

Small Catechism: Table of Duties

Rev. Anthony Ahrendt

The Small Catechism describes The Table of Duties as; "Certain passages of Scripture for various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities." The time frame in which Martin Luther compiled The Table of Duties is uncertain; though certainly it was included in the original Small Catechism.

While there were other Lists of Duties, Luther's was unique in its reliance on Scripture alone. Luther included in the term "holy orders" the three estates in life; the church, the home, and state. Regarding the state, Luther taught that comprehended by Christian love, from God's grace, the home and state are equally important and as relevant as work within the church. Furthermore, Luther taught from Scripture that Christians could work in government serving their fellowman to God's glory. Along with Luther's convictions grounded in the Scriptures, The Table of Duties had a far-reaching effect on future generations.

Luther's intent for including this Table with the Small Catechism was that Christianity, as illustrated in the Chief Parts of the Catechism, should be practiced daily. The Table of Duties clearly teaches that this truth about Christian living is not found by separation from the world, but practiced daily by believers who serve others with their various God-given gifts and abilities in their vocations.



500 Years of the Lutheran Reformation
Southeast Circuit North Dakota District

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In faith, given by God's grace, with gratitude to God for the blessings given in Christ, Christians serve each other and the needs of others as God has prepared in advance (Ephesians 2:10). Whether preacher, teacher, father, mother, son, daughter, worker, laborer or some other vocation all are called in Christ to serve their fellow man to the glory of God.

This truth of Christianity is beautifully and eloquently collected in The Table of Duties, not in human terms, but in the Sacred Word of Scripture as God Himself endows each with various gifts, used to provide for others and that they are taught the truth of what God has done through Christ the Savior.

The life Christ lived for us is one of sacrifice by His life, suffering, death and resurrection. Thus, the life of the Christian is one of serving others as Christ has done for us. The vocations in life which God endows to individual Christians (preachers and lay people alike) are "holy orders" from God as He has saved us in Christ and called us to a life of sacrifice imitating our Savior who endured the punishment of the cross for our salvation.

Speaking of our daily living in Christ given by His grace the hymn writer teaches that we serve The Father's bidding through our faithful Lord who abides with us.

"Let us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Through world that would deceive us
And to sin our spirits lure,
Onward in his footsteps treading,
Pilgrims here, our home above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, with me abide;
I shall follow where you guide."

*-LSB 685 verse 1 "Let Us Ever Walk
With Jesus"*

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