

ACCOMMODATION ETHICS

By Peter Richardson and Paul W. Gooch

The two papers that follow attempt to describe and account for Paul's ethic of accommodation as presented in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 and 10:32-11:1. The two, though closely related, are independent; but they share a common conviction that an important Pauline idea has been neglected or mis-stated.

Some justification may be needed for the use of "accommodation" in these papers, for the word has fallen into disfavour in the last several generations. It is indicative of this unpopularity that no entries on accommodation are to be found in a number of recent encyclopedias.^{1/} A curious article discussing the genetic and psychological uses of the term can be found in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1907);^{2/} articles can also be found in the New Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge and the Catholic Encyclopedia*, both of 1907.

1. For example, the latest *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th edition), *Chamber's Encyclopedia*, *The Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible*, *Sacramentum Mundi*. *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1973) has a very brief article, the theological portion of which is taken in large part, from the 9th Edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1892). Among older works, the *Dictionary of the Bible* and the companion *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* have no articles, though the related *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* has a very long article.
2. There is not a word about the ethical or theological uses of the idea. J. Mark Baldwin wrote of the distinction between genetic adaptation and accommodation in the light of then recent developments in evolutionary theory (adaptations being congenital adjustments which are heritable; accommodation being only for the organism's lifetime). He also dealt with the problem in psychology of learning new things; he sets accommodation over against habit. Whatever an individual is able to perform is habit; the process by which habit is modified is accommodation.

Perhaps some small revival in the use of the term is under way, for not only does the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) have an entry, but so also does the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1974) and *Die Religion in Geschichte and Gegenwart* (1957).

The article in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* adequately summarizes the main lines of definition of the word "accommodation" as it has been used in theology: it is "the adoption of a text or teaching to altered circumstances". Three uses are distinguished: (1) the giving to a text of Scripture a meaning not intended by the writer; (2) the use of the word by liberal 18th century theologians in Germany to expound the mode of Divine communication through the Bible; (3) the teaching by Christians of only a part of the truth for the sake of prudence or modification of the form of Christian teaching to secure its more ready acceptance. This latter usage was defined to a large extent in terms of the well-known disputes between the Dominicans and the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, as a result of the practice of the Jesuits, particularly in China, of clothing their presentation of Christianity in a particular Chinese vocabulary, with the result that the Christian doctrine of God was confused with ancestor worship. The practice was forbidden in 1715 by Clement XI and again in 1742 by Benedict XIV./3/

The question of Divine accommodation figures largely in some of the dictionary articles, especially the very long article by J. R. Willis in the now old *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (vol. I, no date, pp. 15-24). There the definition is given: "the principle or law according to which God adapts His Self-revelation to the capacities and limitations of created intelligences". The whole article expounds this thesis in the light of early twentieth century understandings of the person and teaching of Jesus. The same concern motivates the *Schaff-Herzog* article (original German article by Rudolf Hofmann with an addendum by C. A. Beckwith in

3. Perhaps for this reason there is no whisper of the dispute in either the *Catholic Encyclopedia* or the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* under "Accommodation".

which he is clearly embarrassed by the whole question. /4/ Hofmann, after distinguishing between accommodation of matter and of manner, distinguishes within the latter negative (*dissimulatio*) and positive (*simulatio*) accommodation. Negative accommodation may be justified pedagogically, he says, hence there can be no reproach against Christ because he "allowed the disciples to remain under the influence of false impressions", which he describes as "Jewish beliefs and practices they were allowed to retain in his very presence" - as if Jesus were other than a Jew! He goes on: "The apostles also tolerated the continued existence of numerous ancient errors in their converts, being sure that these would fall away with their gradual growth in Christian knowledge (I Cor. 9:20 sqq.; Rom. 14:1 sqq.; Heb. 5:11 sqq.)".

Curiously, it is only the Schaff-Herzog article which singles out ethical accommodation for comment. It concentrates primarily on the notion of "the weaker brother", and applies it to two cases: (1) "When in a spirit of love it spares a condition of ignorance in another's mind, or (2) when in the same spirit it keeps back some truth which the imperfect state of development of the other is not ready to receive." Hofmann clearly prefers 1 Corinthians 8 to 1 Corinthians 9.

However, he also makes explicit (he is the only one to do so) that the Greek Fathers used the concept of accommodation and used it in connection precisely with Paul's treatment of these issues. To express this they used the word *sugkatabasis* or *sugkatabainō*. The patristic use of this word for accommodation is at least partly related to the fact that it can include within its meaning both "descent" and "condescension", and so becomes a suitable word for the Divine accommodation

4. "It is thus evident that the question of theological accommodation in the N.T. turns in part on a solution of two previous questions - the content of our Lord's knowledge, and the scope of inspiration in the authors of the various books."

involved in the Incarnation.^{5/} In addition to the literal use, it is also used for accommodation (a) in respect of laws, customs (i.e., leniency, concession to human weakness, etc.); (b) in human relationships (i.e. deference, consideration); (c) in respect of one statement with another (i.e. agreement, correspondence); (d) in respect of truth (i.e. diplomacy, reserve).^{6/}

To illustrate these uses, Lampe gives some examples. Chrysostom, *hom.* 12:1 in I. Cor. says *ouch hupokrisis alla sugkatabasis kai oikonomia* ("it was not hypocrisy but accommodation and tact");^{7/} he uses the verb in his comm. in Gal. 1:1: *Tē astheneia sugkatabainontes tōn ex Ioudaiōn pisteuontōn* ("accommodating to the weakness of the Jewish believers").^{8/} Original on 1

5. See G. W. H. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1961) s.v.
6. So Lampe, *ibid.*
7. On 1 Cor. 4:6; see Lampe, s.v. *oikonomia*; this word also is frequently used to express notions of accommodation. In his homily on 1 Cor. 9:19ff. (*hom.* 22:4ff.) he also uses *oikonomia* about Paul's phrase "I became to Jews as a Jew": "he said not 'a Jew' but 'as a Jew', which was a wise arrangement (*oikonomia*)". He goes on to point out that Paul's mind did not change, since that would have been wicked, but because of love condescended,, Paul did not really become a Jew, nor did he really become without the law.
8. He goes on to say that Paul had no need of accommodation when he preached to gentiles. Paul's opponents, according to Chrysostom, used this accommodation of Paul's as an agreement against Paul without ever explaining why he did it, claiming that Paul preached in one way to the Galatians and in another way to others (*ibid.*). When he comments on the circumcision of Timothy (*comm. in Gal.* 2:5) he makes much of the ignorance of Paul's hearers and the need for *oikonomia* ("tact"? or "scheme"? or probably "pious deception") to prevent their being injured. It subsequently becomes apparent that Chrysostom thinks Peter's and Paul's argument is only a "scheme" or "deception", certainly not real, for that would have been a stumbling block to the other Christians (*comm. in Gal.* 2:11-12).

Corinthians 9:20: *sugkatebainein ho Paulos eis sunagogās Ioudaiōn* (*Or. comm. in I Cor. 9:20: "Paul [accommodated] to the synagogues of the Jews")*.^{9/}

The word "accommodation" is never used in any of the standard translations of the Bible (AV, RV, Moffatt, RSV, NEB). The Greek *sugkatabainō* is found only once, in Acts 25:5 where it has simply the root meaning "go down with". It is understandable, then, that the term "accommodation" should not be a standard one, for it has had only sporadic use and has gone through a process of development in which a word applied originally exegetically to Biblical texts has come to be applied to other matters. What follows is an attempt to recapture the word "accommodation" for ethics, based not upon the Greek word the Fathers use but on Paul's description of his practice.

The thesis of these papers is that the idea of accommodation is present in the New Testament, as Origen and Chrysostom properly recognized (though they explained it away), that it is found particularly in Paul, and that in Paul it is stated as a positive principle of behaviour. Accommodation is not primarily a pedagogical activity, as many of the dictionary articles propose, but a matter of ethics. Paul deliberately acted in ways that were accommodating for a specific goal. He was not ashamed or embarrassed about this, but acted openly and stated the principle forthrightly. A stimulus towards a proper understanding of Paul's ethical stance may be useful after a long period of neglect.

A. THE ETHICS OF ACCOMMODATION: A STUDY IN PAUL

By Paul W. Gooch

I Introduction

This paper explores accommodation with Paul's theory and practice of his dictum "All things to all men" as its major source, and with philosophical questions as

9. Origen, *Contra Celsum* II, 1, 7, twice cites 1 Cor. 9:20 but neither time deals with accommodatory questions.

its framework - that is, questions having to do with the meaning and clarification of terms and the moral justification of behaviour. The paper sets out in Section II the basic text for consideration, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, and extracts from it several puzzles having to do with Paul's accommodation. In the next section the notion of accommodation itself is discussed. Here are distinguished three ways of using the term (the 'logic' of accommodation); then possible moral attitudes towards the inconsistencies associated with accommodation are considered (the 'morality' of accommodation). Section IV returns to Paul's theory and practice and asks what kinds of accommodation he approved and how he could justify being all things to all men. The paper concludes with some puzzles which are generated by the practice of accommodation, both in Paul's case and wherever he is imitated.

II The Text and its Puzzles

We need first to state clearly the main points of the principal text, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, where Paul sets out his practice of accommodation along with its justifying reasons.^{1/} The passage begins and concludes with general claims: Paul made himself slave to all men (*pasin emauton edoulōsa*, v. 19), to all those men^{2/} became all things (*tois pasin gegona panta*,

1. For comments on the 'rhetorical mastery' of the passage, see G. Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts", in L. E. Keck, J. L. Martyn, eds., *Studies in Luke-Acts*, Abingdon Press, Nashville (1966) 194f. Bornkamm however sees only three classes of men in verses 20-22a, for he equates the Jews and those under law (in spite of the fact that he immediately goes on to point out that "being under the law" does not denote a merely natural and historical peculiarity, p. 195).
2. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black, London (1968) 215, notes the definite article (*tois pasin*) "which groups together all the examples".

v. 22), for the purpose of winning as many as possible /3/, saving some in whatever way (*hina tous pleionas kerdēsō*, v. 19; *hina pantōs tinas sōsō*, v. 22). In between these general claims he gives a list of specific examples of his accommodation: there are four classes of men to which he has become something, and all for the repeated purpose of winning them (*kerdēsō* occurs twice in v. 20, and in v. 22, and *kerdanō* in v. 21).⁴ The structure is parallel: to the Jews,⁵ to those under law, to those without law, to the weak, Paul became (*egenomēn*, vv. 20, 22) as if Jew, or as if under law, or as if without law, or weak,⁶ in order that he might win each class. He closes the passage by pointing out that he does all (of these) things for the gospel's sake, so that he might be a fellow-participant in it (*sugkoinōnos*, v. 23).⁷

3. Perhaps "the majority": cf. 1 Cor. 10:5 and 15:6.
4. *Kerdainō*, "to gain, to win", may well be used by Paul from the context of Jewish proselytizing, where it meant "to win men over for God". See D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Athlone Press, London (1956) 348, 355-361, and the following paper's comments on this source for Paul's accommodation.
5. Note the use of the article here: "he must be referring to a particular occasion, perhaps that of Timothy's circumcision" (Barrett, 211).
6. Paul does not say "as if weak", but surely this is a legitimate gloss. He does not consider himself weak (cf. Rom. 15:1) any more than he considers himself under the law.
7. That is, a sharer in the benefits or gains of the gospel. Calvin remarks that Paul here extends what he says to all Christians, lest the Corinthians "get it into their heads that what Paul did was something that applied to him alone, because of the office he held" (*The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* trans. John W. Fraser, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh (1960) *ad loc.*). C. K. Barrett apparently agrees with that; "he addresses his readers. . . as one who stands with, not over against them", *op. cit.* 216).
The point might be more convincing had Paul used the plural or made some more explicit reference to other Christians; but he does do this in 11:1 when he invited the Corinthians to imitate his behaviour.

