

**Paul's Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy**  
**"to Become Everything to Everyone" (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>19</sup>For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup>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 I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.<sup>2</sup>

After Paul's turn to Christ, what was his relationship to Torah? The traditional and almost undisputed answer is that he renounced Torah-observance for disciples of Christ—except to imitate Jewish behavior to evangelize among Jews. Yet to me it seems more logical that a Jew, such as Paul claims to be (2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5-6), who is seeking to convince fellow Jews as well as Gentiles to turn to Jesus as the one representing the ideals and promises of Torah, would uphold the quintessential basis of that message, that is, he would observe Torah (cf. Rom 1:1-5; 3; 9:32—11:36; 15:8-9; 1 Cor 15:1-28; Gal 3:19; 5:14).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Paul's rhetoric makes sense

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Joel Willitts and Loren Rosson for helpful reviews of a draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> NRSV translation. Lit.: <sup>19</sup>For being a free one from everyone, I enslaved myself to everyone, so that I might gain [κερδήσω] the many. <sup>20</sup> And I became [ἐγενόμην] to the Jews/Judeans [τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις] as/like a Jew/Judean [ὡς Ἰουδαῖος], in order to gain Jews/Judeans; to the ones under law/convention [τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον] as/like under law/convention [ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον], not being myself under law/convention, so that I might gain the ones under law/convention; <sup>21</sup>to the ones lawless [ἀνόμοις] as lawless [ὡς ἄνομος], not being lawless of God but lawful/in-law [ἐννομος] of Christ, so that I might gain the ones lawless; <sup>22</sup>I became to the ones weak/impaired [as/like] weak/impaired [ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν ἀσθενής], in order that I might gain the ones weak/impaired. To everyone I become [γέγονα] everything, so that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup>Now I do everything because of the good news, so that I might have become [γένωμαι] a joint-sharer [συγκοινωνός] of it." It is also useful to note that the context that v. 23 ties back to is set in v. 18: "What therefore is my payment/reward? That proclaiming the good news without charge I might offer good news for which [I have] not made full use of my authority/power/rights in/with/by way of the good news."

<sup>3</sup> How much sense would it make for Paul to proclaim Jesus to demonstrate the righteous ideals of Torah and to be its goal in order to convince Jews or non-Jews to turn to Jesus as Messiah/Christ if at the same time Paul either degraded Torah as ineffective or less than divine or even worthless, as many

when approached from this perspective. Paul's arguments assume that his statements about Torah as well as criticism of some of his fellow Jews, which arise in letters full of appeal to the authority of Torah to support his positions, will be perceived to represent the views of a movement faithful to the Mosaic covenant, albeit maintaining some interpretations that are in rivalry with the interpretations of other Jewish groups. Moreover, these arguments seem to be targeted to Gentiles (i.e., members of the nations other than Israel) who understand themselves to be participating in Judaism (i.e., Jewish communal life) by becoming Christ followers, although remaining non-Jews.<sup>4</sup> For example, why would the non-Jews in Galatia want to become proselytes, and how would Paul expect his argument to be persuasive when declaring that proselyte conversion (circumcision) would thereafter oblige non-Jewish Christ-believers to keep the whole Torah (Gal 5:3), if they do not know him, a circumcised Jewish Christ-believer, to exemplify that obligation as logically concomitant?<sup>5</sup>

Based on these and other similar examples, it is probable that Paul approached his audience with this assumption if he imagined his arguments would be convincing. I find no reason to believe that the recipients of Paul's letters, who knew him personally, or knew others who did (in the case of Rome), would interpret his language in terms of later "Paulinism," a construction of Paul that operates around the proposition that the role of Torah to express covenant faithfulness had ended for Christians—often applied to everyone else too—whether Jew or non-Jew.<sup>6</sup>

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propose (e.g., when interpreting Romans 2; 3; 7; Galatians 3; 4; Phil 3), or obsolete, as most do (e.g., when interpreting Rom 10; Gal 3), and to thus eschew any obligation to keep it as holy, and for Jews (which he claims to remain and represent the aspirations of), a responsibility to uphold in covenant faithfulness? Cf. H. L. Ellison, "Paul and the Law - 'All Things to All Men,'" in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on his 60th Birthday*, eds. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 195-202; Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Full bibliography is available at [www.marknanos.com](http://www.marknanos.com). Recent summary discussions include Mark D. Nanos, "The Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009): <<http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol4/iss1/4/>>; idem, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?," in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle* (ed. Mark Douglas Given; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, (forthcoming 2009)), 119-63???

<sup>5</sup> Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), offers a sustained exegetical argument in this direction.

<sup>6</sup> This perception is evident even at the level of popular culture: "Paulinism" is "the teachings of the apostle Paul, who believed that people should be emancipated from Jewish law and allowed to follow the faith and spirit of Christ," according to <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Paulinism>> accessed on May 25, 2009.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23, however, is widely perceived to support the traditional conceptualization of Paulinism (i.e., privileging of gentleness, freedom from Torah and Jewish identity) and to counter any challenges mounted against it, such as I propose, irrespective of the specific arguments made regarding the particulars of the other letters.<sup>7</sup> That interpretation is predicated on his audiences knowing that Paul did not observe Torah when among non-Jews, such as themselves. Just as importantly, it proceeds as if the meaning of this passage is self-evident for the later interpreter, without the hesitation one might expect in view of several suspect lexical and exegetical moves required to make that case, and the ethical compromises it must embrace as central to the character of Paul, and thus Christian ideology. For the Paul who is celebrated here for his passion to win for Christ everyone in everything he does adopts a highly questionable way of life. That Paul is deceitful and hypocritical in terms of the principles of choosing righteousness and suffering over expedience, which he otherwise teaches emphatically, and according to which standard he condemns others (e.g., Peter at Antioch in Gal 2:11-21).<sup>8</sup> He subverts his own teaching in this letter of his "rule for all the assemblies," which includes the principle that a circumcised one is to "remain in the state" of circumcision in which he was in "when called," not to mention the ultimate priority of "keeping the commandments of God" regardless of in which state it is that one remains (1 Cor 7:17-24). He misleads anyone responding positively to his message into a religious affiliation that represents convictions and lifestyles that are other than he or she supposed, including important propositions that are absolutely contrary to critical convictions that he or she believes to be central to the proper worship of God (or gods).<sup>9</sup> It follows that he

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<sup>7</sup> The raising of objections based on this text has not only been my frequent experience when speaking or delivering papers, but is also a topic in discussions of my work, even among those sharing my view of a more Jewish Paul: Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 122-25; Alan F. Segal, "Paul's Religious Experience in the Eyes of Jewish Scholars," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (ed. David B. Capes, et al.; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 341 (321-43). I have briefly engaged this text when discussing the idol food context of the players, issues, and instructions of 1 Cor 8–10, in Mark D. Nanos, "The Polytheist Identity of the 'Weak,' And Paul's Strategy to 'Gain' Them: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1," in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Pauline Studies 5; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 179-210, 209-10 (179-210), and in Nanos, "Paul and Judaism."

