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# Luther's Catechisms-450 Years

Essays Commemorating the Small and  
Large Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther

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# **Luther's Catechisms — 450 Years**

## **Essays Commemorating the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther**

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# Early Christian Catechetics: An Historical and Theological Construction

*by William C. Weinrich*

A. In the Jewish-Christian Pseudo-Clementine Homilies the apostle Peter is presented as instructing the people of Tyre. They should repent and submit to those things which are pleasing to God. Those things, Peter says, which please God are: to pray to God, the giver of all things; to abstain from food offered to idols; to be washed from all pollution; and summing up the rest in one word, to do to one's neighbor those good things one wishes for oneself (Clem. Hom. 7:4). From what follows it is clear that the "good things" one is to do to one's neighbor are founded upon the Decalogue. For example, Peter says in explanation, "You would not like to be murdered; do not murder another man." Similar explanatory statements are made concerning committing adultery and theft. Then the Homilies continue: "After Peter had spent a few days in teaching (κατηχέων) them in this way, . . . they were baptized (Clem. Hom. 7:5).

Clearly reflected in this passage is a prebaptismal catechism such as might be given to a non-Jewish proselyte. Prayer, abstention from impure food, washing from pollution, and the Decalogue

encapsulated in the "golden rule," form the content of this instruction. The next scene in the Homilies presents a parallel, but differently stated, teaching of Peter, this time in Sidon (Clem. Hom. 7:7-8). Peter presents his teaching in the form of the two ways:

I make known unto you as it were two paths, and I shall show you by which travellers are lost and by which they are saved, being guided of God. The path of the lost, then, is broad and very smooth — it ruins them without troubling them; but the path of the saved is narrow, rugged, and in the end it saves, not without much toil, those who have journeyed through it. And these two paths are presided over by unbelief and faith (7:7; cf. Clem. Hom. 18:17)

Those who journey along the path of unbelief are those who prefer pleasure, who do what is not pleasing to God and on that account "have forgotten the day of judgment." The path of faith is "the service of God's own appointment" and

consists in worship of God alone, abstention from all things impure, good works, and expectation of eternal life (7:8).

Although the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies themselves are probably to be dated around the middle of the third century, these parallel accounts contain catechetical form and content which derive from earliest Christian practice and, as we shall see, from Jewish antecedents of that Christian practice. Basic are the ideas of keeping oneself free from all that makes impure and of doing good to one's neighbor, this latter based on the "golden rule" as the summation of the Decalogue, and both ideas capable of being taught through the scheme of the two ways. Forming an interpretive context for these two ideas are the two further notions of worship of God alone and the final judgment.

To a great extent just such instruction was given prior to the baptism of proselytes by which pagans were washed clean of their impurities before entering the nation of Israel. Although from approximately the first century on reference to proselyte baptism is rather frequent,<sup>1</sup> the rite of such baptism is given in but two sources, the tractate Yebamoth in the Babylonian Talmud and in the tractate Gerim (On Proselytes). Yebamoth 47 speaks of the instruction of proselytes as follows:

Then they are to instruct him in some of the lighter and some of the weightier commandments; and inform him as to the sins in regard to the corner of the field, the forgotten sheaf, the gleaning, and the tithe for the poor. Then shall they teach him the penalties for transgression: "Know well that up until the time that thou hast come hither thou hast eaten the forbidden fat of cattle without incurring the sentence of excommunication; that thou hast profaned the sabbath without incurring the penalty of lapidation. But from now on if thou eat the forbidden fat of cattle thou wilt be excommunicated; if thou profane the sabbath thou wilt be stoned." In the same way as they instruct him about the penalties of transgression shall they teach him the rewards for observance of the commandments and shall say to him: "Know thou that the world to come was made only for the righteous, but Israel at this present time may not experience very great good or very great afflictions."