That sets out the text, apart from three clauses - but those clauses are of central importance, for they tell us who this Paul is who accommodates himself in these ways. First, he is a free man, free from everyone else (or perhaps everything else/8/) (*eleutheros gar ōn ek pantōn*, v. 19). Second, he is not himself under law (*mē ōn autos hupo nomon*, v. 20/9/), and finally, though he became as without law, he himself is not without law to God but within law to Christ (*mē ōn anomos theou all'ennomos christou*, v. 21)/10/ These clauses will have to be analyzed more closely if we are to understand Paul's accommodation, but for now, consider the puzzles which arise immediately upon reading this text.

(1) Paul says that to certain Jews he became a Jew, which suggests (in *ginomai* and *hōs*) that he was not a Jew. But he was, wasn't he? Do we not find him on many occasions willing to stress his racial and cultural roots?/11/

8. *Pantōn* may be either masculine or neuter; since the *pasin* which immediately follows it is most naturally masculine, it is probably best to read the phrase as "free from all men".
9. This phrase is missing in some ancient authorities and in the Textus Receptus, but Metzger suggests that it "probably fell out by accident in transcription, the eye of the copyist passing from *hupo nomon* to *hupo nomon*" (B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, London (1971) *ad loc.*
10. Or perhaps, following C. K. Barrett, he himself is not "God's lawless one" but is "Christ's law-abiding one" (p. 214). On this latter phrase see C. H. Dodd, "ENNOMOS CHRISTOU", in J. N. Sevenster, W. C. van Unnik, eds., *Studia Paulina*, E. F. Bohn, Haarlem (1953) 96-110; cf. E. Bammel, "Nomos Christou", *Studia Evangelica*, III, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin (1964) 120-128.
11. But it may be significant that nowhere in 1 Corinthians does Paul refer to himself as a Jew or an Israelite. It would be hard to discover in this letter any confession of his Jewishness: when he refers to the Jews he usually mentions the Greeks in the same breath in order to downplay differences (1:22-23; 10:32; 12:13). Even the *pateres* of 10:1 are not his alone, but *pateres hēmōn*. See note 21 below.

(2) The passage clearly deals with Paul's behaviour and not simply his methodology in mission or instruction. The reader is meant to infer that Paul engaged in practices by which Jews or the weak or those without law would define their own lives. But the repeated *hōs* clauses may be troubling: since Paul does not actually become weak or without law, he must act as though he were what he is not. Some commentators translate *hōs* by "as if"; by acting "as if" he were something, Paul is only pretending, deliberately adopting a guise.¹² He then may lay himself open to the charge of inconsistency and hypocrisy. So this raises questions about the morality of accommodation.

(3) Perhaps the practice of accommodation could find some justification in Paul's stated aim: to win some of each class. Certainly there is a missionary context for this passage, and for the notion of "winning" within rabbinic Judaism. But there are other indications pointing away from a narrowly conceived missionary context. The final clause of the passage widens the purpose a little: Paul accommodates not only to win others but to gain for himself in the gospel. More strongly, however, there is the presence of the weak in his list of examples. Accommodation is not simply for the sake of making converts, but also may be justified by reference to Paul's relationship with other Christians. In this connection a historical and textual puzzle arises: what specific events or occasions would the Corinthian Christians connect with Paul's claims about Jews, those under law or without law, and the weak? Can any light be shed on the Pauline view of accommodation by his actual practice?

(4) I have spoken of the possibility of Paul's justifying his practice of accommodation, rather than of his actually having justified it. Clearly he does attempt to give a reason for accommodating: to win over, or to see some farther along in the process of salvation. But is this a justifying reason? Is it clear enough, or good enough, all by itself? It is indeed a reason stronger than mere etiquette, and of greater force than reasons of self-interest which might lie behind counsel to adapt one's behaviour to one's environment. Paul was not

12. So C. K. Barrett, *ad loc.*

concerned simply to get along with strangers or to make them feel comfortable. But his critics might not have accepted his stated purpose as a justifying reason: they could have argued - and probably did - that he was destroying through his accommodation the very work of God.^{13/} So our major puzzle arising from the passage is simply this: what underlies the Pauline practice of accommodation as its ultimate justification?

In setting out these puzzles, it becomes obvious that they do not form a neat package which can be systematically untied, inspected, and analyzed. We can only try to untangle a few major strands in the hope that following out their lines, will lead to a better understanding of the complexities within the practice of accommodation. Our untangling begins, not with Paul, but with the notion of accommodation itself.

III The Notion of Accommodation

It is important to discuss in fairly general terms first what might be called the logic of accommodation, and then to move to the morality of accommodation.^{14/} The

13. So Paul must speak again in his own defence in 2 Corinthians: he must emphasize that he has been straightforward in his dealings and statements (1:12, 17f.; 2:17; 4:2; 6:3; and so on).
14. It may be objected that analysis of the use of the English word "accommodation" will be irrelevant because Paul never used it (for obvious reasons), or (more germanely) that he did not use any word which is clearly translated by it. All the same, as contemporary English speakers we do find the term useful in discussing Paul, and we have clearly inherited a tradition which made use of the notion, as our introduction demonstrates. Thus the analysis is important simply because it is better to have a considered understanding of the term than a merely impressionistic idea of what it means in various contexts.

In connection with the morality of accommodation, I should make it clear that I use "morality" in this phrase to mean the rightness or wrongness of a certain practice. When I speak of ethical accommodation, I mean a type of accommodation having to do with actions and behaviour. Hence to discuss the "morality of ethical accommodation" is simply to discuss the rightness or wrongness of a certain type of practice.

"logical geography" of the term needs charting because conceptual clarity will help us sort out what moral issues may or may not be appropriate to the practice of accommodation in its various senses. The plural "senses" is used because it is possible to distinguish in a rough but fairly ready way between theological accommodation, epistemological accommodation, and ethical accommodation. These areas of the term's logic are now discussed.

III.A The Logic of Accommodation

(1) Theological accommodation occurs when someone surrenders some item or items of belief in order to be acceptable to some other party. What was formerly considered true is renounced and the other party's doctrine is substituted for it. At the extreme end of the scale accommodation would slide off into wholesale conversion to the entire system of belief held by the other party; at the more innocuous beginning of the scale would be the compromises on unimportant matters of belief reached by groups who value harmony more than dogmatism about minute matters of doctrine.

(2) Epistemological accommodation is required where two parties operate with conceptual frameworks some distance apart and where one wishes to communicate with the other. The message needs to be accommodated to the epistemological conditions of the hearer, else it will be lost in ambiguity and misunderstanding. All good teachers engage in this kind of accommodation; it is central to their methodology. Further, it can be a highly effective method in argument. Socrates often began with premisses acceptable to his interlocutors, only to move them step by step to conclusions they had not foreseen and which they would otherwise have been unwilling to accept.

(3) The third type of accommodation is ethical. It is concerned not with the truth or transmission of beliefs, but with behaviour. It is practised whenever one adapts his pattern of living to the lifestyles of various groups, having his actions dictated by the situations and circumstances in which he finds himself.

Now, it will be clear that the logic of accommodation in each of these cases is tied up with the notion of a relation between two different belief or behaviour structures. If a person begins with structure A and

accommodates A to B, that cannot mean that he replaces A with B: that would be conversion, not accommodation. I have already pointed this out in the case of theological accommodation; in the ethical case it would mean giving up one way of life for another. No: to accommodate is not to convert, but to make certain changes out of regard for another person or party. Epistemologically, it is to attempt to find in structure B the most appropriate vocabulary, models, examples, and so on, by which to express something from structure A. Theologically, it is to take notice of which beliefs in B clash with beliefs in A and to make the necessary adjustments where possible; ethically it is to make certain practices, done differently in A, conform to the practices of B. But in all of this, something of A is preserved, or else there would be nothing to accommodate to B.

It is interesting at this stage to ask about the relation of accommodation to the notion of inconsistency. Although one should avoid an overly simple dissection of the phenomenon of accommodation, if there is any substance to the distinction between converting to a view and accommodating to it, then it appears likely that anyone who engages in accommodation opens himself to the charge of inconsistency. On the logical level the charge may develop in this way. A person is inconsistent if he holds beliefs which contradict each other or cannot be reconciled with each other; or if he acts in ways which cannot be reconciled with each other or with his beliefs. Those who practise accommodation may very well be seen, from this perspective. They profess to believe or act or communicate within structure A, they identify themselves as participants in A. Yet they also employ the language of B, or conform to its patterns of thought or behaviour at certain points. In so far as A and B are themselves inconsistent structures, then whoever accommodates A to B will be considered inconsistent.

Notice that it has been natural to speak in the last paragraph of the "charge" of inconsistency. We only lay charges where we consider wrong to have been done, so the morality of accommodation must next be considered.

III.B The Morality of Accommodation

This question may be approached by asking about the conditions under which we would be justified in blaming someone for inconsistency. Take some individual X who has acted and expressed beliefs in one situation (S₁) and

then in a different situation (S_2) has professed beliefs and engaged in practices which are inconsistent with his earlier stance. When is X rightly thought to be morally blameworthy?

(a) Note first that in S_2 X might have changed his fundamental beliefs so thoroughly that it is no longer the old X from S_1 who now acts and speaks. The old person and the new X may indeed be inconsistent, but unless X in S_2 now contradicts or denies his new identity, we do not attach moral blame to his conversion. Otherwise it would always be wrong morally for someone to change his mind or alter his behaviour when clearly change is often not only right but obligatory. That is not to say that there will be no theological disapproval of X's conversion. It is only that heresy is not automatically immorality.

(b) It may be that X is inconsistent in S_2 without having become apostate: he may instead be genuinely unaware of his inconsistency. That is a common enough occurrence, and always has been - which is why Socrates was able to practise his method, leading his opponent into the impasse (*aporia*) that results from the recognition that one has been holding inconsistent beliefs. Were X to persist in his inconsistency when it had been exposed, we would consider him culpable; but normally we do not attach moral blame to those who are ignorant of their inconsistencies.

(c) Moral blame does belong to those who act or profess differently in different situations out of insincerity or hypocrisy. This is not the place for a treatise on hypocrisy, but surely a large part of it is that belief and action are not dictated by inner conviction, but by other motives such as greed, or a desire to be accepted, or perhaps fear. Whatever the motivation, the inconsistency is real and deliberate. X knows that he behaves in one way in S_1 and another in S_2 ; he chooses (in some significant sense) his different behaviours and beliefs; and his reasons have no essential connection with what makes an action right or a belief true in any particular situation.

(d) There is another possibility, however. X may act in ways which do not appear consistent, or hold beliefs which seem irreconcilable. But just as there can be inconsistency through ignorance on the part of the agent as in (b), so there may be an ignorance in the observer

of a basic consistency in X's behaviour. X may have some underlying reason or principle which can explain both his action in S_1 and his different action in S_2 ; where he appears to contradict one belief by another, he may be able to reconcile both. In these cases, X is not really inconsistent and is not therefore morally blameworthy.