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Peter Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 and Galatians 2:11-14," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1979): 347-62.

<sup>9</sup> John M. G. Barclay, "'Do We Undermine the Law?': A Study of Romans 14.1--15.6," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2001), (308) 287-308,

or she thereafter will be committed to adopting this same strategy of misleading others to win them to the gospel. In addition to such serious moral compromises, the prevailing reading almost certainly involves Paul in an ineffective bait and switch strategy. While his disguising of his convictions is based on compromising truthfulness for expedience as he moves among different groups to successfully gain a hearing among each, this inconsistency will almost certainly result in failure, giving truth to the lie he lives. For each party will ultimately learn of his absolutely contrary behavior when among other parties' subscribing to opposite propositional truths, whether by directly witnessing his flip-flopping, or by way of rumors.

Nevertheless, the prevailing readings have a long and powerful legacy. Peter Richardson perceptively observes that "rarely" is there "a passage that is as pregnant with implications—particularly for understanding his [Paul's] behavior—as 1 Corinthians 9.19-23."<sup>10</sup> Heikki Räisänen presents those implications in starkly simple terms with which Richardson's analysis also agrees: "1 Cor 9.20 f. is absolutely incompatible with the theory of an observant Paul."<sup>11</sup>

Already in the fourth century, Chrysostom sought to defend Paul from charges of inconsistency by non-Christian critics who developed the negative logical inferences of the Christian interpretation to demonstrate Paul's indifference to Torah as a central ideology that made him suspect. An anonymous apologetic work arguably preserving Porphyry's criticisms includes the accusations that it is neither reasonable, nor clear headed, nor healthy, nor independent, nor will it be effective, but corrupt and confused for Paul to claim to be free in 1

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cleverly compares Paul's theology with "a Trojan horse which threatens the integrity of those who sought to live according to the law." The relevance of this comment is accentuated by the discussion below of Odysseus as *polytropos*.

<sup>10</sup> Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency," 347. The impact of this essay on Lloyd Gaston's interpretation of Paul is telling. The only comment I find for Gaston on this passage is Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 78-79, where he states that if Richardson is right, then "perhaps he [Paul] did not" keep the commandments.

<sup>11</sup> Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 75 n. 171; cf. 73-76.

Cor 9:19 and call circumcision "mutilation" in Phil 3:2<sup>12</sup> while also circumcising Timothy in Acts 16:3;<sup>13</sup> moreover,

But anyone saying [both] "I am a Jew" and "I am a Roman" is neither, even if he would like to be.

The man who hypocritically pretends to be what he is not makes himself a liar in everything that he does. He disguises himself in a mask. He cheats those who are entitled to hear the truth. He assaults the soul's comprehension by various tactics, and like any charlatan he wins the gullible over to his side.

Whoever accepts such principles as a guide for living cannot but be regarded as an enemy of the worse kind—the kind who brings others to submission by lying to them, who reaches out to make captives of everyone within earshot with his deceitful ways. And if, therefore, this Paul is a Jew one minute and the next a Roman, [or a student] of the [Jewish] law now, but at another time [an enemy of the law]—if, in short, Paul can be an enemy to each whenever he likes by burglarizing each, then clearly he nullifies the usefulness of each [tradition] for he limits their worthwhile distinctions with his flattery.

We may conclude that [Paul] is a liar. He is the adopted brother of everything false, so that it is useless for him to declaim, "I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie" [Rom. 9.1]; for a man who one day uses the law as his rule and the next day uses the gospel is either a knave or a fool in what he does in the sight of others and even when hidden away by himself.<sup>14</sup>

The Christian apologist does not offer a satisfactory reply to the charges, including the duplicity, but simply seeks to justify this behavior.<sup>15</sup> Chrysostom also did not deny these problems, the criticisms of which he was acutely aware, but rather legitimated Paul's behavior as faithful to Jesus:

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<sup>12</sup> I have challenged this long-standing interpretation, and argued that Paul's reference to "mutilation" is likely to some "pagan" phenomenon rather than circumcision, in Mark D. Nanos, Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog? *BibInt* 17 (2009): 448-82 (a conference version is available at <<http://www.marknanos.com/Phil3Dogs-Reverse-1-17-08.pdf>>).

<sup>13</sup> Macarius Magnes, *Apocritus* 3.30. See also e.g., Julian, *Against the Galileans* 106a-c, including Paul as responsible or Christians disregarding Torah and circumcision.

<sup>14</sup> Macarius Magnes, *Apocritus* 3.31 (transl. R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians: The Literary Remains* [New York: Prometheus Books, 1994], 60-61).

<sup>15</sup> 3.37 responding to 3.30, and 3.38 responding to 3.31: T. W. Crafer, *The Apocriticus of Macarius Magnes* (Translations of Christian Literature Series 1: Greek Texts; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and New York: Macmillan Company, 1919), 101-103.

Therefore Paul, in imitating his master, should not be blamed if at one time he was as a Jew, and at another as one not under the Law; or if once he was keeping the Law, but at another time he was overlooking it... once offering sacrifices and shaving his head, and again anathematizing those who did such things; at one time circumcising, at another casting out circumcision.<sup>16</sup>

Elaborating an argument already made briefly by the author of the *Apocriticus*, Chrysostom also excused Paul's inconsistent and morally suspect behavior by appeal to a popular Greco-Roman topos of Paul's time, that of the physician who misleads a patient for the good of the patient, not that of the doctor.<sup>17</sup> The physician is expected to treat each patient differently according to the needs of each, including changing treatments as the patient's level of illness or return to health progresses. This "condescending" behavior extends to lying to the patient, or play acting. That conduct is justified by the physician's overriding concern for the advantage of the patient, not of the doctor's own self. Thus Chrysostom explains: "as a physician rather, as a teacher, as a father, the one to the sick, the other to the disciple, the third to the son, condescends for his correction, not for his hurt; so likewise did he."<sup>18</sup> Chrysostom does not simply analogize the behavior of the doctor to Paul's rhetorical adaptability, but also to Paul's conduct: Paul "was variable and many-sorted not only in what he did, but also in what he

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<sup>16</sup> *Laud. Paul.* 5.6 [SC 300.240], cited in Margaret M. Mitchell, "A Variable and Many-sorted Man": John Chrysostom's Treatment of Pauline Inconsistency," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.1 (1998): 107 (93-111).

<sup>17</sup> On the physician topos, see Philo, *Unchangeable* 65-67; *Joseph* 32-34, 74-79; Stanley K. Stowers, 'Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason', in David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (eds.), *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 253-86 (274-75); Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 81; Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 21-22, 35-40, 53-98; Mitchell, "A Variable and Many-sorted Man," 102-3; idem, "Pauline Accommodation and 'Condescension' (συγκατάβασις): 1 Cor 9:19-23 and the History of Influence," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 201-5 (197-214).