A thorough examination of this passage led David Daube to posit a five-part "pattern of instruction": 1) an examination of the motives for conversion, 2) instruction about the com-

mandments, 3) instruction about the command to love, 4) instruction concerning punishments, 5) instruction concerning rewards and the world to come.<sup>2</sup> The similarities with the catechesis underlying the passages in the Homilies are obvious. Of interest is the fact that the words about the corner of the field, the gleanings, the forgotten sheaf, and the tithe for the poor are most certainly derived from Leviticus 19 (see 19:9-10), which according to the rabbis was regarded as the central chapter of the central book of the Torah and hence the central chapter of the whole Torah. We have already seen that in the Homilies the Decalogue is summed up in the "golden rule" which is simply another rendering of Lev 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," which is the middle verse of Leviticus 19 (see Matt 7:12; 22:40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). We shall return to the importance of Leviticus 19 below. For now it may suffice to intimate that in both the Homilies and in proselyte baptism the proselyte is viewed as entering a community of levitical holiness characterized by freedom from all that is impure and by love of the neighbor.

That the "two ways" schema was used in the instruction of proselytes is indicated from Midrash Rabba on Ruth 1:7 and 1:16 which refer to the laws of proselytes, "the words דרך ("way") and הלך ("walk") in both verses being taken as indications that the necessary instruction in the "two ways" had been given Ruth by Naomi.<sup>3</sup> The Midrash on Ruth 1:16 bears unmistakable traces of the rite of proselyte baptism. When Ruth clearly resolves to be converted, it is said that Naomi "began to unfold to her the laws of conversion." Two of these are explicitly given: "My daughter, it is not the custom of daughters of Israel to frequent Gentile theatres and circuses" and "My daughter, it is not the custom of daughters of Israel to dwell in a house which has no mezuzah." There is further mention of "penalties and admonitions" and of "other commandments of the Bible." Here is basically the same pattern of instruction that we found in the Homilies and in proselyte baptism as it is reflected in Yebamoth: abstention from all things impure, instruction in the commandments (reference to the mezuzah probably implying the Decalogue), and instruction in penalties and rewards (by implication). The word mezuzah refers to the doorposts of a house or sanctuary upon which, according to Deut 6:9, the commandments of God were to be written. Deut 6:9 closes the famous passage Deut 6:4-9 which begins with the "Hear, O Israel" and the commandment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might," namely, that commandment which along with Lev 19:18 is given as the summation of the whole law (Matt 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27).

The early Christian writing, the Didache,

contains perhaps the most famous occurrence of two-way instruction, and, as the full title shows,<sup>4</sup> this instruction was directed to Gentile proselytes.<sup>5</sup> According to the Didache there are two ways, a way of life and a way of death. The way of life is summed up by a conjunction of Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, which as we have just noted occurs also in the NT, and the whole is then recapitulated in the "golden rule" negatively formulated: "The way of life is this: first, you shall love the God who made you; second, [you shall love] your neighbor as yourself. But all things whatsoever you would wish not to happen to you, do not do to another" (Did. 1:2). The way of life is then described in some detail, first by a series of commandments based primarily upon words taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Did. 1:3-6). There is no discernible order to these commands, but the thrust is to abstain from fleshly desires (Did. 1:4a) and, especially, to love in a selfless way even toward those who do not merit it. The way of life is further described in Did. 2:2-7; 3:1-10 by a series of commandments based upon the Decalogue. We quote Did. 2:2-7:

Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not corrupt boys; do not fornicate; do not steal; do not practice magic; do not go in for sorcery; do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant. Do not covet your neighbor's property; do not commit perjury; do not bear false witness; do not slander; do not bear grudges. Do not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is a deadly snare. Your words shall not be dishonest or hollow, but substantiated by action. Do not be greedy or extortionate or hypocritical or malicious or arrogant. Do not plot against your neighbor. Do not hate anybody; but reprove some, pray for others, and still others, love more than your own life.

In Didache 5 the way of death is described, first by a series of evil acts or vices (5:1), then by a series of clauses descriptive of persons who do evil works (5:2). Also here one can discern the Decalogue as the underlying basis.

From Did. 7:1 it is clear that the instruction of the two ways in Didache 1-6 was intended as prebaptismal instruction, since the words "having spoken beforehand all these things" can only refer to the preceding six chapters. What we have then in the Didache's "two ways" is prebaptismal instruction, such as it might be given to a proselyte, which includes that from which one is to keep free and that which is to characterize one's life, this latter summed up in the dual command to love God and neighbor.