To apply this to the morality of accommodation is a simple move. The "inconsistency" of conversion in case (a) is irrelevant, since to convert is not to accommodate. Likewise case (b) is irrelevant: it is hard to say that someone who is not aware of his inconsistencies of belief or action is engaging in accommodation. Perhaps one might move to talk of unconscious accommodation in such cases, but that is not an attractive route to follow at this point. So cases (c) and (d) remain: here we are dealing with conscious and deliberate actions, and moral categories are appropriate. We conclude then that if inconsistent behaviour is accommodatory for bad reasons as in (c) then it deserves moral censure. But it is possible that accommodation may only look inconsistent on the surface, in which case it may be morally justifiable. This means that in considering the morality of accommodation, we can speak of hypocritical accommodation or of justifiable accommodation. Accommodation may be either justifiable or hypocritical in each of the three areas we have delineated: theological, epistemological, or ethical. It is not necessary for our present purposes to spell this out for each type, for we have said more than enough about the notions of accommodation and inconsistency. It is time to move back to the Pauline practice of accommodation and the possibility of its justification.

IV Pauline Accommodation

What type or types of accommodation did Paul practise? Since commentators have not made explicit distinctions between kinds of accommodation they have not provided explicit answers to this question, but it seems to me that discussions of the Pauline maxim "all things to all men" often centre on Paul's methodology rather than his own personal conduct. That is legitimate, for the apostle was a masterful communicator and dialectician. His speech to the Athenians (or at least Luke's

construction of it) has historically been regarded as a superlative instance of his apologetic technique, but recent discussions have turned to more subtle but still powerful examples within his own letters. Let me pick out as examples of what we can call Paul's epistemological accommodation two studies: Henry Chadwick's 1954 article, "All Things to All Men",¹⁵ and Richard Longenecker's chapter of the same title a decade later in his *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*.¹⁶

IV.A Epistemological Accommodation

Chadwick sees accommodation chiefly as an apologetic technique on Paul's part in order to "minimize the gap between himself and his potential converts" (p. 275). To do this Paul does not directly challenge the principles of the Corinthians (p. 270), but "begins by accepting unhesitatingly their fundamental position. . . he begins from where they are" (p. 264). Chadwick concludes that "Paul had an astonishing elasticity of mind, and a flexibility in dealing with situations requiring delicate and ingenious treatment which appears much greater than is usually supposed" (p. 275). But it is clear that Chadwick is thinking in all this of epistemological accommodation. His defence of Paul is based upon the conviction that divine revelation is itself conditioned by "the capacities and situation of the recipient" (p. 275), and he sees this kind of accommodation as the principle of Christ's incarnation. Paul merely follows suit in his own situation.

Longenecker's general approach to our theme overlaps considerably with Chadwick's position. He discusses various problems in 1 Corinthians, and sketches Paul's methodology in comments such as these. Paul "begins on their own ground, at the point where he finds agreement with them, and leads them on from there" (p. 234). "Paul's approach to the question is that he begins in agreement with those he seeks to correct" (p. 236). Longenecker sums up:

15. H. Chadwick, "All Things to All Men", *NTS* I (1954-55) 261-275.
16. R. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, Harper and Row, New York (1964).

In every case he seeks to work from the one element of truth which they have grasped to a fuller understanding and expression of their liberty in Christ. . . And by beginning with them at the point where there is common agreement and omitting such matters and arguments as will cause unnecessary offence, he is but manifesting his missionary and pastoral principle of being "all things to all men". (p. 244)

Now naturally there may be questions about whether some commentator has correctly understood how Paul applies this method in any specific passage; nevertheless, I have no quarrel with the general description of Paul's methodology just given. It seems to make eminent sense that a mind as keen and committed as Paul's should work in this way. And (as my earlier comments show) it is reminiscent of a typically Socratic approach. In the Protagoras, for instance, Socrates began with common assumptions about pleasure in order to bring home a certain view about the relation between knowledge and action which had not been accepted at the outset of the discussion (352ff.); and he often made use of a term like *aretē* in dialectical conversation in order to win his interlocutor away from conventional understanding towards a deeper comprehension.¹⁷ All the same, two comments have to be made on this reading of Pauline accommodation.

(1) The first is that this view raises few ethical perplexities since it concentrates upon epistemological accommodation. True, there might be a hypocritical epistemological accommodation, in which someone pretends acceptance of an opponent's position for his own gain, not in order to get his opponent to see things differently. But as long as one can justify the accommodation by showing how it may lead to a better understanding of and argument for one's own position, there seem to be no moral problems. And it was certainly

17. A good example of this is the *Meno*, where Meno has a fairly popular understanding of what *aretē* is, but cannot define it or see its relationship to knowledge. Chadwick suggests that Paul in Colossians makes use of Gnostic terminology to present the Christian gospel: "throughout the epistle there is a tendency to use the vocabulary of the opposition in a different and disinfected sense" (p. 272).

characteristic of Paul to balance and qualify his original agreement in order to move his hearers away from their own entrenched positions./18/

(2) Second, it is essential to realize that by "All things to all men", Paul himself does not mean what these commentators have taken him to mean. This point is implicit in the second puzzle I raised about the 1 Corinthians 9 passage: Paul here discusses not his dialectical or apologetic method, but his behaviour, his personal conduct. He does not say that he adopted the language of those within law or outside it; he does not present himself as agreeing with the basic premises of Jew or the weak. Instead he claims that he has become as one of those he is trying to win: he has adopted, not terminology, but ways of behaving. The moral problems in ethical accommodation are much more pressing than any that might be raised by epistemological accommodation, so I think it important to recognize that Paul's own claims relate to behaviour and not simply methodology. In other words, it must be acknowledged that when one has defended the apostle's method there still remains the question of the justification of his self-confessed accommodatory behaviour.

18. Longenecker stresses the qualifications Paul places on his agreements with various parties in Corinth, for he recognizes that Paul could be accused of hypocrisy. "The Apostle could easily be charged with being unscrupulous at this point. And if his agreement with his erring pupils' basic claim was really not sincere, then he certainly cannot be relieved of such a charge. But in actuality, Paul did agree with them - though only up to a point" (p. 233). I am uncertain of the general claim which Longenecker seems to be making here; someone like Socrates might not "sincerely agree" with a proposition, but still advance it under the pretence of agreeing with it so that he could secure the participation of his hearer in argument. If the goal of the argument is to help the hearer towards the truth, and this method is essential for psychological reasons, can the charge of being unscrupulous hold?

IV.B Theological Accommodation

We will have to return to the matter of ethical accommodation; before doing that, however, we should ask about *theological* accommodation. Did Paul ever engage in accommodation on items of his theological belief? Would he have been willing, under certain conditions, to reject some belief not because he had come to regard it as mistaken but for the sake of someone else?

The answer of the Paul of Galatians is not only straightforward, but strong:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel - not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ. (1:6-10, RSV)

Theological accommodation is for Paul nothing but the attempt to please men (*anthrōpois areskein*, v. 10) in the worst possible sense, to curry favour with them, enslave oneself to their opinions. He can be a slave to no one in the matter of the gospel, not even the other apostles, as he goes on to elaborate in the first two chapters of Galatians. In 1 Corinthians the theological content of the gospel is not so much in question, but there still can be no compromise with idolatry (10:14 and 20-21; 12:2-3). The confession that Jesus is Lord is central (12:3), and if belief in Christ's resurrection is surrendered then the whole core of the Christian faith disintegrates, and the benefits of belief along with it (15:2, 15-19).

We could go on. In 2 Corinthians 10-12, Paul's wholehearted commitment to the purity of the gospel causes him to employ an orchestra of defences against charges that he is inferior or foolish or inconsistent or weak - charges that he takes to reflect ultimately on the content of his message. So he affirms that he takes captive every thought in obedience to Christ (10:6), that his actions will match his words when he comes to them (10:11); and he

plays effectively in the sarcastic mode,

For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! (11:20-21, RSV)

Some of these comments have clearly to do with the rightness of his behaviour as well as his theological commitment, but the basic impression about that commitment is unmistakable. Paul will accommodate the content of his message to no one, and therefore he reacts with violent emotion when his own converts exhibit theological indifference, inconsistency or accommodation.

A question arises and a comment needs making before we leave this part of our discussion of Pauline accommodation.

(1) The question is this: are there no circumstances whatever in which Paul would be willing to give up a theological belief for someone else, even a rather minor belief? Would he not, for example, be willing to accommodate back in the direction of Judaism, seeing Christianity itself perhaps as an accommodated form of Judaism?

To take the last point first: what happened to Paul on the Damascus Road is usually called his conversion, and one suspects he would prefer that term to "accommodation". He reversed his beliefs about Jesus of Nazareth, and he did not look back. For him, Judaism was superseded, not merely altered in certain ways; he hardly regarded himself as a Jew legitimately and justifiably accommodating his beliefs to take Jesus into account. Hence, to accommodate back into Judaism would be a dangerous practice for Paul - which is why the issue of circumcision assumed such large proportions for him. As for the possibility of accommodating on matters of minor importance: Paul did recognize that certain items of faith were for some people not worth debating about. Hence those who were weak such as sabbatarians or vegetarians were to be accepted and their scruples accommodated (Romans 14:1ff.). However, the accommodation was not so much a matter of doctrinal compromise, with the strong coming to agree theologically

with the weak, as it was a matter of adjusting behaviour.^{19/} This will bring us shortly to the third type of Pauline accommodation, ethical accommodation; for now, let us observe that where ethical accommodation is justifiable, there Paul might agree that one could alter if not one's beliefs at least the practice of asserting and defending those beliefs.

(2) A final comment on theological accommodation. It might be argued that in Paul's refusal to compromise the gospel we have a clearly drawn limit to freedom, and therefore a limit upon the scope of accommodatory actions. Paul will not be this thing to these men if the gospel is thereby denied. I think this view is correct, but it depends upon a link between belief and behaviour which must not be fastened too firmly. The same action may be interpreted in different ways by different people in different circumstances. Since different beliefs may be associated with the same piece of behaviour, we should remember that the limits of behaviour and the limits of belief do not automatically or necessarily coincide. But it is time now to turn to the justification of Paul's accommodatory behaviour.

IV.C Ethical Accommodation

That Paul indeed did practise ethical accommodation was of course the problem which began our investigation. We found certain puzzles in his claims in 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23, but we should begin this section with another verse to throw into bold relief the difference between Paul's attitudes to theological and to ethical accommodation. In 1 Corinthians 10:33 he sums up his behaviour by saying, "I myself please all men in all things" (*kagō panta pasin areskō*) - this same Paul, whom we have quoted as setting the pleasing of men at odds with the service of Christ (Gal. 1:10). How shall we reconcile these apparently contradictory statements? The task requires three or four steps; as we take them we will try to draw in a range of Paul's comments on Christian behaviour so that his possible justification of accommodation can be set in a wider ethical context.

19. I have investigated some of this in "St. Paul on the Strong and the Weak: a study in the resolution of conflict", *CRUX* 13:2 (1975-76) 10-20.

(1) Paul's contradictory desires to please everybody and yet to please nobody but Christ find expression in other passages in 1 Corinthians, and usually around the freedom/slavery model. On the one hand, he affirms his freedom unequivocally. He is a free man and an apostle, with the freedom to take about a Christian wife, and the freedom to take material support from his converts (9:1-18); he reiterates in 9:19 that he is free from everyone else, and in 9:20 that he is not under law. Four times he states that he is free to do anything whatever (though he qualifies this, he does not contradict it; twice in 6:12 and twice in 10:23). And he regards himself as so little under authority that he cares less if his converts or any human institutions judge him - he doesn't even judge himself (4:3). Nevertheless, his freedom is only one polarity: he is also the servant of Christ (4:1) and within law to Christ (9:22), and he has made himself slave to all men. So he exists in the tension of living free from people and law and human structures, but as Christ's slave and servant to everyone else.

(2) Note next that this tension does not characterize Paul alone. The apostle may have certain privileges of support and certain teaching authority (ch. 9), but he wants all Christians to recognize their freedom. So the "free to do anything" slogan of 6:12 and 10:23 is not restricted to apostles. Even the household slave become a Christian is the Lord's freedman (7:22); and Christians are not to become slaves to men (7:23). But the reason for this is that they have been purchased and are slaves to Christ (6:20; 7:22).