<sup>18</sup> *Homily XXII.6* [PG 61.185], in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. First Series. Vol. XII. Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 129 [PG 61.185]; and see *Hom. in Gen.* 2.3 [PG 53.29]; *Hom. in Gal.* 2:11 3 [PG 51.374]; *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 12.1 [PG 61.96]; *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 22.3-4 [PG 61.184-85]; *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 4:13 2.2 [PG 51.283]; *Laud. Paul.* 5.7 [SC 300.242-44]; *Hom. in Eph.* 6.3 [PG 62.46]; *Hom. in Tit.* 3.1-2 [PG 6.677-78]. Jesus provides Chrysostom with the precedent for this variation, for he both praised and rebuked Peter at various times (idem, "Pauline Accommodation," 208-14). In *Homily XX.8* on 1 Corinthians 8:7, he explains that the knowledgeable are approaching the impaired incorrectly: "they gained no ground by their refusing to condescend. For this was not the way to bring them in, but in some other way *persuading them by word and by teaching*" (Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series. Vol. XII. Chrysostom: Corinthians*, 115 [emphasis added]).

said."<sup>19</sup> And what Paul did was based on indifference to Torah: "Therefore at one time he exalts the Law and at another he destroys it."<sup>20</sup>

In addition to failing to answer the criticisms, the topos does not actually correspond to Paul's language in 9:19-23, for it is based on becoming a physician to a patient, et al, whereas to correspond to Paul's language it would have to call for conduct like a patient to patients, student to students, and child to children. To the degree that Chrysostom understands Paul to be free of Torah and adopt variability in his behavior as well as his speech, his argument represents a variation on the focus of the traditional argument, but no serious challenge to it.<sup>21</sup> I do not see how it successfully explains this passage, or defends Paul of the charges made.

In contemporary scholarship, the need for such apologies based on the prevailing interpretation of this passage continues unabated. Consider this example from Gordon Fee:

when he [Paul] was among Jews he was kosher; when he was among Gentiles he was non-kosher—precisely because, as with circumcision, neither mattered to God (cf. 7:19; 8:8). But such conduct tends to matter a great deal to the religious—on either side!—so that

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<sup>19</sup> *Laud. Paul.* 5.6 [SC 300.242], from Mitchell, "A Variable and Many-sorted Man," 111 n. 74.

<sup>20</sup> *Laud. Paul.* 5.6 [SC 300.242], from *ibid.*, 108.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine argued that Paul observed Torah because that was expected of the first generation of Jewish Christians, as long as they did not observe it for salvation (an early witness to the assumption of Jewish motives for Torah-observance as works-righteousness) (Augustine, *Letter* 40.4, 6, in Joseph W. Trigg, "Augustine/Jerome, *Correspondence*," in *Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Michael Glazier; Message of the Fathers of the Church 9; Wilmington, Delaware: 1988), 264-65 (250-95). But he also argued that they did so only in order "to show them [Jews] what he thought he would need to be shown if he were still unconverted" (Augustine, *Letter* 40.6, in Trigg, "Augustine/Jerome, *Correspondence*," 266). In other words, Augustine denied that Paul was merely pretending, but his explanation was actually still based on pretense, but legitimate because of justifiable motives, namely, empathy. Augustine nevertheless sought to challenge the idea that Paul behaved like a Jew "out of any intention to mislead. Obviously the person who looks after sick people has to think like a sick person himself. I do not mean that he pretends to be sick, but he has to put himself in the place of the sick person in order to understand fully what he should be doing to help the sick person" (Augustine, *Letter* 40.4, in *idem*, "Augustine/Jerome, *Correspondence*," 264). Augustine was so concerned with the topos of the physician's lie being adopted, as it had been by Chrysostom, and before him Origen (Origen, *Hom in Jer.* 20.3 [PG 13.476]), that he wrote a treatise at about this time, *On Lying*, in which he challenged all lying, especially for the sake of religion, which effectively ended the perpetuation of the medicinal lie tradition in Western ethics (*idem*, "Augustine/Jerome, *Correspondence*," 252).

It is interesting to observe that Jerome strongly disagreed with Augustine, revealing his ideologically based disgust of the notion that Paul or any Christian would observe Torah for any reason other than pretense, and maintaining not only that Paul pretended to Jewish behavior to gain Jews (Jerome, *Letter* 104.17, in *idem*, "Augustine/Jerome, *Correspondence*," 289, and see Jerome, *Letter* 104.13 [285]), but also that Augustine's explanation actually supported behavioral pretense, regardless of the different motives for which Augustine argued, which Jerome also denied (Jerome, *Letter* 104.17, in *idem*, "Augustine/Jerome, *Correspondence*," 289-90).

inconsistency in such matters ranks among the greatest of evils. Paul's policy quite transcended petty consistency—and 'religion' itself.... How can Paul determine to 'become like a Jew'? The obvious answer is, In matters that have to do with Jewish religious peculiarities that Paul as a Christian had long ago given up as essential to a right relationship with God.<sup>22</sup>

The apologies offered continue to seek to legitimate the infraction by denial of the problem or appeal to supposed superior values and noble motives rather than attempting to actually eliminate the problem, which would, it seems, be accomplished by the exegetical approach to this passage that I seek to demonstrate, but that comes at the cost of eliminating the brush strokes supplied by this passage in the prevailing composite portrait of a Torah-indifferent Paul.

The virtually lone exception (of which I am aware) that proves the rule is stated by Wilfred Knox, who argues, against the consensus, that Paul did not "deny that the Jewish nation itself was still bound to the observance of the Law; indeed he himself kept it with all the rigour of a Pharisee." For his claim to be a Pharisee to be meaningful: "it is clear that S. Paul

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<sup>22</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), 427-28 (emphasis his). Here we witness how this text is used not only to indicate that Paul was no longer a Jew in a religious behavioral sense, but that such identity and concomitant behavior was regarded now by Paul to be irrelevant to God; hence, for everyone. Anyone who might criticize Paul on the basis that it ought to be relevant is simply being "religious," which is negatively valued, and not what Paul—on Fee's model of Pauline religion—is understood to represent. Rather, Paul is engaged in something superior; Fee is too, presumably, since no hermeneutical distance from this interpretation is expressed. Moreover, we learn that being religiously Jewish would also entail by definition participation in peculiarities that are not essential to a right relationship with God, including the concern for petty consistency, presumably, consistent behavior in keeping the covenant obligations of Torah, which had originated from God according to the Jewish tradition (but not Paul?), and been articulated in the Scriptures, from which Paul drew his authority to speak of Jesus as Christ, and to instruct his assemblies.