As we have seen, ethical instruction given in the

form of the "two ways" was used both within Judaism and within Christianity prior to the baptism of proselytes. In this context the "two ways" was a didactic form used to describe the change of life which the one to be baptized was to undergo in and through his baptism. However, the use of the "two ways" scheme in such literature as the Manual of Discipline of Qumran, the epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and Matt 7:13-15, where Jesus speaks of the wide and narrow ways, demonstrates that the "two ways" was not only directed toward pagan proselytes nor was it only used in baptismal contexts. It was simply a literary form through which ethical instruction could be given. However, that the "two ways" scheme could be used for prebaptismal instruction is reflective of the fact that it corresponds so well to the very structure of Jewish and Christian belief, namely, that when one is brought into the covenant with God, one is separated from evil and all things unholy and is bound to God and to his commandments. We have noted this structure of separation or abstinence and positive good works throughout and have called attention to the fact that the Decalogue which underlies this instruction is understood to be summed up in the words of Lev 19:18, which is within the Holiness Code.

The studies of Philip Carrington and Edward Gordon Selwyn have demonstrated that in the early Church there was current a common pattern of catechetical instruction based upon the concept of the Church as a "neo-levitical" or priestly community and centering around the twin pillars of abstinence from lust and avarice, and holiness effected in mutual love toward the brethren and honest dealings toward all men.<sup>6</sup> Carrington and Selwyn come to this conclusion through a comparison of 1 Thess 4:1-12 and 1 Peter (esp. 1:15-2:12), both of which exhibit noticeable relationships to the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-26 (esp. 17-19). Before pointing out some of these relationships, it might be well to outline briefly the principal characteristics of a holy community according to the Holiness Code. Such a community is (1) holy (Lev 19:2: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy"). The community is holy because it is separated from all uncleanness, especially seen in the sins of idolatry, fornication, and murder (blood); but it is also holy because it is (2) indwelt by God (Lev 26:11-12: "And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you; and I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people"). Such a community is (3) characterized by mutual love (Lev 19:18: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"; cf. Lev 19:34) and (4) by submission to proper order (Lev 19:32). It may be added that characteristic of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-19) is the address in the divine first person, giving notice that the abode of God is one of active address and

instruction.

πνεύματος)

We now return to I Thess 4:1-12 and 1 Peter to show forth schematically the echoes they exhibit of the Holiness Code, on occasion also referring as well to other pertinent passages of the NT:

1 Pet 2:5: the Christians are to be built into "a Spiritual house" in order to bring forward "Spiritual sacrifices"

1) There is a call to holiness:

1 Thes 4:9: The Christians are said to be "instructed by God" (θεοδιδάκτου). (This statement comes immediately upon the words concerning the gift of the Spirit and indicates that the abiding of God in his Spirit is one of active instruction, even prompting toward the good [θεοδιδάκτου εἰς]. We noticed earlier the use of the divine first person in the Holiness Code, and that may be reflected in this passage.<sup>7</sup>)

1 Thess 4:3: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν)

1 Thess 4:7: "For God did not call us for uncleanness but in holiness" (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ)

1 Pet 1:15-16: "but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (Note here the direct quotation of Lev 19:2)

This holiness is seen in separation from that which is unclean:

3) The indwelling of God through his holy Spirit does not only separate from uncleanness but issues forth into a life of holiness which is characterized by mutual love:

1 Thess 4:3: "That you (ἀπέχεσθαι) abstain from fornication" (πορνεία)

1 Thess 4:9: the Thessalonians have been "taught by God to love one another"

1 Thess 4:4: "that each of you know to keep his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of desire as do the Gentiles who know not God" (This may very likely reflect Leviticus 18 which commands against all kinds of sexual immorality.)

1 Pet 1:22: "having purified your souls . . . for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart"

1 Pet 2:11: "abstain (ἀπέχεσθαι) from the passions which war against the soul"

1 Pet 2:17: "love the brotherhood"

1 Pet 4:8: "above all hold unfailing love for one another"

cf. also Eph 4:17-19; Col 3:5-7; Acts 15:29

It may well be that the words "Do not render evil for evil" (1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9; Rom 12:17) belong here as well, for they appear to be a paraphrase of Lev 19:18.