(3) With the freedom/slavery tension established as the characteristic of all Christians, we move to ask about the implications of this tension for behaviour. After all, Paul's letter is laced with imperatives, commands, exhortations, advice, and all kinds of behaviour-directing devices. How does he fit this with the freedom of the Christian? Or, to put it from the other polarity, does slavery to Christ entail a new list of rules and regulations? Quite clearly the themes of law, gospel and grace are too great for adequate treatment here, but within 1 Corinthians there are three kinds of limitation upon a completely unprincipled and spontaneous freedom. (a) There is most basically a Christ-regarding limit, which is expressed in the idea of slavery to Christ. It is this limit which forbids idolatry and which provides the final justification for other

proscriptions, for sins against one's body or one's brother are ultimately sins against Christ (6:15ff.; 8-12). Paul may intend by this limit to point his converts to the teaching of Jesus: but if he is trying to set up that teaching as a new Law, he does a pretty poor job of it. For he does not invoke the teaching as a reason for behaviour in any case but ch. 7's treatment of marriage relationships - and there Paul feels free to introduce his own word alongside the Lord's. Accordingly, it is hard to see Paul's description of himself as *ennomos Christou* (9:21) as saying much more than that he was *ho doulos Christou*.^{20/} (b) Another curb on utterly free behaviour is a *self-regarding* limit. All things may be permissible, but not everything is profitable for me; some things may end up enslaving me and I will lose my freedom (cf. 6:12). (c) Thirdly there is an other-regarding limit on freedom. In many ways this is the predominant theme of the letter. Paul himself does not exercise his apostolic freedoms (ch. 9); he does not cause his brother to stumble (8:13); he doesn't regard his own good, but the good of the many (10:33). His followers are to do likewise. They are to imitate him as he does Christ (11:1 - he gives neither saying nor example of Christ's accommodation but see the next paper on this). They must build up, seek not their own interests but the interests of others (10:23). Speaking in tongues may be good for the speaker, but it is better to prophesy and build up others (14:3, 4). The magnificent image of the church as body in ch. 12 has this other-regarding emphasis at its centre; and that, of course, flows into the best description we are likely to get of what it is to have regard for the welfare of others, 1 Corinthians 13 on *agapē*. So Paul is able to conclude his letter: let all you do be done in love (16:14).

We can conclude that in 1 Corinthians at least the limits of freedom for Paul are grounded not in law or rules or regulations, but in relationships. As Christ's slave the Christian is freed from all else and everyone else; but

20. This means I disagree with C. H. Dodd, who thinks the law of Christ "is such that it can be stated in the form of a code of precepts to which a Christian man is obliged to conform" ("ENNOMOS CHRISTOU", p. 100: see n. 10 above).

he must have regard for his own good and the preservation of his freedom; and above all he must look to the good of others rather than to his own advantage. Paul puts it nicely in 7:35: in what he says he doesn't want to put a rein on the Corinthians with regulations; instead he is thinking of their own good, of what will promote good order, and of their ability to wait without distraction on the Lord. Thus the context of Christian behaviour includes freedom, and love for Christ, for others, and for self.

(4) At last we return in this context to the issue of Paul's accommodation to all men for the sake of their salvation. Freedom and love each play an essential role in the justification of Paul's practice.

(i) It is Paul's freedom which makes it possible for him to adapt his behaviour to a variety of situations. Someone who is tightly tied to a particular set of regulations defining his behaviour will find it difficult to alter the rules without thereby altering his identity. If he accommodates without wholeheartedly changing his beliefs about what he ought to do, then he may well be accused of hypocrisy. He will be pretending, wearing a disguise. Paul, however, would not look at it that way. His freedom from all people and systems opens up for him a new identity 'in Christ'. He is really a Jew no longer²¹ - but no more is he a Gentile; if he is

21. This is the answer to the first puzzle we encountered in the text, in Section II above. Paul does call himself an Israelite, of Abraham's seed, and a Hebrew in 2 Corinthians 11:22; and the first two of this trio are repeated in Romans 11:1. (The Philippians 3:4ff. passage surely refers to Paul's characterization of himself before his conversion, but even there he does not describe himself as a Jew.) The only place where Paul calls himself a Jew is in Galatians 2:15, but there he is arguing with Peter that although they are Jews by birth they ought not to continue to live like Jews now that they are Christians. Peter Richardson has pointed to Paul's association of "Judaism" with transient characteristics and his reservation of "Israel" for the people who love God and seek to do his will (*Israel in the Apostolic Church*, Cambridge University Press (1969) 147).

not under law it is not that he is really lawless, and so on. So to adopt the behaviour of the Gentile is not play-acting on the part of someone who is underneath a Jew; to act as without law is not to be someone really under law putting on a disguise. Paul is free from all those identities and cannot be charged with 'dressing up'. As Christ's slave he may freely wear whatever clothing the situation hands him. Since there can be, and indeed are, some Christians who are Jews and some who follow law and some without law and some who are weak, Paul legitimately identifies himself with each group as the occasion warrants it.

(ii) But even if freedom makes this accommodation possible, what of the morality of exercising such freedom? It will be remembered that the usual problems with Paul's ethical accommodation arise out of the charge of inconsistency; in attempting to elucidate this I pointed out in Section III.B above that on occasions someone's actions may appear inconsistent only because some reconciling principle is not known to the observer. I now want to propose that Paul does have a principle which can reconcile his seeming inconsistencies and justify his accommodatory behaviour. The principle is simply seeking the good of the other, which is one way of stating the content of *agapē*.²² His is an *agapistic* accommodation. That is why it is not narrowly a missionary accommodation, and why the weak appear in his list of examples in 9:19-23 (to return to our third puzzle arising out of the text, in Section II above). It is the good of all men, whether or not they are yet in Christ, that Paul seeks. Further, the *agapistic* character of his accommodation means that while there may be no set of laws about behaviour, there are some limits to the practice.

(a) Paul will not do anything which will deny Christ: eating meat offered to idols is one thing for those who

22. The link between winning or saving (9:20-22; 10:33) and the concept of love as seeking the good of the other is made in 10:33. There Paul pleases all men in everything for the good of the many (zētōn. . . to [*sumphoron*] *tōn pollōn*) that they might be saved.

are strong, but the idolatry of table-fellowship in a pagan temple is another, and completely incompatible with Christ (10:14ff.).

(b) Nor can *agapē* allow an accommodation which would harm the other, do him no good. Paul would accommodate in the direction of the weak if his behaviour would violate the scruples of the weak and bring his disaster upon a brother for whom Christ died (8:11).

(c) Although Paul does not explicitly say this, presumably he would agree that accommodation could not be justified where it would lead to his own loss of freedom or damage his standing in Christ. There is at least some evidence for this claim in the final purpose clause of 9:23, for he engages in accommodation in order to share in the gains of the gospel.

And so we return to the paradox which opened this section: Paul must not please men if he is Christ's slave, and yet he pleases all men in all things. The original puzzle was generated by the ambiguity in 'pleasing': one can please others by doing or believing what they dictate, or one can render service to others, pleasing them in the end by acting for their own good. (That the two are not necessarily synonymous is recognized by any parent who has listened to the demands of "Please, please!") Paul's two statements are held together by freedom and love. Because of his freedom he will not accommodate theologically to the opinions of men; because of his love, he will accommodate ethically to serve all men whatever their situations for the sake of their welfare in Christ.

23. *Areskein* seems to mean 'pleasing either in the sense of 'causing pleasure' or in the sense of 'serving'. Thayer separates out these senses and notes as an example of the first Salome's dance which 'pleased' Herod, Mt. 14:6, Mk. 6:22 A. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids (1970). That surely is a case of 'currying favour' and a good parallel for Gal. 1:10. For the use of *areskein* as 'serving in the interests of others', see J. H. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* Hodder and Stoughton, London. (1914-1929) *ad loc.*

V Some Puzzles of the Practice

That brings us through many of the puzzles we raised about Paul's understanding of his accommodation as he sets it out in 1 Corinthians 9. We are left with one more: we had asked in Section II what specific events or occurrences the Corinthian Christians would have connected with Paul's claims about his behaviour. So in conclusion we need to comment upon Paul's actual practice of accommodation, and to close with some puzzles raised for Paul and for those who would imitate him.

Nothing in 1 Corinthians itself gives us any hint that Paul accommodated his behaviour to Jews or to those under the law, so what the Corinthian Christians might have understood as examples of this accommodation can only be a matter of speculation. But if they were to reflect on the very things that Paul reveals to them about himself, they would discover interesting examples of his accommodation towards them - examples he is not explicit about in his list in ch. 9. We have already commented upon his epistemological accommodation: he is willing to agree with the starting points of various groups in Corinth in order to move them from their extremes of liberty or, asceticism or enthusiasm. But this is not merely a technique of argument. Paul's own life shows the extent of his accommodation. To the ascetics he can say: I have no wife, I deny myself the material benefits of my apostolic authority. To the strong he can imply (he does not actually state this) that he eats with unbelievers and asks no questions about the meat before him. To the enthusiasts he can boast of his glossolalic experience. To the weak he says he will refrain from doing anything which might damage their faith. Paul practises, sometimes at personal cost, what he preaches about accommodation.

And yet, in spite of his strong conviction and his self-sacrifice, his practice of accommodation causes problems and raises puzzles.

(1) Paul's zeal and commitment cause him problems with Peter in Antioch. He cannot behave in any way which will deny the truth of the gospel, and he thinks that Peter has done this by withdrawing from table-fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch just because some from James had arrived in the city. Paul attributes Peter's

action to fear and labels it hypocrisy (Gal. 2:12,13). Yet Peter might well have argued that he was only accommodating to the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, not wanting to upset them.²⁴ I said before that the link between belief and behaviour must not be fastened too firmly (Section IV.B, point 2), and this is a case in point: Peter's behaviour may not carry with it the interpretation that Paul quickly attached to it.

(2) There is another puzzle about Paul's behaviour, this time in Jerusalem when he agreed to support the men discharging their Nazirite vow (Luke's account in Acts 21:17-26). It may be (as Bornkamm suggests²⁵) that Paul wanted only to attest to the unity of the church by participating in what he considered a private ceremony. But his action was not private, and was open to misinterpretation on the part of others. So the Jews from Asia must have thought he was insincere, in his observance, stirred up the crowd, and in this way brought about Paul's imprisonment and eventual death. Whatever Paul's motives in this event, it is clear that there can be an interpretative gap in accommodation which may end up working against the reasons for accommodating in the first place.