Many other examples of this kind of reasoning to seek to resolve this matter could be provided. E.g., Donald A. Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer--According to his Letters," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (eds. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 113 (97-120), explains that "Paul regards himself as no longer under the law" since he "obeys it now and then. Paul thus feels free to identify with the Gentiles and not to remain an observant Jew. Incidentally, how remarkable it is that the Jew Paul can speak of himself as an outsider: 'To the Jews I became as a Jew!'"<sup>22</sup> This implies a "break with Judaism," and "it is clear, furthermore, that observing or not observing the law is an unimportant issue before God. The position taken by Paul is one of complete expedience: he will or will not observe the law only in relation to its usefulness in the proclamation of the gospel." Also Paul W. Gooch, "The Ethics of Accommodation: A Study in Paul," *TynBul* 29 (1978): 111-12 (93-117).

continued throughout his life to practise Judaism, and that he expected Jewish converts to do so." Yet one passage stands in the way:

*the only objection* that can be brought against this view is the language of 1 Cor. ix.21, where S. Paul seems to imply that when dealing with Gentiles *he behaved* as if not bound by the Law.... On the other hand *this interpretation* of the passage *is impossible*. S. Paul could not both behave as a Jew when dealing with Jews and as free from the Law when dealing with Gentiles, since apart from the *moral dishonesty* of pretending to observe the Law when in Jewish society and neglecting it in Gentile society, *it would be impossible for him to conceal* from Jews whom he hoped to convert the fact that he disregarded the Law when not in Jewish company.<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult not to wonder if this interpretive conundrum does not result from an *a priori* driving the exegesis of this passage. For those who look to Paul's life and teaching for guidance, the deeply troubling nature of the problems it creates require excusing or defending Paul, the hero of many disguises, and thereby, Christianity. But those defenses come up short on explanatory power for anyone else. In response, some Christians will develop

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<sup>23</sup> Wilfred L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, Eng.: The University Press, 1925), 103 (emphasis mine). Knox's solution is that Paul "means that in dealing with those outside the Law, he *behaves* as if he were free from the Law..., not in the sense of refusing to recognize any divine Law, but as in fact obeying the Jewish Law in Christ, or *in a Christian sense*, as something which he is *more or less* bound to observe, but which others [i.e., Gentiles (?)] are not. The rhetorical tone of the passage obscures the facts" (emphasis mine). In other words, Knox derives the opposite implication from the text: Paul was sincere and consistent when behaving Jewishly among Jews, albeit "more or less" and adjusted to "a Christian sense," thus the mimicry of lifestyles was when modifying his Jewish behavior among non-Jews. It is unclear why this is not, inversely, still moral dishonesty, or how his Law behavior among Jews could be concealed from Gentiles. Moreover, Knox undermines his solution, which already equivocated on Paul's level of Torah observance, when he states: "S. Paul is *not entirely consistent* with his own teaching, since he here denies that he is bound to keep the Law, whereas in vii. 18 he regards obedience to it as a duty.... It is, however, not surprising that his language is inconsistent. He was clear that it was necessary for Jewish Christians to continue to obey the Law; whether this was merely a matter of expediency, or a matter of principle, *he would hardly trouble to consider*. It must be noticed that on his own principles, if he obeyed the Law at all, *he was bound to obey it as a Pharisee.... Anything less was really worthless*" (122 n. 54; emphasis mine). However, if Paul would not "trouble to consider" whether obeying was motivated by expediency or principle, and if he sometimes obeyed it "more or less," he can hardly be observing Torah as a Pharisee. Knox has raised an insightful objection, but in addition to compromising his own alternative with an inconsistent and non-Pharisaic portrayal of a more or less observant Paul, he has merely reversed which sensibilities to privilege, and thus failed to offer a satisfactory solution to the charges of inconsistency and moral dishonesty. And he has not explained how the strategy could have succeeded. Ellison, "Paul," also objects, and insists that Paul observed Torah, but does not explain the proposition; and Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, comments that 1 Cor 9:19-21 makes it "obvious that Paul lived as a pious Jew," although no argument is made, and it is clearly not obvious to the overwhelming majority of interpreters. Others objecting are listed in footnotes below.

hermeneutical distance: Paul was like that, yes, but in this behavior he should not serve as a model. For some others, the prevailing interpretation of this passage can be central to criticizing Paul and Christianity, for it provides legitimacy to, if not also cause for dismissing him as immoral and incompetent.<sup>24</sup> This passage clearly stands in the way of improving relations between Christians and Jews—make that between Christians and non-Christians in general—because it undermines truthfulness as a core value, an essential element for the complete trust required in mutually respectful relationships. Is the prevailing interpretation of this passage really so clear, and is it so necessary that these many problems must be qualified or legitimated, go unrecognized or ignored, or left open to demonstrating the moral bankruptcy of Paul?

For me, a Jewish historian and Christian-Jewish relations critic, this interpretive tradition is intriguing, including the way the problems that it generates are handled by Pauline scholars, while at the same time the obstacles these represent to advancing Christian-Jewish relations are troubling. Have my working hypotheses that Paul was probably Torah-observant, and his movement best approached as Judaism, been mistaken? Are the roots of Christianity far more discontinuous with Judaism, as sustained in the prevailing readings of Paul, than I have supposed?

The fact that this text is embedded in the rhetorical aims of a particular letter, combined with the fact that it deals specifically with how Paul seeks to win those who do not believe in Christ, makes it an unlikely text to turn to for ultimate proof that Paul was not Torah-observant, or that he upheld a Torah-free lifestyle to be the ideal for Christ-believing Jews. More importantly, I propose that this text has been misinterpreted.

This passage does not and cannot by itself demonstrate that Paul was or had to be Torah-observant, and that is not my objective in this study. Rather, I seek to show that it does

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<sup>24</sup> In addition to the kinds of "pagan" criticisms already discussed, see Jewish criticisms by Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 151-57, 166-67; David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: The Turning Point in Western History* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 106-10; and Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 75-86. The history of this line of Jewish critique is discussed by Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, "The 'Essential Heresy': Paul's View of the Law According to Jewish Writers: 1886-1986" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1990), 63-82. See also the examples discussed in Daniel R. Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional View of Paul' and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics," *JSNT* 28.1 (2005): 69-104; Stefan Meißner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus* (WUNT 2.87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

not support the claim that he *cannot* observe Torah as an expression of covenant fidelity; for example, that he only practiced circumcision, dietary regulations, and calendrical celebrations such as Sabbath when judged expedient for the purpose of gaining a hearing among Jews, and then only as matters of indifference (*adiaphora*). The interpretation proposed not only challenges such conclusions, it also opens up for consideration other interesting matters relevant to Pauline studies, including several of concern to this seminar. Moreover, although I am not a Christian, I believe it offers many solutions to the ethical problems that must, or at least I would think should vex any Christian beholden to the prevailing interpretation of this serpent-like guile at the very heart of Paulinism, and thus Christianity itself.