2) This holiness is also due to the indwelling of God who has his abode among his people through his Spirit which is holy:

cf. Rom 8:4: Christ has condemned sin in the flesh "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (i.e. by the prompting guidance of the Spirit). (In Rom 13:10 Paul will say that the law is summed up in the command to love one's neighbor as oneself.)

1 Thess 4:8: God "gives his holy Spirit to you" (The motif of holiness is emphasized through the addition of the word "holy" which does not occur in Ezek 36:27; 37:14 to which this passage alludes.)

4) The members of a holy community are subject to proper order:

1 Pet 1:2: the recipients of Peter's epistle have been chosen "in the sanctification of the Spirit" (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ)

1 Pet 2:13; 2:18; 3:1-7  
cf. Col 3:18-22; Eph 5:21ff; James 4:7, 10; Rom

13:1-7

In view of such correspondences between 1 Thess 4:1-12 and 1 Peter and the apparent relationship they both have to the Holiness Code, Carrington and Selwyn conclude that both rest on a common catechetical tradition whose leading ideas are abstinence from all things impure (expressed by common terminology, especially ἀπέχεσθαι, πορνεία, πλεονεξία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἐπιθυμία), holy living embodied in mutual love for the brethren, and the indwelling of the holy God. In addition the idea of making a good impression on pagans by good Christian conduct may well have been part of such a catechetical tradition. The idea is present in 1 Thess 4:12 and Col 4:5 (where there is similar expression: πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω) and is present as well in 1 Pet 2:12 (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) and in Matt 5:16. Some confirmation of this may be given by the fact that the idea occurs in Ezek 36:23, that is, a passage in close proximity to Ezek 36:27 which, as we have seen, is quoted in 1 Thess 4:8. The whole passage of Ezek 36:23-27 is virtually an OT summary of the motifs we have been considering, so it may be well to quote it in full:

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Although we may say with C. H. Dodd that a passage like 1 Thess 4:1-12 presents us "trustworthy information of the contents of the Pauline catechesis,"<sup>8</sup> it is to be noted that 1 Thess 4:1-12, or any other NT passage to which we have alluded, is not itself actually a catechism. Rather, the common motifs which one finds in the NT (sometimes with remarkable likenesses of terminology and order) indicate that in writing their epistles the NT authors were alluding to a common instructional pattern which was known to their readers and to which they could refer in more or less detail depending upon the requirements of the situation.

To summarize we list the leading motifs of early Christian catechesis thus far discussed:

- 1) idea of a holy community indwelt by God through his holy Spirit
- 2) abstinence from all things impure (the word "to abstain" [ἀπέχεσθαι] often being used and often a list of vices added from which one is to abstain [esp. πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, πλεονεξία]<sup>9</sup>)
- 3) holy living characterized by mutual love (a list of virtues might be added [for ex. ἀγάπη, εἰρήνη, ὑπομονή, πίστις, μακροθυμία, ταπεινοφροσύνη]<sup>10</sup>)
- 4) discussion of various relationships (husband to wife, parents to children, towards authorities, servant to master); here the necessity of having a good reputation among the pagans may have been taught.
- 5) in light of the fact that exhortation is often given in conjunction with mention of the judgment (Rom 13:11; 1 Thess 4:6; 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; Eph 6:18; 1 Pet 4:7; 5:8), it is likely that catechetical instruction was given within a call to watchfulness and prayer.

B. The occurrence in the NT of the word "way" (ὁδός), either with a genitive qualifier (righteousness: Matt 21:32, 2 Pet 2:21; salvation: Acts 16:17; truth: 2 Pet 2:2) or absolutely (Acts 19:9,23 22:4; 24:14,22), to designate the Christian reality, and the common occurrence of the word "walk" (περιπατεῖν) to designate the active life within that reality indicate that the language of the two ways, if not the literary form, was adopted by the early Church not only for its ethical instruction but for its doctrinal instruction as well. Apollos is said in Acts 18:25 to have been taught (ἦν κατηχημένος) "the way of the Lord," which, if the content of his own teaching be any guide (18:25b), means that "the way of the Lord" is synonymous to "the things concerning Jesus" (τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ). That would be to say, the "way of the Lord" is the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That it in fact is to be understood in this way is indicated by the quotation of Isa 40:3 in all four gospels at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). John the Baptist's ministry is one of "preparing the way of the Lord" which, coming as it does before the ministry of Jesus, can only mean that to "prepare the way of the

Lord" is to be the announcer and forerunner of Jesus himself. John's gospel states it explicitly: Jesus said "I am the way" (John 14:6).

