prov. 22:2; but even the rule of the seventh, ninth and tenth commandments would thus be abolished. Much less would I be able to wish in this case that the rich man would give me all his [<page 16>](#) wealth and thus make me rich and himself poor. But I would wish and consider it fair that the rich man should help me according to my need and according to his means, taking into account other poor people who have the same or perhaps a greater need; that he should either, where necessary, give and bestow alms, or lend me money, or give me work, or at least provide me with work and with it bread, or otherwise take care of my need. Just as I would want someone to do for me if I were in my neighbor's place, so I should do for him if I want to love my neighbor as myself. The same would be the case if I were master and my neighbor my servant. Love does not demand that I make my servant something other than he is by God's providence, or even that I make myself a servant and him a master; but that I deal with him as I would want him to deal with me if I were in a superior position, that is, if he were my master and I his servant. (See Luther's Works, Walch's ed. X, 1056-1067 [[StL 10, 886-895](#); [Am. Ed. 61, 306-314](#)]; Erlangen edition XXIII, 310-320.

3. Finally, to the right understanding of the word "love your neighbor as yourself," which is rare even in our day, belongs this, that the commandment to love one's neighbor is the greatest and noblest next to the commandment to love God, and therefore love is the master of all commandments and the standard of their fulfillment, as Scripture (Rom. 13:8-10) expressly calls love the law, and indeed according to Gal. 5:14, the fulfillment of all laws.. (See Luther's Works, Erl. Walch's edition XII, 488-497 — Walch's ed. XX, 2025-2032 [[sic: StL 19,](#)

[1653](#) - [1658](#)] — Erl. ed. XIV, 139-144. Walch's ed. XI, 2254-2260 [[StL 11, 1689-1693](#); [Am. Ed. 79, xxx](#); [Lenker 5, 172 f.](#)]).

III. Why must the Law also be proclaimed in the New Testament and also to Christians?

The answer to this is threefold:

1. Because the law contains the unchangeable will of God, indelibly written in the heart of every human being, as the eternal, irrevocable and unchanging guideline for all beings created for the knowledge and fellowship of God, as Christ expressly says: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:17-19 (Luther's Werke, Erlang. Walch's Edition XX, 2019. 2020 [[StL 20, 1614-1615](#); [Am. Ed. 47, 110-111](#)]. — Luther's Werke, Erlang. ed. XIV, 154. 155. Walch's Exg. XI, 2273 [[StL 11, 1703-1704](#); [Am. Ed. 79, xxx](#); [Lenker 5, 188](#)]. — Erl. ed. XIX, 244. Walch's ed. IX, 422. 423. — Luther's Werke. Walch's ed. XX, 2044. 2048 [[StL 20, 1635, 1638](#); [Am. Ed. 73, 56, 59](#)]. — Luther's Works, Erl. ed. XLIII, 88. Walch's ed. VII, 635 [[StL 7, 425](#); [Am. Ed. 21, 71](#)]) <[page 17](#)>

2. The second reason why the law must also be preached in the New Testament is that only those who recognize their sins can come to faith in Christ and to knowledge of his reconciling and redeeming work and suffering; but knowledge of sin comes through the law alone. For it is not only written: "Through the law comes knowledge of sin," Rom. 3:20, but also: "I did not know sin without the law. Without the law sin was dead." Romans 7:7-8. But at the same time the Scripture testifies to us: "But the law came in beside, that sin might be made more powerful. But where sin has become powerful, grace has become much more powerful." Rom. 5:20. Hence St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, when he wants to give the whole of God's counsel for our salvation, first proves from the law that "both Jews and Greeks," that is, all men, "are all under sin." Rom. 3:9. (See Luther's Works, Erl. ed. X, 283. 284. Walch's ed.

XI, 369 [[StL 11, 267](#); [Am. Ed. 75, 424](#)]; Erl. ed. XXXII, 7-8. Walch's ed. XX, 2022. 2023 [[StL 20, 1616-1617](#); [Am. Ed. 47, 113](#)]).