(3) That leads to a question about the effectiveness of accommodating one's behaviour for the good of others. Where their 'good' means not just their feeling comfortable but instead their ultimate salvation, accommodation has to be accompanied by additional procedures whereby the others are moved away from their present way of life and brought into the freedom of the gospel. Otherwise accommodation will only be the confirmation of their way of life ("If you're living like us our life must be acceptable"). For example, in the case of the weaker brother, the stronger Christian must make a judgement about the possible effects of accommodation over against the effects of his assertion of liberty. If he will cause his brother grave damage

24. I owe this point to Peter Richardson in his "Pauline Inconsistency: 1 Corinthians 9:14-23 and Galatians 2:11-14", *NTS* forthcoming.
25. "The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts" (see n. 1 above) 204f.

he should accommodate. But maybe his brother will be educated into freedom by his example if he refuses to give into weakness. His brother then could be helped towards a different interpretation of behaviour and grow to be strong himself. Would not this be a better way of seeking his good than merely accommodating?/26/

(4) There is also a puzzle about how long accommodation can continue without itself contributing to a genuine shift towards the position being accommodated. One could ask, for instance, about the relation between epistemological and theological accommodation. I have attempted to separate out strands of accommodation for the purpose of analysis, but in the practice of thinking and living they are often interwoven./27/ And when a term is picked up from another system for pedagogic reasons, it may well be that its incorporation into one's own system of belief results in subtle shifts within those beliefs themselves. An example might be the Greek concept of *psychē* which was adapted for Christian anthropology and eschatology - but which resulted in a Christian form of dualism foreign to many of the biblical writers. Similar problems may exist in ethical accommodation. Live as a Jew or Englishman or as weak long enough, and one will gradually come to adopt the beliefs and perspectives of one's group. That was the insight in Pascal's famous recipe for those who those who could not believe even though it might be in their best interests:

26. On this, see my "St. Paul on the Strong and the Weak" (n. 19 above).
27. How difficult it is to keep the strands separated even during discussion may be seen from the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* entry. As was pointed out in the introduction to our two papers, Hofmann does acknowledge ethical accommodation. But his expansion of the two cases where accommodation is required by ethics slides into a discussion of pedagogy. "The very nature of the human mind prescribes gradual progress in knowledge", he writes - moving onto *epistemological* accommodation and its justification.

You would like to cure yourself of unbelief, and you ask for remedies. Learn of those who were once bound and gagged like you, and who now stake all that they possess. They are men who know the road that you desire to follow, and who have been cured of a sickness of which you desire to be cured. Follow the way by which they set out, acting as if they already believed, taking holy water, having masses said, etc. Even this will naturally cause you to believe and blunt your cleverness./28/

The message is: begin by accommodating and you will end up converted. Yet the procedure may well work for any beliefs, regardless of their truth or falsity. And it may work regardless of the intentions of the participant, for he may have wanted only to accommodate.

So the practice of accommodation has its problems, even when the theory underlying it may be morally justified and theologically appropriate. Accommodation may not accomplish its purpose, either because it erodes the identity of the practitioner or because it is persistently misunderstood by the observer. It may take an apostle to serve all men in love without the loss of freedom, but even a saint cannot ensure that others will understand his motivation, and history provides us with too many such saints whose service was misconstrued, resented, and put to an untimely conclusion. So perhaps it is not surprising that Paul the accommodator should in the end become Paul the martyr. Those of us not called to that destiny may find accommodation more worth dispute than practice.

28. Pascal, *Pensées*, Everyman edition, trans. John Warrington, Dent, London, Dutton, New York (1960) 95.

B. EARLY CHRISTIAN SOURCES OF AN ACCOMMODATION ETHIC - FROM JESUS TO PAUL

By Peter Richardson

I Introduction

Paul asserts that he has become all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22). Though this seems an unequivocal statement, it should be admitted candidly that this ethical statement is not common in Paul; it is a minor theme which surfaces at only a few points. Nevertheless, the idea contained in the statement is more important to Paul than its frequency in his correspondence might suggest. Evidence from Acts reinforces the impression that Paul himself gives us that he adjusted his behaviour to suit circumstances. Such a theory sits uneasily, perhaps, alongside his more numerous exhortations to consistency and obedience.^{1/} The superficial opposition between notions of accommodation and consistency need to be integrated into a single view of Pauline ethics. That, however, is not the purpose of this paper. Here we shall deal only with his view of accommodation as an ethical principle and his sources for that view.

The statement itself runs as follows:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the Law - though not being myself under the law - that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ - that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, so that I might by all means save some. (1 Cor. 9:19-22, RSV)

1. Exhortations to obedience are found, for example, in Rom. 2:8, 13:1ff., 16:19,26(?); 1 Cor. 14:37ff.; 2 Cor. 2:9, 9:13; Phil. 2:12f.; 1 Thes. 5:12(?); 2 Thes. 3:4, 3:6ff., 3:14; Phm. 21. Exhortations to consistency can be found in Rom. 2:17 ff., 14:5ff.; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 13:5ff.; Gal. 1:6-9, 2:11ff., 5:2ff., 5:25; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:23, 2:6.

With this we might compare a similar statement:

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.
(1 Cor. 10:31-11:1, RSV)

Four comments may be made from those two statements without any particular concern for finer aspects of exegesis. (a) Paul claims for himself the right to a principle of behaviour by which he can accommodate his actions to the needs of the situation in which he finds himself. (b) This principle of accommodation is inextricably bound up with the goal of saving some.^{2/} (c) While it is a principle which he claims in the first instance for himself he later, in the second statement, appears to extend it to include others - though perhaps reluctantly.^{3/} (d) His principle of accommodation (or of pleasing all) is connected in some way with his imitation of Christ.

These two statements of a principle, which must have been open to easy attack by anyone who wished to criticize Paul,^{4/} are found in his most pastoral letter. But it is also the strongest expression in his correspondence of difficulty and tension. To express such a principle in the context of a situation that could blow apart seems a

2. The purpose is expressed in Greek even more strongly than it appears in English. The sequence of five purpose clauses (*hina kerdēsō, hina kerdēsō, hina kerdēsō, hina kerdanō, hina kerdēsō*) culminating in a final *hina sōsō* and then a general purpose, *hina sugkoinōnos autou genōmai*, is very strong. This same sense is reinforced in 1 Cor. 10:33 with its *hina sōthōsin*.
3. I have treated this question at greater length in my paper "Pauline Inconsistency: 1 Cor. 9:19-23 and Gal. 2:11-14" *NTS*, forthcoming.
4. Cf. the implied criticisms in 2 Corinthians and Paul's vigorous assertion of a contrary principle in Gal. 1:10 where he claims not to please men.

rather naïve course of action. That it exacerbated his relations with the Corinthians seems likely from some of the comments made in 2 Corinthians. In any case, whether wisely or not, Paul expresses to the Corinthians his convictions about his own behaviour in transparent terms. From the way in which he states this principle it would seem that he expects everyone to accept it as a matter of commonly agreed Christian ethical belief. Though much of the surrounding material is highly apologetic, and though some features of this section are apologetic, the paragraph is not polemic. But in fact there is no good reason for the Corinthians to accept this principle easily, for it seems nowhere else to be stated in as bold a fashion. There is no easily available description of such behaviour in the other early Christian writings and no statement in primitive Christian catechesis that accommodation was acceptable. Why does Paul state his principle in this way? What sources does he draw from to enunciate this ethical view?

II Sources of an Accommodation Ethic

This attempt to identify some of the sources of Paul's principle of accommodation builds on an important article by Professor David Daube, to whom all students of the N.T. are indebted for his investigation of *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*.^{5/} In chapters XI and XII he demonstrates convincingly that there is a close correspondence between Paul's statement about missionary methods and Jewish teaching on the same subject. The two major points of contact are "the idea that you must adopt the customs and mood of the person you wish to win over, and the idea that, to be a successful maker of proselytes, you must become a servant of men and humble yourself".^{6/} Paul's views should be compared with Hillel's in the first instance (c. 30 BC-AD 10). In dealing with proselytes Hillel did not reject their quite inadequate understanding of Judaism, so that he could

5. Athlone Press, London (1956).

6. *Ibid.*, 336.

subsequently go on and instruct them further in Torah.^{7/} He accommodated himself to them. After Hillel similar ideas can be traced in those who stand in the same tradition, most notably Rabbi Meir (c. AD 150).^{8/} The conclusion towards which Daube points is that there was a living tradition of accommodation into the second century; originally this tradition was related to accommodation in proselytizing activity, but in some sources it became transformed into principles of courtesy for Jewish society. He then posits a very close connection between this tradition and Paul's advice in Romans 12 which he views as advice to the community but advice which has a missionary flavour. A second section (pp. 346-351) deals with the second idea - meekness and service are demanded of the missionary, as it was said of Hillel: "The meekness of Hillel brought us under the wings of the Shekinah".^{9/} He suggests that a missionary maxim of Jewish origin underlies the various N.T. texts in which there is a connection made between service and "gaining" others for Christ. This maxim probably ran "serve and be humble to gain those far from you".^{10/}

Daube's investigation allows us to establish several important points: (a) Paul is a part of a much larger rabbinic tradition of accommodation that goes back at least as far as Hillel; (b) this tradition is connected at its earliest level with pedagogical matters - the teaching

7. Daube cites Bab. Shab. 31a; Ab. de R.N. 15; *ibid.*, 336, n. 2. He goes on to deal with Mish. Ab. 2.5 and Tos. Ber. 2.24, the latter of which ("Do not appear naked, do not appear dressed, do not appear laughing, do not appear weeping...") would imply from its context that it may apply only to rules of conduct. Daube, however, is of the opinion that it may originally have developed "as a piece of advice for intercourse with prospective proselytes" (p. 337, cf. p. 339).
8. Daube cites Gen. Rabba on 18.8; Exod. Rabba on 34.28; Mish, Ab. 1.12; Derekh Eretz Rabba 8.4; Derekh Eretz Zuta 5.5.
9. Quoted *ibid.*, 346.
10. *Ibid.*, 350. He deals more technically with the background of the term *kerdainō* in chapter XII, pp. 352-361.

of proselytes; (c) only secondarily does it develop into ethical or behavioural accommodation; (d) when it does become behavioural it appears to be connected not with proselytizing activity but with relations within Jewish society. From this we may conclude that, important as these features of the background of Paul's ideas may be, we do not find the immediate background for the behavioural dimensions of Paul's statement. We do find, however, the background for Paul's *purpose* - to gain some; in Paul, of course, the goal is to win them for Christ.

In another place/¹¹/ I have analysed the relationship between 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, in which Paul enunciates principles of behaviour, and Galatians 2:11-14, in which he describes the confrontation with Peter at Antioch over questions of practice. That analysis attempted to discover the reasons for Paul's willingness to express a principle of behavioural accommodation for himself and his refusal to accept that Peter could adapt his behaviour in the situation in Antioch. There are two main points. First, Paul thinks of accommodation as a principle especially applicable to apostles; when he first states his practice it is distinctly in the context of a discussion of apostolic freedom and with a heavy stress on the first person singular (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Later, when he recapitulates the principle in 1 Cor. 10:31-32 he appears, reluctantly perhaps, to allow for accommodation by the church as a whole. Even in that instance he goes on to state that this extension is founded upon his practice of accommodation (1 Cor. 10:33-11:1). His practice, he says, is based upon Christ's.¹² This principle of accommodation is intended in 1 Corinthians 10:31ff. to apply both in the missionary setting (as in Hillel) and also within the local congregation.¹³ Though we have little direct evidence for the extent to which Paul himself or his congregations actually

11. "Pauline Inconsistency: 1 Cor. 9:19-23 and Gal. 2:11-14", *NTS*, forthcoming.
12. The connections are quite explicit: ". . . give no offence. . . as I also (*kathōs kagō*) please. . . be imitators of me, as I also (*kathōs kagō*) am of Christ".
13. "Jews, Greeks and, the church of God"; 10:32.

practised this principle, the expression of the principle in the way Paul formulates it is a step beyond the Jewish tradition he inherited.

The second point made in the other paper is that, just as Paul is reported in Acts 21 to adjust his behaviour to the needs of the Jerusalem community, so Paul expects Peter to adjust his behaviour to the Antioch needs when he is there. There is not only an apostolic imperative in accommodatory behaviour, there is also a territorial imperative. When Peter is on Paul's ground, as in Antioch, he must act in ways that will contribute to the well-being of that community. The issue is not just theological (important as the question of circumcision and table fellowship might be), it is a matter of principle in the relation between apostolic mission territories.^{14/} One of the factors that contributed to the need to assert a principle of accommodation was the situation in early Christianity in which different missionary practices existed side by side (*e.g.* Gal. 2:6-10). The practical difficulties occasioned by the decision not to require all Christian missionaries to follow the same set of practices required some understanding of acceptable ways to resolve those difficulties as they arose. In part at least that is what Paul is attempting in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

III The Problem

Paul's statement of an accommodation principle in 1 Corinthians has two basic sources: first, his continuity with the proselytizing tradition of Hillel and, second, the demand within primitive Christianity for a way to deal with the need for apostolic adaptation.