If this is the case, Apollos in being taught "the way of the Lord" was simply taught the gospel story. Two other passages in Luke-Acts indicate that indeed the gospel story (the ministry, death, resurrection of Jesus) was contained in primitive Christian catechesis. In the prologue to his gospel Luke says that the purpose for writing his gospel is that Theophilus "might know the truth concerning the words [he] had been taught" (Luke 1:4). The word for "taught" is  $\kappa\alpha\tau\eta\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$ , the same as in Acts 18:25 about Apollos. The instruction which Theophilus once received was basically the gospel story which Luke now for some reason feels required to go over again. The second passage is Acts 10:37-43. Apparently here is instruction for those in the household of Cornelius wishing to be baptized, and here is nothing other than the gospel story in summary: baptism of John, baptism of Jesus, the works of Jesus (especially his healings), the death of Jesus, his resurrection and appearances.

The gospel story itself was the content of early Christian instruction, that is to say, Christian catechesis took up what had first been preached — the gospel.<sup>11</sup> That is why on occasion the object of teaching can simply be "Christ" (Col 1:28) or "Jesus the Christ" (Acts 5:42). This latter passage shows explicitly that the content of preaching and of teaching was the same, for the verbs  $\delta\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$  and  $\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\lambda\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  are placed in tandum: the apostles did not cease to teach and to preach that Jesus is the Christ.

While it appears likely that the gospel story as such could be and was at times the content of instruction, the bulk of NT data indicates that the core of preaching and teaching was Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus as Messiah especially in his death, resurrection, and coming again to judge. Luke concludes his gospel with Jesus opening the minds of his disciples that they might understand (this is catechetical!) the Scriptures which proclaimed the necessity for the Christ to suffer, to be raised, and for repentance and forgiveness to be preached in his name to all nations. Paul does this same proving from Scripture in the synagogue at Thessalonika (Acts 17:3). It may have been the case that instruction especially among Jewish-Christians included proofs from the OT that Jesus, crucified and raised, was the Christ. Be that as it may, C. H. Dodd in his little book, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments has sketched what he believes was the core substance of the preaching of the early Church: the coming of Christ fulfilled the OT prophecies and inaugurated the New Age, Christ was born of David's seed, he died to save us from the present evil age, he was buried, he rose

on the third day, he is exalted at the right hand of the Father, he will come again to judge the earth.<sup>12</sup> Early Christian instruction encompassed the same message. As we see from the gospels and the passages of Acts which were mentioned above, instruction to the Jewish Christian was predominately, if not only, Christological in its doctrinal section. However, instruction in a Gentile context would have included as well the notion of one God who is the creator and provider of all things. This is indicated, for example, in 1 Thess 1:9 where Paul speaks of the conversion of the Thessalonians as a turning "to God from idols to a living God who created heaven and earth and gave rains from heaven and fruitful seasons." J.N.D. Kelly has noted that the NT is replete not only with statements solely Christological but also with binitarian and trinitarian formulations which testify to an emerging creedal formulation that was to take on increasingly concrete form, issuing in the second century in the early symbols and rules of faith.<sup>13</sup> The faith of the Church in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was not only preached; it was also taught, Christian generation to Christian generation, and I would submit, handed down especially in that way. For as Alfred Seeberg writes in concluding his famous study on the catechism of early Christianity, the early symbols are nothing other than "the truths of the catechism ordered according to the trinitarian schema."<sup>14</sup>

C. We have briefly considered the content of what might be called the ethical and the doctrinal catechisms. It used to be generally accepted, and in some circles still is, that the preaching of the Church (the kerygma narrowly defined: cross, resurrection, exaltation) and the teaching of the Church (the words of Jesus and ethical instruction generally) were to be sharply divided and that the traditions which embodied them had virtually separate histories and served separate functions. Bultmann, for example, expresses this view in his Theology of the New Testament:

The reason that the sayings of the Lord, which at first were handed down separately from the Christological Kerygma, came more and more to be taken up into 'the gospel' . . . is that, while missionary preaching continued, preaching to Christian congregations took on ever-increasing importance, and for these already believing congregations, Jesus in the role of 'Teacher' had become important again.<sup>15</sup>

However, as H. G. Wood has pointed out, Luke in his prologue attributed the traditions, not just the narrative portions of his gospel, to eye-witnesses, and, as the gospel as a whole demonstrates, these traditions include both words and works of Jesus, that is, ethical instruction as well as the gospel

narrowly defined. "When Luke wrote of the things accomplished in the Christian dispensation, he was not thinking only of the death and resurrection of Jesus. He had in mind both the mighty works and the teachings of Jesus."<sup>16</sup> What we above termed the ethical and the doctrinal catechisms were never understood by the NT or the early Church to be separate; they were rather expressions of two sides of the same divine act of salvation. The language of the "way" already intimates this. The "way of the Lord" is the eschatological visitation of God in love toward mankind; yet NT exhortations repeatedly tell the Christian to "walk" according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4). That is to say, Christians, having been brought into the "Way," which is Christ, are now to "walk" in the way; their life is to be structured according to the contours of the divine act of salvation upon which that life is founded. The summation of all law is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," for as John says: "If God loved us in that manner, we also ought to love one another" (I John 4:11), or as Jesus himself says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

As examples of the intimate and organic relationship which the indicative and the imperative have, let us look at several passages of Scripture and then two Church Fathers of the second century. First of all, we note Leviticus 26:13, which earlier played an important role in our deliberations:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you to walk erect.

The words "to walk erect" have a double meaning. Literally they mean that God made the Jews freemen. But the verse is not interested in social history. As is clear from Lev 26:3 which speaks of "walking" in God's statutes, the words "to walk erect" have taken on the meaning of being obedient to the covenantal requirements. In that God broke the yoke of their slavery, the Israelites were placed within a covenant with God of which obedience to God's commandments was the historical expression, so to speak. Were the Israelites to disobey God's commandments, it would be as if they were still in Egypt. That is why in Lev 18:3 God can command the Israelites not "to do as they do in the land of Egypt . . . you shall not walk in their statutes. " This, although the Israelites had already come out of Egypt! Obedience to the statutes is the very goal and purpose of God's saving; he wants a people for himself and a people whose God will be God. To disobey is to be no people, to fall back into a state of unredemption (Note Lev 26:14-33 where God threatens destruction and desolation should the

Israelites "walk" contrary to God).

The second passage is Rom 8:3-4, to which we have alluded before: God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemning sin in the flesh, "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." Here also the purpose of Christ's redeeming work is to establish a people in whom the law might be obeyed. Fulfilling the law is, if you will, the organic result of Christ's redeeming work. For Christ to condemn and defeat sin is nothing other than for him to establish obedience. The new life of the Christian is given "in, with and under" the redeeming, atoning and justifying work of Christ. This fulfilling of the law, says Paul, is a "walking in the Spirit" which, we have seen, reflects the thought of Ezek 35:27 and Lev 26:11-12.

A third passage is Col 2:6: "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, being rooted and built up in him and being established in faith, as you have been taught." For purposes of present discussion, this passage is remarkable for two reasons. First of all, the use of the verbs παραλαμβάνειν and διδασκεῖν clearly indicate that this passage is founded upon a prior catechetical instruction of the Christians at Colossae. Secondly, it states in a direct and encapsulated fashion a couple of points we have emphasized in our discussion. The Christian life, "walking," is in conformity with Christ; "to walk in him" is descriptive of the entire Christian life which is under the Lordship of Christ and for that reason in conformity with him. Also, the three participial clauses, which give flesh to the idea of walking, indicative as they are of God's goal for man, describe this walking as a constancy in God's purpose for man at each point along the way of the Christian life.