3. Finally, the law must also be preached to those who have already become true Christians, for the reason that even the believing, enlightened, born-again Christian, who is of course willing to do all good, is not yet completely enlightened and renewed, but has the old Adam, that is, flesh and blood, and therefore still needs the teaching of the law, even terror and compulsion; as we see then that the law is also preached to Christians through the whole of Holy Scripture. (See Luther's Works. Walch's ed. XX, 2053-2057 [[StL 20, 1642-1645](#); [Am. Ed. 73, 63-65](#)] — Erl. ed. XIII, 118. Walch's ed. XI, 1798 [[StL 11, 1330-1331](#); [Am. Ed. 78, 217-218](#); [Lenker 4, 161](#)]. — Erl. ed. XXXII, 72. Walch's ed. XX, 2070 [[StL 20, 1658](#); [Am. Ed. 61, 342](#)]. — Erl. ed. LI, 303-305. Walch's ed. IX, 520-522 [[StL 9, 880-882](#); [not in Am. Ed.](#)] [[StL 16, 2241-2242](#); [Am. Ed. 41, 113-114](#)]).

IV. What is the relationship between the preaching of the law and the preaching of justification through faith?

The short answer to this is threefold:

1.

The preaching of justification through faith must be preceded by the preaching of repentance from the law, as it is written: "Thus it is written, and thus Christ must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and cause repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name among all nations, and be raised up in Jerusalem." Luke 24:47 (Luther's Works, Erl. ed. XXXII, 9. 10. Walch's ed. XX, 2024. 2025 [[StL 20, 1618](#); [Am. Ed. 47, 114-115](#)]. — Luther's Werke, XXXV, 221. 222. Walch's ed. III, 1285. 1286 [[StL 3, 858-859](#); [Am. Ed. 62, 178-179](#)]. — Luther's Works, Walch's ed. 1, 1784-1790 [[StL 1, 1185-1189](#); [Am. Ed. 3, 221-224](#)]. — Luther's Werke, Walch's ed.. I, 2144. 2145 [[StL 1, 1428-1429](#); [Am. Ed. 4, 50-51](#)]. — Luther's Werke, Erl. ed. XXIII, 12. 13. Walch's ed. X, 1912-1914 [[StL 10, 1636](#); [Am. Ed. 40, 274](#)]. — Luther's Werke, Erl. ed. XXXII, 5. Walch's ed. XX, 2018. 2019 [[StL 20, 1613-1614](#); [Am. Ed. 47, 110](#)].)

2.

Justification itself may be taught from the gospel alone, and therefore the preaching of the law is to be entirely [<page 18>](#)

excluded from it, for thus it is written: "But we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be guilty before God: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now without the work of this law is righteousness revealed in the sight of God." Rom 3:19-21. (Luther's Werke, Walch's ed. XX, 2039. 2040 [[StL 20, 1632](#); not in Am. Ed.]).

3.

The law must not be preached to the justified as such in order to make them pious and fruitful in good works, and it must therefore not be imposed on the new man, but only on the old man; just as the holy apostle Paul calls out to the Galatians, who had again placed themselves under the yoke of the law: "I want to learn this from you alone: Did you receive the Spirit through the works of the law, or through the preaching of faith? Are you so foolish? You began in the Spirit, will you now complete it in the flesh? He who gives you the Spirit and does these things among you, does he do it by the works of the law or by the preaching of faith?" Gal 3:2-3, 5. (Luther's Works, Erl. ed. XIII, 39-41. Walch's ed. XI, 1692-1694 [[StL 11, 1251-1253](#); not in Am. Ed.]).

Lecture on the doctrine of authority.