It would not be impossible to suppose that 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 can be accounted for on the basis of just those two factors. This might be satisfying except that it would be unusual for Paul to develop a basic principle of personal behaviour with no reference to Jesus or to

14. It is significant that the decision of the apostolic council purports, in Acts 15:23, to apply only to a certain geographic area: Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (*cf.* also Acts 15:30). The geographic note is missing in the repetition of the decision in Acts 21:25.

primitive Christian practice.¹⁵ Though that reference is not always explicit, it is usual for him to urge; behaviour that conforms to what he knows about Jesus and those who were Christians before him. Thus we should ask if there are other proximate sources for Paul's statements about accommodation. What follows is hampered by the fact that the only attempt to deal explicitly with accommodation is Paul's; in his corpus the direct evidence is limited almost exclusively to 1 Corinthians. Secondary evidence is available from Romans and Galatians. Two problems that will not be answered, but which lurk on the fringes of this paper, are first, why no others allude to this same problem of accommodation¹⁶ and, second, why it is Paul who happens to state it.¹⁷ The sole question we will attempt to answer is this: are there other earlier Christian sources for Paul's accommodation ethic?

IV Other Evidence from Paul

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul refers, almost casually, to Christ as the model for his own behaviour; in turn, the Corinthians are to model themselves on Paul: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ." This imitation has in view his exhortation in 10:32 to be blameless (*aproskoptoi*)

15. There certainly are examples of Paul developing the ethical implications of the Messiahship of Jesus without, at the same time, basing those implications firmly on Jesus' own teaching. His important statement "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:28) is one. The statement is not simply an extension of ideas implicit in Jesus. It can be argued, however, that, new as this statement is, it is a deduction from and an extension of the practice of Jesus. See my article "Paul Today: Jews, Slaves and Women", *CRUX* 8:1 (1970) 30-37.
16. One part of this is that no other writers in early Christianity are in situations similar to Paul's. His attempt to straddle both cultural milieux is no doubt one reason.
17. Paul, in addition to being involved in two different contexts, is also the Christian writer closest to the Pharisaic tradition which, we must assume, initiated the idea of accommodation.

to Jews, Greeks and the church, as Paul also pleases everyone in everything (*kathōs kagō panta pasin areskō*). This idea of pleasing everyone in everything is expanded by the clause "not seeking my own advantage but that of many". Paul's attitude, and the Corinthians' imitation of it, is modelled upon Christ (*kathōs kagō Christou*). The idea of imitation of Christ is not present in the basic passage on accommodation in 1 Corinthians 9:19ff. However, 1 Corinthians 10:31ff. is a summary of the argument in all of chapters 8-10, and summarizes especially clearly his principle of accommodation.^{/18/} It is important to attempt to trace in what way Paul thinks of this practice as founded on something he knows about Christ's behaviour.

To judge from his correspondence Paul often was the focus of practical problems encountered in the early church, either in his own person or in the advice he gave to his congregations. His claim to be imitating Christ is not likely to be an idle assertion. He is often on the defensive about his role as an apostle, his practice as a missionary, and his behaviour. He is not insensitive to the problems he poses and the need for agreements in some of those areas of difficulty. The Antioch incident is illuminating in this respect (Gal. 2:11-14), as are also the indications of the need for an agreement in Jerusalem between Paul and the others (Gal. 2:6-10) and the need for a decision whether or not to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3).^{/19/} It is abundantly clear from the paraenetic sections of the letters that different practices obtain, not only within the apostolic group, but also within the local churches and between the local churches. These differences, which should on no account be minimized, faced the primitive Christian community with major problems in its collective and social behaviour.

18. This is sufficiently clear from the consistency of the argument in chapters 8-10, all of which deals with eating problems in one form or another. He refers to this in an abbreviated way in 10:32: "Therefore whether you eat or drink or whatever you do . . .". The final phrase may indeed suggest that it is a somewhat broader summary than of chapters 8-10.
19. Whether Titus was circumcised does not matter; whatever decision was taken someone was accommodating his practice to another person's principles!

The Corinthian church, the recipient of the letter in which we find advice about accommodation, is fraught with difficulties. The congregation had had contact with Paul, Apollos and, very likely, Peter also; it is also likely that the troubles within that Christian community relate part, to the different traditions each of these has passed on during the period each was in contact with the church. It is all the more surprising, then, that Paul, in an apologetic and defensive mood, claims in *his* principle of accommodation to be following Christ. Surely Peter would have the best claim to be imitating Christ (*cf.* 1 Cor. 1: 11-13; 3:4-6, 21-23). Paul does not hesitate to make the aggressive claim in 11:1 to be a link in a chain of tradition: Christ - Paul - the Corinthians. Apart from the fact that Paul does not have the best claim to be the correct line of succession there is another problem that makes it a weak claim: in what sense did Christ enunciate a principle of accommodation of which Paul is the valid successor and exponent?/20/

His understanding of his inheritance from Christ is elucidated to some extent in Romans 15:1-3. The ideas and the language of 1 Corinthians 10:32ff. are reflected here, especially the use of *areskō* and the idea of pleasing everyone. The context of this section of Romans is the life of Christian community; the strong/weak contrast implies this even if one were to overlook the thrust of chapters 12-14. However, a broader context might be in view as well. Daube has already noted that Romans 12 has a "missionary flavour", and the shift in Romans 15:7ff. to a broader concern ("welcome one another", "circumcision/uncircumcision", "Gentiles/people") encourages one to think of Paul's comments in 15:1-3 as not restricted

20. Conzelmann, *Der Erste Brief an die Korinther*, Vandenoock & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1969) *ad loc.*, maintains that the imitation of Christ is not related to the person of the historical Jesus but to his work of salvation. He cites approvingly Robertson and Plummer who comment: the question is not: what would Jesus do? but, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? This, however, neglects completely that the first step, of the comparison is between Paul and the Corinthians, where his advice is to follow his behaviour. The second step of the comparison is not so much an *imitatio Christi* as it is a justification of Paul's own practice!

solely to an internal application. It is true that the purpose expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19ff. - to win some - is absent from Romans 15:1-3, making the internal application primary in the latter passage, but it is also true that in 1 Corinthians 9:19ff. the idea of winning some should not be limited only to gaining those who are outside./21/

What, then, does Paul say here? The Christian, especially the strong Christian, is not to please himself; he is to please his neighbour for his good, because Christ did not please himself. In his behaviour the Christian is to be motivated by a concern for building up the other person or, if I may paraphrase his advice on the basis of the connection between 1 Corinthians 10:32ff. and 9:19ff., he is to accommodate his behaviour to the good of others. The warrant for such accommodation, as in 1 Corinthians 11:1, is Christ's decision to forego pleasing himself (15:3; cf. also 15:5 - "to live in such harmony with one another in accord with Jesus Christ"). Three comments may be made about this. First, Romans 15:1-3 does address itself to the problem of accommodation. There are differences from Paul's description of that same principle in 1 Corinthians but these differences may be accounted for. In 1 Corinthians his thought is centred more on apostolic accommodation because of the need to defend his apostolic role - a problem largely absent from Romans. His lack of explicit knowledge about the Roman community, if it is addressed to Rome, helps to account for some of the lack of precision. There is the further difference that in Romans, where all believers are included in the scope of the accommodatory principle, the accommodation envisaged is a more passive kind of adaptation to "the failings of the weak" than in 1 Corinthians 9, where it is a positive becoming like another.

Second, the cumulative force of 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Romans 15:3 leads to a reasonably sure inference that Paul is drawing on a pre-Pauline tradition about Jesus' relationship with his contemporaries as an example of accommodation. Though it is rarely possible to prove such claims, the factors which point to a pre-Pauline tradition are: (a) the gratuitous introduction of the example of Christ; (h) the *kai gar* introductory transition is rough;

21. On this point see my "Pauline Inconsistency".

(c) the lack of a direct connection between the quotation from Psalm 69:9 and the situation at hand; (d) the somewhat forced reference in 15:4 to what was written before being applicable to us; (e) the content of the phrase is unusual; to say that Jesus had taught the love of the neighbour would have been adequate for the demands of the context. If it is correct that Paul is drawing on an earlier Christian tradition in Romans 15:3, the sources for Paul's accommodation ethic must be expanded to include this. Paul is not only following a Jewish tradition mediated to him through Jewish missionary maxims, as Daube believes, nor simply formulating an apostolic principle as I have argued elsewhere. He is also following, as he believes, the example of his Lord in pleasing others for their good.

Third, and this is highly speculative, one of the theological ideas Paul is wrestling with at a number of points in Romans is a notion of divine accommodation.^{22/} It is not just that Christ pleases others rather than himself but, more importantly, that Christ accommodated himself to the world by becoming a servant of circumcision (15:8ff.).^{23/} This same idea had appeared earlier in Romans in 11:11, 13-14, 20-23, 25-26, 30-31 when dealing with the relation between Jew and non-Jew in the missionary activity of Paul and the early church. (It may also be hinted at in 2:12-16 and 2:28-29.) Paul appears to conceptualize this relationship as an accommodation of God and his priorities to the realities of the missionary proclamation. He seems to assume that God's behaviour - at least in the short run - has been changed, and that the behaviour of God's missionaries should take into account this altered priority.^{24/} Paul's view that Christ was an

22. This is the point that, in many of the dictionary articles, assumes the overriding place.
23. With this we may compare Daube's stress on "service" in order to gain those far from you. If the comparison is legitimate, Paul's assertion that Christ became a servant of circumcision is bordering on being an offensive reinterpretation of the proselytizing mission, in his view now applied to an inside Israel concern.
24. For more on this see my *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, SNTS Monograph Series X, Cambridge University Press (1969) 126-147.

accommodation to the world and that God could accommodate his purposes to the reality of his people's reception of Jesus influenced his readiness to speak of an accommodatory principle in his own missionary activity and in the social life of the early Christian communities.

V Primitive Christianity

If there was a pre-Pauline tradition that Jesus accommodated himself to his situation one would expect to find accommodation in primitive Christianity. Thus the Pauline letters give evidence of variety in primitive pre-Pauline Christianity. Paul's perception, for what it is worth, is that accommodations have been made by others. At Antioch Peter was free to sit at table or not to sit at table; indeed, he was already living as a Gentile (Gal. 2:14). Titus might or might not be circumcised; there was no fixed custom in the matter (Gal. 2:3). (Though Timothy was circumcised, Luke implies it was not necessary but only happened "because of the Jews" (Acts 16:3).) Even those who were getting themselves circumcised (Gal. 6:13) were not keeping law! Even if Galatians is not an early letter these examples begin to define some pre-Pauline problems for which Paul was not himself responsible: table fellowship, purity and the keeping of the law, need for proselyte circumcision.

The evidence from Acts, though skimpy and not always unequivocal, points in the direction of accommodatory principles as part of the primitive church's understanding of things. We leave to one side Acts 21:17-26 when Paul undertakes a Nazirite vow in Jerusalem and Acts 15, the Apostolic Council, the two most obvious incidents involving Paul directly.