We turn now to a couple of second century witnesses. Justin Martyr (c. 130-155) witnesses to the organic nature and relationship of the gospel and the Christian life. In 1 Apol. 10 Justin is clearly basing himself on catechetical material (παρειλήφαμεν, δεδιδάγμεθα) and relates the Christian life to the first article of the creed:

We have learned that God has no need of material offerings from men, considering that he is the provider of all. We have been taught and firmly believe that he accepts only those who imitate the good things which are his — temperance and righteousness and love of mankind, and whatever else truly belongs to the God who is called by no given name. We have also been taught that in the beginning he in his goodness formed all things that are for the sake of men out of unformed matter, and if they show themselves by

their actions worthy of his plan, we have learned that they will be counted worthy of dwelling with him, reigning together and made free from corruption and suffering.

Note here the imitation motif. The Christian community, because its God is the creator of all good things and the provider of all, is itself characterized by the attributes of God. Justin elucidates this theme in 1 Apol. 13-14 basing himself again upon catechetical material and relating the Christian life to the work of Christ through which the Christian has been brought into that relationship to the creator that God intended:

. . . we worship the fashioner of the universe, declaring him, as we have been taught, to have no need of blood and libations and incense . . . We have learned that the only honor worthy of him is, not to consume by fire the things he has made for our nourishment, but to devote them to our use and those in need, in thankfulness to him sending up solemn prayers and hymns for our creation and all the means of health . . . It is Jesus Christ who has taught us these things, having been born for this purpose and crucified under Pontius Pilate. (emphasis ours)

In 1 Apol. 14 Justin describes that conversion through which the Christian has been separated from all things impure and has been made to live through Christ after the manner of God himself:

Those who once rejoiced in fornication now delight in continence alone; those who made use of magic arts have dedicated themselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who once took pleasure in the means of increasing our wealth and property now bring what we have in common fund and share with everyone in need; we who hated and killed once another . . . now after the manifestation of Christ live together and pray for our enemies.

Here ethical instruction has been entirely assumed into talk of the salvific action of God the creator who through his Word re-established his creation as a creation of obedience and righteous living according to his creative intent. That is not as though the Christian life is itself part of the salvific action. It is rather that God effects his ways, and his ways, that is, the goal of his working, are an obedient people.

Irenaeus (c. 180) is a second Church Father who entertains this wholistic understanding of

God's work as encompassing the new life. His work Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, is perhaps the only extant second century writing which has an explicit catechetical purpose<sup>17</sup>; it wishes to explain the preaching of truth for the confirming of faith (Demon. 1). Irenaeus begins with the theme of the two ways:

For those who see (the illumined, the baptized), there is only one way, which ascends, and which the heavenly light illumines; but for those who do not see, there are many dark paths which go in opposing directions. The first leads to the Kingdom of Heaven by uniting man to God, but the second descends to death by separating man from God. . . . Thus, it is necessary to walk, thanks to faith, with sure and firm step, without swerving away, in order to avoid by abandoning (the faith) or lagging behind establishing our home within material pleasures, or by taking a false path from leaving the (narrow) way.

Since man, says Irenaeus, is a composite animal having both a body and a soul, there is "a purity of the body, namely, continence which abstains from all shameful things and all unjust acts, and a purity of soul which consists in guarding intact the faith." However, Irenaeus also speaks of the tight inner and organic bond between faith and the Christian life:

We ought to hold inflexible the rule of faith and to accomplish the commandments of God . . . But the accomplishment of these commandments is an acquisition of faith.

Faith, that is, the appropriation of God's salvific working reveals the meaning of the commandments making possible obedience to them. Thus, when in Demon. 6 Irenaeus quotes the Rule of Faith, he introduces it with the words: "Here is the Rule of our Faith, the foundation of the building (Church) and that which gives firmness to our conduct." Indeed, Irenaeus places the Christian life within the third article of the Rule:

The Holy Spirit by whom the prophets prophesied and the fathers were taught that which concerns God and the just were guided within the way of justice, and who, at the end of time, has been poured out in a new manner upon our humanity in order to renew man throughout all the world in the sight of God.

The Christian, in that he has appropriated the work of God, Father, Son and Spirit, has received the Spirit who is a witness to the will of God, and, as it were, an internal catechist bringing mankind

to obedience to God's purposes, to a walking in  
God's ways.