

The Small Catechism's Table of Duties

September 8, 2013



Synopsis:

The Table of Duties is not one of the Six Chief parts of Dr. Luther's *Small Catechism*. It has been suggested that the Table was suggested to Luther by John Gerson's (1363-1439 A.D.) *Tractatus de modo vivendi omnium fidelium*. This section was, perhaps, not prepared by Luther, but later taken into the Catechism, probably with Luther's consent. The table of duties gathers together Biblical responsibilities laid upon the various stations in life (vocations) that have been instituted by God in the ordering of life. These duties, or vocations, are universal and are found in every society, centering on church, state/society and family. While these duties arrange an order of authority they do not merely do that to merely give individuals their prerogatives (permissions) of activities and delineating those 'under' their authority; but, when rightly viewed, those given greater authority, or more extensive duties, are given them not merely or primarily as a reason to be heard and obeyed, but as a greater responsibility to love and to serve through what they say and admonish. As such, we fail God when we fail to carry out the duties to others in the way that God has called us to do them, or use them in selfish, self-serving ways. Such failure is a double sin, since it is (1) disobedience and dishonor to God and (2) it deprives those we serve of the divine benefit that God has called us to deliver to those over whom we have authority. On the other hand, when God's appointed authority (be he a believer or not) is dishonored and/or disobeyed, then God is again dishonored, for he appointed that authority, and we rebel not against that authority, but God who appointed it. We are all both given authority to act and are under the authority of someone else and we can, thus, sin in either direction against God and against those over us in authority or under our authority.

As such the Table of Duties is law against which we must compare our attitudes, words and actions, that not only are to guide us as Words from our heavenly Father, but also show us our sin, the reason for our greatest discomforts and sorrows (our own sins). The Table shows us what we need to confess as our sins and receive forgiveness and amendment of life through better learning the Law, through the Spirit's applying it truthfully to our lives, through our confession for sins and harms we've cause, and, best of all, restoration through grace in Absolution and the Lord's Supper, unto sanctification and amendment of our sinful live.

Goals:

- Learn our Stations in Life.
- Learn to accept our Stations of Life as God's cross laid upon us.
- Understand the duties of each station relative to the other stations in life, directly or indirectly.
- Repent of our failures to honor God and serve others in our Stations.
- Apply the Ten Commandments to our unique stations to confess and seek counsel and forgiveness.
- Grow in Sanctification by the Means God has given; the proper application of Law and Gospel.

Introduction

TABLE OF DUTIES

*consisting of certain passages of Scriptures, selected
for various estates and condition of me, by
which they may be admonished to do
their respective duties.*

BISHOPS, PASTORS, AND PREACHERS – 1 Tim. 3.2-4; 3.6; Titus 1.9

DUTIES CHRISTIAN OWE THEIR TEACHERS AND PASTORS – 1 Cor. 9.14; Gal. 6.6-7; 1 Tim. 5.17-18; 1 Thess. 5.12-13; Heb. 13.17

GOVERNING AUTHORITIES – Rom. 13.1-4

DUTIES SUBJECTS OWE TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES – Mt. 22.21; Rom. 13.5-7; 1 Tim. 2.1-3; Titus 3.1; 1 Pet. 2.13-14

HUSBANDS – 1 Peter 3.7; Col. 3.19

WIVES – Eph. 5.22; 1 Peter 3.5-6

PARENTS – Eph. 6.4

CHILDREN – Eph. 6.1-3

LABORERS AND SERVANTS, MALE AND FEMALE – Eph. 6.5-8

MASTERS AND MISTRESSES – Eph. 6.9

YOUNG PERSONS IN GENERAL – 1 Peter 5.5-6

WIDOWS – 1 Tim. 5.5-6

CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL – Rom. 13.9; 1 Tim. 2.1

*Let each his lesson learn with care,
And all the household well shall fare.*