The life of the earliest church was characterized, it would seem, by several new features: a new role for women to play (Acts 1:14, 2:17, 9:36); the breaking down of clean/unclean distinctions (Acts 10-11); increased concern for proselytes and Gentiles (Acts 2:5ff.; 6:1ff.; 8:5f., 14ff., 26f.); a fresh attempt at communally shared resources (Acts 2:43ff.; 4:32ff.). In general terms this was viewed as an attempt to follow the impulse of the Spirit, but it was also an adaptation of the patterns of the nascent community to the experience of the early believers. In at least the case of women and table fellowship it resulted in behavioural patterns that were accommodations, in the one case internal and in the other

external. The question of table fellowship is especially important because it is the same issue that concerned Paul when he argued for accommodation in 1 Corinthians. The comment in Acts 11:3 is very revealing; it is the most significant piece of evidence for a deliberate but unsophisticated - in that it is not theologically motivated - accommodation in behaviour. The circumcision party asks Peter: "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" This is the obverse of the attack Paul later makes on Peter at Antioch as reported in Galatians 2, and is similar to the disturbances in the Corinthian and Roman churches. Peter's defence in Acts 11 boils down to a description of his vision (11:4-10), a recital of the ensuing events which were evidence of the Spirit's presence (11:11-16), and a rhetorical question (11:17): "who was I that I could withstand God?" While Peter does not claim in Luke's account that accommodation is acceptable as a principle, he is reported to act in an accommodatory way because the situation itself imposes such a demand. His description of the incident to the circumcision party in Jerusalem is sufficiently compelling that they draw the logical conclusion: "to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). This would seem to be evidence for at least the acceptability of accommodation when it can be theologically and experientially justified./25/

With this vignette of primitive Christianity we might compare the evidence in Luke's account of Stephen's trial. He is accused in Acts 6:14 of saying that "Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs (*ta ethē*) which Moses delivered to us". It is now impossible to know the extent to which the Stephen account has been shaped by tradition./26/ It is reasonable,

25. E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Blackwell, Oxford (1971) 359 suggests that Luke views this as "fundamental turning point". He holds that 11:3 is only understandable as a Lukan comment and that the vision too is devised by Luke. The conclusion to the episode has to do with salvation of Gentiles, not eating customs (see especially pp. 361-362).
26. See Haenchen, *ibid.*, *ad loc.*

however, to accept the accuracy of the tradition that Stephen claimed that Jesus would alter the customs. It is worthwhile noting that it is Jesus the Nazarene, not Christ or Jesus Christ, who is responsible for this. This lends some support to the claim made earlier that there is a pre-Pauline tradition about Jesus' accommodatory ethic.

In brief, while the evidence for the most primitive state of Christianity is slender and equivocal and undoubtedly affected by Luke's perceptions, there is corroboratory evidence for Peter's own practice of accommodation particularly with respect to table fellowship, for a pre-Pauline tradition that Jesus will alter the traditional customs, and a strong dogmatic standpoint that the changes in behaviour evidenced by the early Christians are prompted by the action of the Spirit. Luke would presumably view this as an ethic of the Spirit.

VI Accommodation in the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels

All the usual qualifications need to be made in attempting to draw out the evidence from the Gospels. In addition to the usual caveats, we have the problem that Jesus nowhere is reported to state a principle of accommodation, but he does appear to behave in ways that, against his immediate socio-religious background, may be taken as partial evidence for an ethic of accommodation.^{27/} There is, of course, less occasion for this in Jesus' ministry because Judea and Galilee, though mixed populations, presented less cultural diversity than is present in Paul's ministry and therefore less need for behavioural adaptations.

In Mark, much of the material in chapters 2 and 3 could be pressed into service to support a claim of a type of accommodation: the healing of the paralytic, the calling of Levi, sitting at table with tax collectors and sinners,

27. I leave out of consideration entirely the question of the Incarnation as an accommodation and of Jesus' relationship with others requiring some accommodation to their ignorance and humanity. The question is the extent to which Jesus runs against Jewish conventions in ways that might predispose Paul to state that he was imitating Christ in his ethic of accommodation.

the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus, the plucking of grain on the Sabbath, the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. These all exemplify accommodation of a kind - but only of a kind, for it is not a deliberate and consistent principle of accommodation but a principle of service to others to meet their needs even if established customs must be overlooked in the process. These help to determine the priorities in Jesus' ministry, but they do not go far toward an accommodation ethic. It is probably out of such traditions that the reference in Stephen's speech to Jesus' altering of the customs comes; it is also connected with the idea that Daube has stressed of service in meeting others' needs. Jesus' practice of meeting needs differs from Paul's principle in certain respects, primarily in that the meeting of need is much more an end in itself in Jesus' ministry. This kind of accommodation is not - at least not explicitly - in order to win someone (though this is one of the ways that Jesus sees the Kingdom being introduced and growing), nor is it implied that such accommodations are to be copied as a way of keeping the community intact (there is, in fact, no community!).

As in the Pauline letters, the gospels also pose us with evidence of an opposite kind of attitude: the followers of Jesus are to be consistent, rigorous in their behaviour, more righteous than the Pharisees (e.g. Matthew 5-7). To assess the full range of Jesus' adaptability one would need to examine all of Jesus' attitudes to Jewish customs, institutions and practices, the allowable variations within Judaism, his attitude to Gentiles and so on. Here we must remain confined to the most straightforward evidence.

With respect to accommodation the most obvious point of contact between Paul, the primitive Christian community, and Jesus is found in the matter of table fellowship.^{28/} Jesus accommodated himself in his eating customs to the

28. It is indicative of the importance of this feature that among the Pharisees, especially before AD 70, the question of table fellowship dominated their discussions: see J. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. (1973) *passim*.

situation of others and with the object of influencing their relationship with God. Mark, for example, introduces this note in 2:15-17: Jesus is at table, tax collectors and sinners are with him, and the scribes of the Pharisaic party object. Though it is true that there was not one normative set of practices in the matter of table fellowship, these still being a matter of dispute at the time of Jesus, the assumption of the gospels generally is that Jesus and his disciples shared a common starting point with the Pharisees on these questions. The later disputes in the primitive church also point in this direction of Pharisaic assumptions as the starting point. Hence Jesus' divergence from those practices, especially when it was a point of controversy between him and the Pharisees is significant. Thus, when Jesus replies that the sick need a physician, that he came to call sinners, not the righteous he is asserting his right to transcend even his own customary table practices for a more important goal: to heal sinners. Table fellowship plays a part also in a way the next pericope where a contrast is drawn between the eating habits of John's and Jesus' disciples (Mark 2:18ff. //Mt. 9:14ff.//Lk. 5:33ff.) and in the saying in Luke 7: 31-35 (//Mt. 11:16-19) about John's and Jesus' degree of asceticism. The former strikes a strongly eschatological note in explaining why Jesus' disciples do not fast: the latter simply notes the contrast between John's and Jesus' practice. Other evidence can be assembled to support the conclusion that Jesus felt free to eat with whom he liked in whatever fashion he liked, varying his customs to suit the others, in such a way that critics were baffled to know where he stood.²⁹ That freedom was based upon his conviction that the Kingdom of God was breaking in and that his ministry was a sign of it.

29. The Zacchaeus incident (Lk. 19:1-10) supports, too, the contention that Jesus will eat with whom he likes, but in that incident the initiative is taken by him. In a similar fashion Jesus also takes the initiative in dispensing with certain traditional halakhic practices connected with clean/unclean distinctions (Mk. 7:1-23 pars.; cf. Lk. 11:37-41). However, Jesus is not, in these cases, accommodating himself to anyone, he is asserting a particular view of the practices themselves and refusing to follow the Pharisaic interpretation.

He was reproached for his practice by the more scrupulous of the Pharisees; it may well be this fact that has encouraged the traditional association in Romans 15:3 between Jesus not pleasing himself and the statement drawn from Psalm 69:9 that "the reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me". His not pleasing himself was epitomized by his table practice (cf. the context of table questions in Rom. 14); the reproaches he faced were engendered by the same factor. It may not be too far-fetched to imagine that Jesus' marginal extension of table fellowship to include errant Jews (tax-collectors and sinners) was part of the motivation behind the reluctant willingness of the early church to further extend table fellowship to include uncircumcised non-Jews when dramatic events such as those described in Acts 10 and 11 supported such an extension. Despite Jesus' expectation of eschatological change and the early church's experience of the Spirit, it still did not find the abrogation of traditional eating customs easy.

With this general question of eating practices we may connect the reports of the first part of the mission charge to the disciples. This is a notoriously difficult pericope; it is found in different forms in Matthew, Mark and twice in Luke, the second being the charge to the 70 (Mt. 10:5-15/Mk. 6:7-11/Lk. 9:1-5/Lk. 10:1-2, 4-12). It is likely that Luke 9 is drawn basically from Mark 6, that Luke 10 is a form of a Q version parallel to the Markan version, and that Matthew 10 is a conflation of Mark and Q. The significant feature of the account is that, in Luke 10:7, 8, there is included twice the instruction to eat and drink "such things as they give" and to "eat such things as are set before you".³⁰ The Markan version, which Matthew (10:1,9-11,14) and Luke (9:1-5) follow, does not make such a statement. Matthew instead introduces (10:11,13) a criterion of worthiness for the person whose house one enters.³¹ He further includes the unparalleled "go rather to the lost sheep of the

30. *En autē de tē oikia menete. esthiontes kai pinontes to par' autōn. . . esthiete to paratithemena humin.*

31. The introduction of the idea of worthiness in Mt. 10: 11ff. would appear to be an extension of the worthiness of the missionary in 10:10b.

house of Israel" in 10:6. If Matthew (10:5-15) and Luke (10:4-12) have access to a Q account, it is evident that each has used particular parts of that pericope and that each has pushed the pericope in a direction he favours. It is relatively clear what Matthew's motives are in stressing the Israel-centric nature of Jesus' ministry and, conforming to that, the need for worthiness in the house one enters. It is also possible, though this conclusion is not quite so clear, that Luke is developing a motif of open table fellowship. If so it is a subtle editorial change,^{/32/} and one that could have been encouraged by a Pauline influence. Though there is obvious support in Acts 10-11 and 15 on the matter of more open table practices, one can hardly claim that this is a Lukan motif. One must still account for the decision to alter, if it is an alteration, the material in this direction. Luke is likelier to be closer to Q and this reference to eating practice may be an indication of the attitude towards accommodation in that segment of the primitive church in which Q was passed on. The saying does not likely stem from Jesus himself though the theology of Q was built upon an adaptation for that church's situation of what the tradition recollected about Jesus.^{/33/} In this reference, then, to eating and drinking whatever is put before one, we have a fairly clear reference to the need to eschew rigorous principles akin to the Pharisaic customs assumed to be relevant in the primitive church, and instead to adopt a principle of accommodation. This developed as a missionary practice in the church and was connected with Jesus' instructions to the Seventy.^{/34/} It is indicative of the practice in the

32. On Luke's change, C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, vol. 2 (1927, reprint, KTAV, New York (1968)) *ad loc.*: "They are apparently not to scruple to eat food which according to the Jewish Law is illegal, e.g. rabbits or meat cooked in milk. All this assumes later events and Pauline preaching among the heathen."
33. See particularly W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, Cambridge University Press (1964) 366-386.
34. The 70 should of course, be viewed as exemplary of the larger body of disciples, and thus even the framework of the pericope in Luke reflects a post-Easter set of conditions.

primitive church, not directly of Jesus' own practice, though it is not radically out of keeping with his practice.