I. Secular authority is the name given to that state of certain persons in human society which gives these persons, as supreme superiors, the power and occupation in all that relates to public community life and is subject to reason, to govern by command those subject to them in accordance with the authority vested in them; which state, on the one hand, imposes on them the duty to conduct their government according to justice, equity and the existing laws of the land, to always have in mind and promote the general best, and to protect and maintain the rights, civil order and earthly profession of their subjects against all violence by laws, orders, threats, supervision and punishment of property, life and limb according to the guideline and demands of the moral law; on the other hand, it gives them the right: to demand unconditional obedience from all subjects in the performance of their office, to enforce obedience in the event of refusal, and, in order to perform their duty, both to maintain an external power in the necessary number of servants, so-called public servants, and to levy the necessary taxes.

Matt. 20, 25. Rom. 13, 3, 4, 6. 1 Tim. 2, 2. 1 Pet. 2, 13, 14. Ex. 22, 8, 9. Prov. 20, 26. 29, 4. Jer. 25, 31. Job 19, 29.

Luther, Schem. Hamphoras, Erl. Ausg. XXXII, p. 146. Interpretation of the Ten Commandments, E. A. XXXVI, p. 121. Von weltlicher Oberkeit, E. A. XXII, p. 96

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II. of all the powers which men may possess over others, none is originally of divine foundation and ordinance but the power of parents over their children. The

power of temporal authority is therefore a power flowing from parental authority, either expressly or tacitly transferred or left to other persons? According to the extent of this delegation or surrender, the power of authority extends more widely or more narrowly and gives rise to the various forms of secular government: either, when the supreme power is surrendered to one person only, the unlimited and the limited monarchy; or, when the supreme power is surrendered to several persons, the aristocracy and the democracy. The authorities and their government are therefore not established and ordered by divine command, but are subject solely to the reason and conscience of men.

Gen 41:41, 43. Deut 17:14, 15. Ex 18:13-26. Gen 9:6.

Luther, The Great Catechism, the 4th and 5th Commandments, Concordb. Amer. A., pp. 389. 394. interpretation on several chapters of the other book of Moses, E. A. XXXV, pp. 380-383.

III. Every worldly authority without distinction — be it more or less limited in its power, distributed to one person or to several, arising by lawful means or by cunning and violence — is as such God's servant and divine order, not only because it has one and the same vocation in every form: to carry out what God commands all men according to the divine law written in the heart, in the place of many, as far as the power reaches, this vocation is therefore the direction of the divine vocation of many; and furthermore, the establishment of the magisterial office by partial surrender of the divine vocation of individuals has no commandment of God against it, but rather comes about through divine providence and government; and also the persons who are to hold this office are called to it by God either by express revelation or by providential providence for the blessing or punishment of the subordinates — but also because it is attested by divine revelation in Holy Scripture as a divine order and God's servant.

Röm. 13, 1. 4. 6. 1 Pet. 2, 13. Spr. 8, 15. 16. Joh. 19, 11. 1 Sam. 2, 8. Spr. 28, 2, 1 Mos. 45, 8. 9. 2 Kön. 14, 25— 27. Dan. 2, 21. 37. 38. 4, 14. Isa. 3, 4. 5 Mos. 1, 17. 2 Chron. 19, 6. 7. Ps. 82, 6.

Luther, Interpretation of the 82nd Psalm, E. A. XXXIX, pp. 231- 234. Interpretation of several chapters of the other book of Moses, E. A. XXXV, pp. 383. 384. Sermon on the Angels, E. A. XVII, pp. 193. 194.

IV. All those subject to secular authority, without exception, are bound to hold their authority dear and worthy as a divine order: so that they may make petition, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving before God for them, as well as show them due reverence, obey their laws, commands and orders in the exercise of their duty< [page 20](#)> and in the use of their rights, take the required oath, conscientiously pay the dues due and, where necessary, place themselves at their service in order to serve them faithfully at the risk of property, life and limb. This also applies to the free citizens in every democracy-since authority does not cease to be authority by the fact that the persons appointed to it can only occupy the position of authority for a predetermined short period of time and can be elected from every class of the people-thus in our republic with regard to the authority of the individual state as well as to the authority of the association of states.