First, I will focus on the topic of Paul's behavior as presented in prevailing views, and develop analytical categories to assess this matter. In the case of the consensus reading, Paul is describing his tactics in terms of "conduct" or "lifestyle adaptability." I will offer a different way to read Paul's language, suggesting instead that Paul was describing his "rhetorical adaptability." Then I will discuss examples from Acts 17 and Antisthenes' Odysseus that support my case. This will be followed by explaining some of the problems that arise from the prevailing views, and how my reading avoids, solves, or problematizes them further, at the same time raising a few challenges of its own, certainly for anyone ideologically bound to the traditional "law-free" Paul.

### **The Prevailing Interpretations**

Central to the traditional and still prevailing readings is the proposition that Paul adapts his *behavioral conduct* to the different audiences he seeks to gain to Christ, as can be clearly seen in the citations already presented. Paul is understood to be describing his *lifestyle* in terms of Torah or Jewishness as variable depending upon the social context in which he is operating. But it is specifically Jewish behavior that is primarily regarded to be compromised by Paul, for he is no longer Torah-observant, and therefore implicitly more aligned with non-Jewish behavior in principle, and thus involved in mimicking Jews more so than Gentiles, whom he rather represents, because "gentileness" is the default setting for Pauline Christianity. Richardson states the prevailing view concisely:

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul describes his motivation for his *conduct*; the basic principle is that he adjusts his *conduct* to fit the immediate circumstances as long as this adjustment will help to win some to Jesus. This statement is found within a treatment of the problem of eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor 8.1ff.) in which he suggests that it is *acceptable to eat* such meat....<sup>25</sup>

The accusations in Acts 21 against Paul *are probably true*; he counsels certain kinds of non-observance of the customary practices of Judaism, even to the point of agreeing to suggestions that Jews might cease to circumcise their children."<sup>26</sup>

For Richardson, it is plain that it is eating behavior that Paul has in mind, and that Paul's theological position represents Gentile (Christian) norms.<sup>27</sup> The subject of dietary behavior offers a good example to work around, since it represents a tangible expression of Torah-observance, or not, and one that involves different interpretations of certain elements from group to group, but one that never the less, however practiced, bears witness to the importance of seeking to live according to Torah as Jews, or not. We will return to this issue.<sup>28</sup>

Interpreters representing the New Perspective basically adopt the current consensus view that Paul was writing about adapting his behavioral *conduct* such as dietary practices to match that of the various audiences he addressed, with a Pauline Christianity based

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<sup>25</sup> Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency," 347 (emphasis added); see also the interrelated essay by Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 97 (93-117), who states that "the passage clearly deals with Paul's behavior and not simply his methodology in mission or instruction." Mark Douglas Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 7; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 106-7, interprets Paul's reference to ἐγένεθην ("I became") to mean "temporarily assuming a different identity," and "refers to concrete, observable changes" (109). For a different view of Paul on idol food, that he instead teaches that no food known to be idol food can be eaten by Christ-believers or by Jews, implying also by himself as a Christ-believing Jew, as well as several other elements that challenge the consensus readings in these chapters, including the identity of the "weak," whom I propose to be idolaters who are not Christ-believers, see Nanos, "Polytheist Identity," 179-210; in agreement that Paul does not permit eating idol food per se, see also Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT; Assen and Minneapolis: Van Gorcum and Fortress Press, 1990); Alex T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* (JSNTSup 176; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); John Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A Social-rhetorical Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1* (WUNT 2.151; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency," 361.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Richardson, "Early Christian Sources of an Accommodation Ethic -- From Jesus to Paul," *TynBul* 29 (1978): 118-42.

<sup>28</sup> See Nanos, "Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul," for a summary investigation of Paul's arguments about dietary matters developed in several essays and monographs.

propositional bias towards gentileness, that is, toward norms that are not derived from an interpretation of Torah, but rather from its non-applicability for Christians, Jewish or Gentile.

E. P. Sanders explains that,

Paul is obviously attempting to formulate how he can live outside the law when evangelizing Gentiles and living among them, yet remain *within* the law of Christ and thus of God. He is attempting to formulate that possibility, yet the passage does not say how he can manage both. The truth is that he has no clear way of defining his own situation theoretically. When among Gentiles he does not observe the Jewish law: that is clear in Gal. 2:11-14.... Christians, of whom Paul is here the example, are not *under* the law, but they are not thereby lawless toward God."<sup>29</sup>

Sanders interprets "became like" to mean "lived according to the law in order to win Jews," and not according to it to win Gentiles.<sup>30</sup> He challenges the idea that this can be "a literal description of Paul's life and work," because it would not work for Paul to observe law when he goes to a synagogue and then not when he was with Gentiles "*in the same church*."<sup>31</sup> For Sanders, this language is "hyperbolic," and the exception, when Paul practices Judaism, is only when Paul goes to Jerusalem: Paul lived like a Jew in Jerusalem, where that was expected in order not to give offence, but "in all probability, when he entered each city, he went to Gentiles, he preached to them with some success, and he lived like a Gentile."<sup>32</sup> In other words,

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<sup>29</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 100 (italic emphasis his; underline emphasis mine). I challenge this reading of the Antioch Incident in Mark D. Nanos, "What Was at Stake in Peter's 'Eating with Gentiles' at Antioch?," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 282-318.

<sup>30</sup> Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 185.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 185 (emphasis his).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 186. The comments on this passage by NT critics are brief, and generally do not address the problems which this interpretation raises. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 576-78, observes: "His freedom as an apostle was freedom to adapt policy and practice to particular situations, even when that meant running counter to all precedent, and to both scriptural and dominical authorization" (577); *idem*, "Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity," *NTS* 45 (1999): 174-93. Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 2003), 115, makes it plain that Paul could not describe himself becoming a Jew to Jews "if he regarded Christianity as simply a sub-branch of Judaism; it is a new thing, a fulfilment, no longer bound by ethnic or geographical identity." Paul was "prepared to observe customs and key commands of the law, presumably meaning by this that he would keep the Sabbaths and the food-laws" in order to win Jews to the gospel, with the caveat that Paul's "justification... didn't depend on these observances" (116). At the same time, Wright understands Paul to also become like non-Jews "without regard for the regulations of the Jewish law" in order to win them (116). Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1997), 153-54, views Paul as "free from the Law": "This

Paul's lifestyle as far as Torah was concerned was like that of a Gentile, and this was the direct result of having changed his convictions about Torah; Paul lived like a non-Jew when he worked in the Diaspora among non-Jews, which represented virtually all of his time, but he mimicked Jewish behavior on the few occasions he was in Jerusalem.