In the Matthean account the mission charge continues in 10:16-23//24:9,13//Mark 13:9-13//Luke 21:12-19//10:3; 12:11-12. This involves another very complex set of parallels about which only three brief points need be made. The saying in Matthew 10:16b/35/ about being "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" implies that missionaries are to combine prudence and innocence. Second, the setting for this "testimony" is a situation where the disciples are set before synagogues, governors and kings. Third, the disciples are to have no set response to the charges against them, they are to allow the Holy Spirit to speak in them (Mt. 10:19-20//Mk. 13:11//Lk. 21:14-15//Lk. 12:11-12). Though Matthew attaches to this pericope the saying about not having time to go through all the cities of Israel (Mt. 10:23, no pars.) it is likely that the main pericope deals with a defensive kind of adaptability in circumstances of persecution. The combined emphases on prudence, testimony context, Holy Spirit reinforce the tradition that in the mission charge accommodation is envisaged. This complex pericope has been influenced by developments within the church, but it rests on a tradition about Jesus' expectation that the church in its ongoing missionary task will accommodate its actions to the needs of the situation. This, too, allows no clear conclusion about Jesus' own views.

Mention was made of Matthew's use of "worthy" to describe the disciples' hosts. The same word is included in the incident of the healing of the centurion's son (Mt. 8:5-13 //Lk. 7:1-10//Jn. 4:46-53). The Roman soldier says that he is not worthy that Jesus should come under his roof: as one who has shown great interest in Jewish worship - he is no doubt to be classed as a Godfearer - he would be very sensitive to the limits to his intercourse with a teacher (*kyrie*; Mt. 8:8 and Lk. 7:6). Jesus, though he does not have to decide whether he will adapt his behaviour by going to the centurion's house (for the child is healed from a distance), is confronted with a decision about meeting the need of a non-Jew who is close to Judaism. He decides in favour of the centurion.

35. No parallels, though the immediate context in 10:16a is paralleled in Luke 10:3.

There are two additional interesting features. Matthew has included in this pericope, because it was appropriate to the matter at hand, the Q saying about many coming from east and west to sit at table in the Kingdom (Mt. 8: 11-12//Lk. 13:28-30). In Matthew's version the applicability of the healing of the centurion's son to the situation of proselytes and God-fearers is heightened.^{36/} Luke, for whom such a connection would have been more appropriate, must not have found it ready-made. The other curious feature of this pericope is that it is Luke (!) who suggests that the centurion sent elders of the Jews to Jesus to intercede on his behalf (7:3). While this is consistent with Luke's interest in Godfearers, it makes leaders of the synagogue accessories before the fact. Though there is no deliberate accommodation here, we have a firm tradition that Jesus worked on a few occasions with non-Jews, that there was some question about the possibility of his entering a gentile house, that the leaders of the synagogue were a part of Jesus' involvement with the non-Jew (Luke only), that the centurion showed better faith than Israel's, and that this was paradigmatic for entry into the kingdom by proselytes and godfearers from the Diaspora (Matthew only).

A somewhat similar case is the healing of the Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mt. 15:21-28//Mk. 7: 24-30). The setting is in gentile territory.^{37/} The woman is an outsider, like the centurion. The content of the pericope recalls questions about eating customs. Whether Jesus has already adapted his behaviour to the local customs in hiding in a gentile house (so Mark) is not certain. But it is clear that Jesus allows himself to be persuaded by her acceptance of his offensive

36. By joining these two pericopes, by inserting "many", by reversing the order of the clauses so that stress falls on the many who came from east and west, by re-arranging the phrases so that "they will sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" becomes the purpose.
37. Note especially Mark's reference to Jesus entering a house "and would not have anyone know it" (7:24). Matthew drops this in his account, perhaps not just for reasons of his different use of the Messianic secret but also because it suggests a kind of accommodation to gentile customs. Matthew keeps Jesus out of doors (cf. *exelthōn*, in 15:21).

comparison between the children's right to eat and the dogs' scraps. Like the centurion's child, this woman's daughter is healed at a distance thereby mitigating some of the implied universalism of the pericope. Matthew's inclusion of the "lost sheep of Israel" saying (15:24) further strengthens the idea that Jesus' primary intention is not to work among non-Jews or in a gentile setting.

Similarly we might call in Mark 3:7-8//Matthew 4:24-25// Luke 6:17-18 and Matthew 11:20-24//Luke 10:12-15 to round out the notion that Jesus' ministry, though limited, was effective in areas outside Judea and Galilee. None of this demonstrates beyond doubt that Jesus made accommodations to those other cultural settings; one could envisage his limiting his basic contacts to Jewish settlers in those other lands. The point is that the tradition recalls that Jesus on occasion moved outside the orbit of Israel. When he did so, there are hints, though rarely developed, that he was ready to meet needs when pressured to do so. The need to "serve" gentiles was not a pressing one for Jesus and the church tradition is hesitant about developing it. We are justified in concluding, however, that the tradition is open to the possibility that Jesus altered his behaviour in certain circumstances in order to extend the healing (salvation) of the Kingdom to others.
/38/

In the two incidents involving taxation there is a subtle underlying theme of accommodation. The Temple Tax pericope (Mt. 17:24-27) implies that Jesus need not pay the tax (indeed that every real Jew is free!) but that as a matter of concession he will pay it./39/ In the Tribute to

38. The Chorazin-Bethsaida saying in Mt. 11:20-24//Lk. 10:13-15 is curious. It implies that mighty works were not done in Tyre and Sidon (or at least not the same kind of mighty works). But other passages imply that there was a widespread following of Jesus in these areas on the basis of his healing ministry. The purpose of the pericope is to utter a "woe" on the Galilean cities: it seems also to suggest a kind of divine accommodation to Tyre and Sidon who will fare better on the day of judgement.
39. *Hina de mē skandalisōmen autous* (Mt. 24:27) where it is not clear whether *autous* refers to the "sons" or the "others".

Caesar pericope (Mt. 22: 15-22//Mk. 12:13-17//Lk. 20:20-26) the intent of the pericope is to demonstrate Jesus' compliance with the civil authority while at the same time it is careful not to compromise him by making the compliance for illegitimate reasons. He silenced his critics, it is reported, by recommending an accommodating behaviour towards the state.

Finally, with the Dispute about Greatness and what follows (Mt. 18:1-14//Mk. 9:33-50//Lk. 9:46-50, 17:1-3, 15:3-7), we return to one of the points Professor Daube made.^{40/} These pericopes connect pre-eminence in the Kingdom with service (Mk. 9:35, cf. Lk. 9:48b) and with behaviour which is like a child's (Mt. 18:3-5//Mk. 9:36f.//Lk. 9:48 and cf. Mk. 10:15//Lk. 18:17). Daube comments: "the phrase 'servant of all' was a missionary slogan, and the embracing of children symbolized the welcoming of converts. . . this section too. . . contains an important principle as to the proper treatment of outsiders. . . the principle of accommodation". To this should be added the two pericopes which follow in Mark's and Luke's accounts. The Strange Exorcist, who casts out demons in Jesus' name though he is unknown to Jews and the disciples, should not be forbidden. Why? Because "he that is not against you is for you", an amazingly tolerant expression of willingness to accept those whose motivation, standards and conduct might be different.^{41/} Behaviour consistent with Jesus' goals is acceptable. Following this is a pericope On Temptation (Mt. 18:6-9//Mk. 9:42-48//Lk. 17:1-2) in which causing a little one (a proselyte?) to "stumble" is the occasion for harsh judgement.^{42/} It is difficult to escape the conclusion that in these pericopes the tradition is recalling sayings of Jesus which are quite closely analogous to notions of accommodation such as we find in the primitive church and in Paul.^{43/}

40. Daube, *op. cit.* 350-351.

41. We need not go into the tension between this saying and Mt. 12:30//Lk. 11:23: "he who is not with me is against, me".

42. *Kai hos an skandalisē hena tōn mikrōn toutōn tōn pisteuontōn.*

43. The instances of *skandalizō* in the gospels are often reminiscent of the Pauline injunctions about the strong and the weak, love of the neighbour and so on.

Cumulatively, there is some - though not overwhelming evidence for holding that Jesus altered his normal behaviour, and on occasion recommended that others should alter their behaviour, in order to meet others' needs or, perhaps, to adapt themselves to their customs. This accommodation was sometimes for others' good - as Paul might say, that they should be saved - and sometimes for one's own good in matters relating to the state. There is a strong tradition that one should not cause another to stumble.

CONCLUSION

In tracing the sources of Paul's accommodation ethic, a starting point was assumed, namely that there is a tradition in Judaism, associated with proselyte missionary activity, which made certain kinds of accommodations in order to win converts to Judaism. This tradition has been traced by Daube to a period before Jesus; Daube has also suggested that there is, another related tradition about being a servant which likewise predates the Pauline and gospel material.

The above brief investigation into the Jesus material is not as decisive as one would wish. From an assessment of Jesus' behaviour and his advice to others about their behaviour we may deduce that Jesus is recollected as one who on occasion accommodated his behaviour to the needs of others. He adjusted his eating habits to others' circumstances, he healed some in a foreign setting, he taught the need for service in the Kingdom and becoming as a child, he warned against making another stumble, he accepted the need to pay taxes though he thought them obsolete. Each of these is based on recollections of how Jesus himself behaved or taught, and in these cases in particular there is sufficient evidence for concluding that Jesus was to some extent - though perhaps not to a large extent - accommodating in his plan behaviour. In a number of these incidents it is apparent that the views are eschatologically motivated.

In addition, there are pericopes which, though less surely anchored in the *Sitz im Leben* Jesu, presuppose some basis in the teaching of Jesus for advice on missionary accommodation. It is likely that in the saying about the Seventy eating what is set before them we are in touch with a recollection that has been embellished by the

primitive church to reflect its accommodation to others' eating customs as the church extended beyond the bounds of Judaism. Other parts of the Mission Charge indicate other ways in which primitive church was accommodating. With those could be included Matthew's version of the child entering the Kingdom in Matthew 18:2-5 as another piece of evidence for accommodating behaviour within the earliest church.

The Acts of the Apostles fills out this picture slightly, though one ought not to maintain that Luke has a special interest in such a feature of the church. The church described by Luke adjusts some features of its behaviour in favour of female participation and of new gentile converts. That the changes with respect to gentiles, particularly in the matter of table fellowship, were not easy modifications is evident from the accounts in Acts 10-11 and 15. The difficulties which underlie those accounts are also eloquent evidence for the observation that Jesus' own attitude to the matter of accommodation is not totally straightforward and unequivocal. Had it been so, there could have been little need for the church to agonize over some of the questions that troubled its early history. Acts does corroborate, however, an important point from Paul's letters - that Peter himself was thought to be too accommodating in his behaviour.

There is then, a pre-Pauline tradition, founded on traditions about Jesus and in certain respects going back to Jesus himself, that Christians, particularly Christian missionaries can adjust their behaviour to suit others' needs. This holds particularly for questions of eating customs and of internal church arrangements.

These are the focus of the Pauline information on the subject. Paul, too, gives evidence of a tradition that predates him - a tradition to which he points in his exhortation to "imitate me as I imitate Christ" and his statement that "Christ did not please himself". What is unusual about Paul's view is not so much that he is accommodatory, but that he states his practice unequivocally and expresses it as an important matter of principle. In this respect, as in certain other ethical questions, he goes a long way beyond the traditions he inherits. It is clear from his statement that he sees accommodation as a peculiarly apostolic activity, as a matter of his relations both with the church and with outsiders, and also as a means of gaining some for Christ.

Thus, while Paul's accommodation ethic is continuous with, but a considerable extension beyond, the practice of the primitive church and before it of Jesus, it also represents an important new development in Christian ethics, Paul's ethic does not exist in a vacuum, nor does he borrow it directly from Hillel. As with many other singular emphases in Paul's theology there is a foothold generation of Christians - particularly perhaps in the developments affecting the transmission of Jesus' sayings that help to explain Paul's behaviour and beliefs.