Romans 13:1, 5, 6, 7; Titus 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:13, 17; Matt. 17, 24. 25. 22, 21. Ex 22, 28. Jer 29, 7. 27, 12.

Luther, The Great Catechism, 4th Commandment, C. B. Amer. A., p. 391 ff. Lessons of the Visitors, E. A. XXIII, pp. 20-27. Sermons on the First Book of Moses, Cap. 33, E. A. XXXIV, pp. 216. 217. Of secular supremacy, E. A. XXII, p. 73.

V. In all those cases in which the temporal authority abuses its power in things subject to reason, without therefore commanding sinful things, the subject is guilty of obeying, but has the duty, if the love of his neighbor requires it, to bear

witness against the disorder in accordance with his profession and without violating his duty to the authorities and to accept the consequences of this witness in patient suffering, or, if love for his neighbor requires it, to evade the abuse of power by emigrating. If, on the other hand, the authorities wish to rule in the kingdom of God and over consciences, or command them to do sinful things, those subject to them are obliged to refuse to obey them. But the subject, as such, never has the right to oppose his authority; because the only original authority over others is that of parents over their children, and any other authority can therefore only be given by profession, but any authority that can be created in a people by a profession is subordinate to the supreme authority that the authority possesses.

Isa. 1, 17; Acts 4, 19; 5, 29; Matt. 26, 52. Dan. 3, 28. 2 Sam. 18, 31. 1 Sam. 24, 8. Prov. 24, 2.

Luther, Kirchenpostille, 23 p. Tr., E. A. XIV, pp. 262. 263. Interpretation of the 82nd Psalm, E. A. XXXIX, pp. 228-230. 234-237. Reply to Melanchthon in Augsburg to the questions sent to him about the Statutes of Man, Walch. A. XVI, p. 1206 ff. Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, E. A. XXII, p. 101. Interpretation of the Epistle of St. Peter 1523, E. A. LI, p. 419. 420. Interpretation of the 5th, 6th, 7th chapters of Matt. Cap. 6, E. A. XLIII, p. 183. 184

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Dissemination of the Holy Scriptures.

The Synod was repeatedly reminded that within the St. Louis parish, to which all those parishioners and guests can belong who declare themselves willing to contribute 2 cents a month to its treasury, and which has set itself the purpose of distributing Bibles in good editions at the lowest possible prices, and has already worked by God's grace in the most glorious blessing, so that through it the Holy Scriptures have already come into many a house and into many a hand where they would not otherwise be found, apart from the fact that the publication of the New Testament of the Altenburg Bible has also been made possible by the existence of this society and thus the publication of the whole glorious work has been set in motion. It has already been encouraged in the past to form either independent similar societies or branch societies of the St. Louis Bible Society in other parishes of our synod. Only two branch societies have been formed as a result. This can only be due to the fact that this subject has not been sufficiently encouraged in the congregations. May the dear congregations take this matter to heart! Bibles are also available here, but mostly in editions that cannot satisfy us. That of the American Bible Society, although it has certainly brought immeasurable blessing, not only omits the apocryphal writings, from which quotations are often made in the theological works and edifying writings of our church, for which reason, as well as for other reasons, it is desirable to find them in every Bible book; but it also lacks the indication of parallel passages, which is of the greatest importance to us for our own correct understanding of Scripture and in the fight against false teachers, since we know that Holy Scripture interprets itself and that the meaning of the Holy Spirit in obscure passages can be revealed to us all the sooner by indicating the parallels. In other editions of this country either the summaries of the individual chapters, by which the right understanding of Scripture is also to be promoted, are entirely absent, or they are such that the reader does not know what is meant by them, if they do not mislead him and lead him to a false understanding, as when, for example, above a psalm it says: "Of a great King," where good summaries read: "Of Christ, the Bridegroom of His Church" or "The King of Honor." Still other editions contain abominable and atrocious distortions of the text of the Bible itself. It is surely our duty to ensure that good editions of the Holy Scriptures are obtained from Germany and distributed here, apart from the fact that it is actually a shame for us that we have not already had a good edition of the Bible printed here ourselves. But what has not been done may yet be done, and all the sooner, since