There are some minority interpretive approaches which are of interest for this discussion. But given the limits of this paper, and the fact that in the end these also lead to the same primary conclusions—that Paul no longer practiced Torah as a matter of covenant faithfulness, adopted a Torah-free lifestyle to the degree that he could do so in the Diaspora where he lived mainly among non-Jews, and that he varied his lifestyle to mimic Jewish and other groups of people, perhaps to a lesser degree, or in a supposedly less benign fashion, or with a different focus, or with more empathy or more admirable motives than are emphasized in the prevailing portrayals—they will not be presented here.<sup>33</sup> The few that point in the direction of my proposal will be discussed below.<sup>34</sup>

### Analytical Options for Interpreting Paul's Adaptability

The interpretations of Paul's language we have reviewed focus on Paul *adopting the lifestyle* of his audiences, *varying his conduct to imitate or mimic* the way that each of them *lives relative to*

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sentence [9:21] states clearly what is abundantly apparent from many other bits of evidence: Paul not only resisted the imposition of Jewish Law on Gentiles but also himself adopted a casual attitude about Law observance (kosher laws, etc.) when he was among Gentiles."

Similar interpretations are mounted against the New Perspective, especially to accentuate Paul's discontinuity with Jewish observance and identity. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and his Critics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004), 172, observes that, "Paul himself did not scrupulously adhere to the law. In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 he notes that he behaves differently ('as one outside the law') in the presence of Gentiles than he does among Jews; nonobservance of the 'ritual' Torah must be meant." D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol. 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, et al.; Tübingen and Grand Rapids, Mich.: Mohr Siebeck and Baker Academic, 2004), 402 (393-436), adds, "Perhaps the most startling passage is 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.... these [discontinuities] are of such a nature that Paul can think of himself, in this context, as not being a Jew...." See also David Carson, "Pauline Inconsistency: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 9.19-23 and Galatians 2.11-14," *Churchman* 100 (1986): 6-45, esp. 10-16, 37. Here we witness not only Paul discontinuous with Jewish behavior, but also with Jewish identity: Paul is no longer a Jew; similarly, see also Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 96; Given, *True Rhetoric*, 103-17; Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer," 113.

<sup>33</sup> They are discussed in notes when rhetorical adaptability is introduced.

<sup>34</sup> Knox, *St. Paul*; Ellison, "Paul"; and Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, have already been noted.

*Jewish law practices* when he is among them. For analytical purposes I will refer to this as "lifestyle adaptability."<sup>35</sup>

Adapting one's lifestyle to fit into the social context of another does not necessitate adopting *the propositional values* of the one whose behavior is imitated. One can pretend by mimicking behavior in an outward fashion in order to appear to share the values of the other, and thus to gain access and trust which might otherwise not be gained. If one adopts the lifestyles of groups with contrary rational (or divine) bases for their very different behavior, such as Paul's language describes for the various referents, this by definition cannot represent adopting their propositional values.

Paul is interpreted to undertake this behavior solely in order to win each person or group to the Christian gospel's propositional values, which he believes to be superior. For interpreters who subscribe to and by way of Paul promote that ideology, the justification of this deceptive tactic is apparently self-evident. As noted, the charges of inconsistency and moral dishonesty are treated as if benign, generally discussed without offering explanations sufficient to those who do not share this ideological perspective. In less generous terms, for example, expressed by those not inclined to defend Paul, or instead toward demonstrating his faults, he is portrayed to ape the behavior of each in order to trick everyone into mistakenly believing that the message he proclaims does not subvert the rational basis or convictional value of living in the particular way that each lives. In the case of non-Jews (idolaters or atheists), especially the lawless or weak, he appears to worship their gods, or alternatively, to oppose any gods, when he believes in neither of these propositions. In the case of Jews, when Paul conducts himself like a Jew when among Jews, he is "misleading" Jews into thinking that he is a Jew whose message upholds the propositional conviction that Torah-based behavior is

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<sup>35</sup> I am drawing on the work of Paul Gooch, but with some modifications, and a different name for the categories. Gooch describes this category as "ethical accommodation," that which is "concerned not with the truth or transmission of beliefs, but with *behavior*. 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" (Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 99 [emphasis mine]). Gooch places Paul in this category, and express the view that Paul has left Judaism and a Torah-defined way of life following his conversion to Christianity, in keeping with the prevailing views we have reviewed (107).

I do not find "ethical" helpful, since the behavior being described as duplicity is arguably not ethical but unethical, and "accommodation" has been used in ways that can confuse as much as clarify the issues, as his own discussion of the terminology demonstrates (Peter Richardson and Paul W. Gooch, "Accommodation Ethics," *TynBul* 29 [1978]: 89-93).

enjoined upon Jews by God, although he no longer shares that conviction. This policy obscures the fact that any Jews who valued Torah-observance enough for Paul to adopt it to gain their trust, would be, if they accepted his message, becoming members of a community characterized by the renunciation of Torah-faith, yet unbeknownst to them. It follows that if "converted," they too will adopt this chameleon-like expedient behavior thereafter on the same terms, i.e., only in order to trick other Jews. That creates a spiral of duplicity, with long-range deleterious results for their psychological and spiritual as well as social well-being should they remain "Christians" after finding out the truth.

In sharp contrast, one who adopts the lifestyle of another convinced of its superior value undertakes "*convictional adaptation*."<sup>36</sup> I am not aware of any interpretation of this passage that understands Paul to be describing convictional adaptation, and since he includes parties who uphold opposite propositional values, it would make little sense to do so.<sup>37</sup>

A third option for describing Paul's behavior is very different from either of the first two, focusing on his *argumentative* behavior, which can be undertaken without suggesting any adaptation of the lifestyles of others. Such "*rhetorical adaptability*" consists of varying one's speech to different audiences: reasoning from their premises, but not imitating their conduct in other ways.<sup>38</sup> In fact, to uphold the ideals to which the argument calls the audience, it is far more likely that the essential differences between the speaker's lifestyle and that of his or her audience are magnified.

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<sup>36</sup> Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 99, names this phenomenon "theological accommodation," and describes it as surrendering "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." According to Gooch, this could stretch from compromises on small matters of doctrine to achieve harmony to conversion to the doctrinal system of the other. I prefer to call this category *convictional adaptation*, because it is not merely imitating or mimicking the behavior of the target audience, but involves subscribing to their convictions for undertaking just such behavior, and not other kinds.

<sup>37</sup> The exception to this would be cases of non-doctrinal practices... [Augustine/Ambrose issue is discussed in Rome SBL version of this paper...] But this does not apply to our case, since the issue is Torah/not-Torah, rather than rival interpretations of some halakhic practices, each based on Torah.

<sup>38</sup> Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 99, describes this as "epistemological accommodation." Note that however unclear the parallel with language may be, Philo, QG 4.69, is about rhetorical behavior; cf. David Jacob Rudolph, "A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Selwyn College, University of Cambridge, 2006; forthcoming in revised version, Mohr Siebeck), 127-32).