in quite a number of congregations a participation in the work of the St. Louis Mother Society is developing, since, as the experience of the latter shows, such great things have already been achieved by such small contributions, as one is wont to say, from many droplets < [page 22](#) > streams and ponds, rivers and lakes, rivers and seas. After all, this is our precious Bible, through which the good Lord gives us the greatest treasures for time and eternity. Therefore, no congregation should be slow and weary in this, but all should be lively and active, and they will then soon experience the blessing of the existence of such a society in their own midst. Through the quarterly meetings of the members of the society and through its annual Bible festival, which may also become a bond for neighboring congregations if they celebrate it together, the members of the society not only inspire each other to spread the Scriptures in the surrounding area, which may win some for the church, but also to their own greater zeal for God's Word. Indeed, the very existence of such a society is a loud preaching of the truth that the Word of God is the greatest treasure a person can have on earth. And how unspeakably great would be the joy if God, by His grace, were to allow us to organize our own good edition of the Holy Scriptures, since, as experience in other places has shown, this alone would bring thousands of Bibles into homes where they would otherwise not have found their way and where immortal souls could now be snatched from eternal perdition and won to heaven.

Changes to the synodal constitution.

A synodal congregation submitted a proposal for a change to the synodal constitution. The synod declared that, as a district synod, it had no authority to decide anything in this matter, since changes to the constitution can only be made by a general synod meeting, so that even unanimous separate resolutions by all district synods would not be valid in this matter.

Support for church buildings.

From a congregation which has been served by one of our pastors as a branch, but which has recently appointed its own pastor, the Synod received a petition for support for a church building, which prompted the Synod to declare the following:

The Synod notes with the utmost disconcertment the recent and increasing bad habit of congregations wishing to build churches seeking support from other congregations, either by petition or through traveling agents. While it never occurred to our old congregations to call on the love of the brethren for church buildings, preferring instead to gather in private homes until they could build a church from their own resources, it has now come to the point where preachers are almost constantly expected to approach their congregations with petitions for church buildings. What is most strange is that even the synod as such is approached for < [Page 23](#) > such support, as if it were there to build churches for the congregations. The synod as such must decisively reject all such requests, and in doing so gives the dear congregations something to consider:

1. it is dangerous for the synod as a synod to become involved in collecting contributions for church buildings, because some congregations might be tempted to join it simply in the hope of receiving such support.

2. almost all the congregations of our synodal association are more or less burdened with debts and have to do their utmost, partly to meet their own external needs, partly to meet the needs of the synodal funds, which is why they should be spared such demands on their love.

3. congregations that are not in a position to build their own churches and

parsonages should also not request their own preachers if, as in the present case, they can be provided for by a neighboring preacher. However, as far as schooling is concerned, for which the congregation in question believed it had to appoint its own preacher, the parents may either teach their children themselves or appoint one of their own for this purpose until the congregation gains strength.

Although, however, the Synod rejects the present petition, like all similar ones, as quite improper, and establishes the rule that each congregation must provide for its external needs, such as church buildings and the like, itself and from its own resources, without complaining to the sister congregations or the Synod, it does not mean to say, on the one hand, that there can be no exceptions to the rule, and, on the other hand, that it does not deny the congregations of its association to voluntarily provide support to the petitioning congregation in question out of brotherly love.

rule for the age required to vote in the municipalities.

In a congregational constitution submitted to the synod for inspection, there was a provision that young people aged 18 could be members of the congregation with voting rights. This did not seem advisable to the synod, because it is certainly contrary to the reverence which the young owe to the old, according to the words of God: "Let the young be subject to the elders." But if the question now arises as to who is to be counted among the young in this respect, we have no better standard for this than the assumption of all the world that all those who are not yet 21 years old belong to the young.

Public services during the synod.

On the first morning of the Synod, as already mentioned, the Reverend Mr. Wyneken preached on the 117th Psalm.