This behavior arises when one seeks to express views in vocabulary and by way of models and examples that are calculated to persuade.<sup>39</sup> One thus works from the audiences' premises or world-views, even though seeking to lead them to a conclusion that is based on another set of premises or world-views. Teachers normally seek to relate to students in this way. It is highly useful for making a persuasive argument in any context, especially in philosophical or religious debates, including recruitment and discipleship, as well as for apologetical purposes.<sup>40</sup> That is just how Socrates approached his interlocutors, starting from their premises in a way calculated to lead them step by step to conclusions they had not foreseen and might otherwise be unwilling to accept. For example, in order to explain the relation between knowledge and action, Socrates begins by articulating common assumptions about pleasure (*Protagoras* 352ff.). In order to win his interlocutor to a new understanding of *aretē* that conflicts with the conventional usage, Socrates works his argument beginning from the conventional usage (*Meno*).<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, this approach approximates much more closely the topos of physicians and patients, of teachers and students, of parents and children, but highlights a very different dynamic with far-reaching implications for modeling the case. For regardless of how empathetically the instructor relates to the one he or she instructs, and regardless of the highest of motives at work, it is more likely that he or she will appeal to the *differences in their lifestyles* to exemplify or prove the value of the instruction being offered, rather than adopting the conduct of the student, which would often run contrary to the instructional objective.

I propose Paul's self-description here refers entirely to his evangelistic tactic of rhetorical adaptability, and did not include any level of lifestyle adaptability involving the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 99, this is when "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."

<sup>40</sup> Philo was troubled by the implications of anthropomorphisms in Scripture, in particular, that they could be exploited to argue that God had a body. He thus explained that God's "coming down" to meet people in their weak state in the various forms in terms of rhetorical adaptability: these expressed God's way of communicating with humans by words and revelations within the confines of their human limitations; see Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation," 205-8. Note also a pertinent rabbinic parallel in *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* 12.24-25 (trans. William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, pp. 223-4): "Moreover, said R. Jose bar R. Hanina, the Divine Word spoke to each and every person according to his particular capacity." Origen analogized God's condescension to that of philosophers toward youths just taking up the study, not bodily, but in terms of speech (Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation," 210).

<sup>41</sup> Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 104.

adoption of conduct representing his various audiences' convictional propositions.<sup>42</sup> He could undertake this argumentative tactic as a Jew faithfully observing Torah, even when speaking to lawless Jews, Jews upholding different halakhic standards, and non-Jews of any stripe. Thus Paul's behavior was free of the duplicitous conduct which serves as the basis for the charges of moral dishonesty, inconsistency, and so on, that arise logically from the prevailing views.

### Paul's Rhetorical Adaptability

In the midst of the discourse of chapters 8–10, in which 9:19-23 is embedded, Paul seeks to show his "knowledgeable" addressees in Corinth how he exemplifies the behavior to which he calls them.<sup>43</sup> The context for 9:20-23 begins with the comments in vv. 16-19, and illustrate

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<sup>42</sup> The appeal to rhetorical adaptability is not entirely unprecedented, but as far as I am aware it has always been coupled with lifestyle adaptability, and almost always with Paul as Torah-free as a matter of principle. Aspects have been noted in Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine. Knox, *St. Paul*, has been discussed; see also Henry Chadwick, "'All Things to All Men' (1 Cor. IX.22)," *NTS* 1 (1954-55), 275 (261-75); Idem, *The Enigma of St Paul* (London: University of London, The Athlone Press, 1969), 14; Idem, "St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria," in *History and Thought of the Early Church*, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982; Original: *BJRL* 48 [1965-66]), 297-98 (286-307); Richard Norman Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 244, addressing specifically pastoral rhetorical adaptability, 230-44, but he does not discuss Torah-observance, and the message of the monograph turns around freedom from Torah (see 153-55); Ellison, "Paul," 200, without caveat for speaking to Jews as a Torah-observant Jew (!), although not explaining how this works for the other referents (195-202); Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 94, 95 n. 57, 107, but see also 1, 105, 114; Günther Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 199 (194-207), but see 202-5 (194-207); Margaret Mary Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 248, interprets Paul to call them "to be accommodating of one another in all things, but especially in regard to meat-eating practices," although she says that in addition to "Paul's behavior" attention should also be "to the rhetorical strategy in Paul's call for accommodation here in 1 Cor" (emphasis hers); Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 240, 273, 327, but see 1, 258; Joop Smit, 'About the Idol Offerings': *Rhetoric, Social Context, and Theology of Paul's Discourse in First Corinthians 8:1--11:1* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 27; Leuven and Sterling, Va.: Peeters, 2000), 64-65; Stephen C. Barton, "'All Things to All People': Paul and the Law in the Light of 1 Corinthians 9.19-23," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2001), 280, but see 285 (271-85); C. Johnson Hodge, "If Sons, Then Heirs," 124-25; Rudolph, "A Jew to the Jews," 169-203, esp. 185-88, and see 130-32, maintains that Paul was Torah-observant. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 428 n. 36; and 432-33, and Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 105-17, specifically reject arguments in this direction.

<sup>43</sup> This approach to the purpose of chapter 9, to articulate how Paul embodies what he calls for the knowledgeable to do in chapter 8, rather than supposing it to be in the first instance a defense against charges brought against his apostleship by opponents, can be traced to at least Chrysostom, *Homily XXI*, in Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series. Vol. XII. Chrysostom: Corinthians*, 118, 129. Wendell

Paul's tactic for convincing those who do not believe in Christ of the gospel message. He explains that this expresses a specific choice that he makes to be "enslaved" to all people without receiving payment for his proclamation of the gospel, even though theoretically free to choose to do otherwise, and therefore he expects to be rewarded.<sup>44</sup>

Earlier in the letter Paul explained how his instruction is limited by his audience's condition as "fleshly" or immature versus the way he would prefer to inform them as "spiritual" or mature (3:1). That this does not indicate Paul behaved in a fleshly or immature manner beyond the way he adapted his speech to them is readily evident to commentators. That is also how teachers adapt their speech to students at various levels, how parents adapt their speech to children at various levels (even baby talking), and so on. But specifically in view is speech behavior, how one relates to others discursively, not how one behaves in terms of conducting themselves like students, or children. The teacher or parent wants the students or children to recognize the very different behavior of the teacher or parent; they seek to provoke emulation, not confirmation of an immature status quo (cf. 4:8-17).

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Willis, "An Apostolic Apologia? The Form and Function of 1 Corinthians 9," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 33-48; Mitchell, *Paul*, 243-50, for detailed discussions. Note that throughout the letter epistolary terms that relate to a discourse on adaptability are also attested: "*symphoros* (benefit, advantage), *euschemon* (proper, good order), and *kalos* (good, useful; 5:12; 7:1, 8, 26, 35, 37, 38; cf. 10:23; 12:7)" (Clarence E. Glad, "Paul and Adaptability," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 31 (17-41). Barbara Hall, "All Things to All People: A Study of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John In Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 141-42 (137-57), links Paul's example of himself in ch. 9 to the behavior he calls for the knowledgeable to observe in the idol food discussion of chapters 8 and 10. Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 78, observes that chapter 9 "functions primarily as an example for the behavior advocated in chapters 8 and 10 (giving up one's privileges for someone else's sake)." See also Chadwick, "All Things," 268; Harry P. Nasuti, "The Woes of the Prophets and the Rights of the Apostle: The Internal Dynamics of 1 Corinthians 9," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 246-64; Peter David Gooch, *Dangerous Food: I Corinthians 8-10 in its Context* (SCJ 5; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993), 83-84; Anders Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (CBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1998), 148-53, 154-73; Victor Paul Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23-24; David E. Garland, "The Dispute Over Food Sacrificed to Idols (1 Cor 8:1--11:1)," *PrST* 30.2 (2003): 185-97 (173-97); Smit, 'About the Idol Offerings,' 64-65, 84-85, 153-54; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 115-17.

<sup>44</sup> If confronting works-righteousness was as central to Paul as the traditional interpretations require, it is surprising that he is willing to admit to being rewarded for his choices and labor, as he does here, seemingly without caveat that the idea of earning something from God is anathema according to his most important theological teaching.

In chapters 8–10, Paul's instructions to the knowledgeable to make lifestyle changes—in keeping with Christ-faith values, including learning to live in ways that take into consideration the best interests of others—actually exemplify Paul's rhetorical adaptability. Paul's "becoming" can be explained by examining the way that he relates to the "knowledgeable" at Corinth in this argument by becoming knowledgeable rhetorically.<sup>45</sup> Although he disagrees with their thinking and approach, he tries to persuade them from their own premises. Paul does not eat like them (or how they propose to eat), or behave like them (or how they propose to behave), but his argument is based on their own premises (and proposals), at least at the start, in order to lead them to an entirely different set of premises in keeping with Scripture, and a different way of living than their own reasoning had led them to suppose followed from the renunciation of idols.<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding that Paul was probably citing sayings of the knowledgeable in vv. 1 and 4, rather than declaring his own point of view, he moves on to state the contradictory proposition that *not everyone* knows what they suppose to be self-evident now in vv. 7ff. And in chapter 9, Paul illustrates his very different lifestyle, including his rhetorical adaptability, to demonstrate the lifestyle they should now imitate. Although Paul does not explicitly call the Corinthians to proclaim the gospel to their families

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Richard Horsley, *Wisdom and Spiritual Transcendence at Corinth: Studies in First Corinthians* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2008) 86-88 ["Gnosis in Corinth?"].

<sup>46</sup> One of the interesting things about this argument in 1 Corinthians 8–10 is that it was necessary for Paul to make it. It appears that when he taught among them he did not anticipate where their logic would lead, in the very unjewish direction of supposing that because of renouncing the reality of the gods to which idol rites were devoted they were thus free to eat idol food or even participate in idol rites. They probably reasoned that this demonstrated that they regarded idols as merely profane, and also maintained the relationships that complete avoidance of such rites and food or meals would compromise if not destroy, with deleterious results for themselves. If Paul had anticipated this line of reasoning, it would seem that this exchange would not arise, or he would approach it by appeal to his earlier teaching among them. As a Jew, he would reason and likely suppose any Christ-believer would thus reason that regardless of the proposition that these were not gods as non-Jews supposed, that these gods and the rites and thus food dedicated to them were nevertheless anathema for worshippers of the God of Israel as the only God. Thus even when Jews trivialized idols, they refrained from anything having to do with idolatry. As Paul represents the issue of marketplace food, the food is not designated idol food, but is rather assumed to be profane unless known to be otherwise (announcing this option implies that there was food available there that was not idolatrous; likewise it could be available at the home to which one might be invited). Rabbinic material is replete with discussions of the difference between interaction with things sold or used by idolaters and those which are specifically set apart to idols, the latter forbidden, while the former often permitted (cf. *m.Aboda Zara* 1.4-5; 2.3; 3.4; 4.3-6; 5.1; see Tomson, *Paul*, 151-77, 208-20; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 39-81, 152-64, 300-1; Smit, 'About the Idol Offerings,' 52-58, 65, *passim*; Magnus Zetterholm, "Purity and Anger: Gentiles and Idolatry in Antioch," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* (2005): 15 (1-24); Rudolph, "A Jew to the Jews," 97-104; Nanos, "Polytheist Identity," 179-210.

and neighbors as much as to seek to live with respect to one another, he does call them to imitate his lifestyle in order to gain others in 10:31–11:1, and elsewhere throughout the letter (e.g., 7:16; 10:24, 27–30; 14:22–25).<sup>47</sup> This brings up an interesting topic.

I join those who understand Paul to be explicitly describing his evangelizing tactics in 9:19–23, and my interpretation of the identity of the "weak" throughout these chapters as non-Christ believing idolaters strengthens that case,<sup>48</sup> nevertheless, it would be surprising if Paul did not exemplify this rhetorical tactic in his pastoral approach to these Christ-believers.<sup>49</sup> In his argument throughout chapters 8 to 10, Paul does not become knowledgeable to the knowledgeable in the sense of lifestyle adaptability, but his rhetorical adaptation to the premises of the knowledgeable is based on empathy toward the weak as well as communicating this empathy to the knowledgeable. He calls the knowledgeable to change their lifestyle, to be sure, something he does not describe seeking among the recipients of his evangelistic tactics in 9:16–23. Paul also explains how he adapts his own lifestyle to accomplish various goals throughout chapter 9; but it is important to notice that he does not write that he mimics the behavior of others. Quite the contrary, he claims to do many things very differently than others do, including other apostles, in order to succeed in ways that he believes would be compromised otherwise, or less effective, or less able to gain him reward.

When engaging in pastoral adaptability, Paul relates to the knowledgeable from their premises at the beginning of his argument as well. He reasons from first principles that there is only one God and thus that idols are nobodies (8:4–6), and therefore the food offered to them can be eaten as profane (8:8; 10:19, 23, 25–26). But he grants this line of argument only in

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<sup>47</sup> For more discussion of the specifically polytheist orientation of the letter's message, see Nanos, "Polytheist Identity," esp. 203–9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–97, 200–2.

<sup>49</sup> Paul approaching his addressees from their premises is evident throughout the letter, representing pastoral rather than evangelistic oriented rhetorical adaptability. Chadwick, "All Things," 268, 275; *Idem*, *Enigma of Paul*, 12, 14, notes that 1 Cor 7:1–6 similarly begins by hypothetical agreement in principle that it is good for a man not to touch a woman, but moves to a different conclusion that the wife controls whether that is good or not for the husband; R. Longenecker, *Paul*, 230–44; Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 114, observes that Paul does demonstrate epistemological accommodation in this letter: "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," and although he includes examples of ethical accommodation based on interpretations of passages with which I disagree, he also notes: "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." Cf. Peter Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 83–84, 93; Smit, 64–65, 84, 153–54; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 115–17.

theory—even undermining it in the way it is first stated, for he includes the caveat that "*there are many gods and many lords*" (8:5)—thereafter seeking to lead them to a very different conclusion. For he explains that there are those who believe in these idols who will be encouraged to continue to believe in them rather than coming to know what the knowledgeable know (vv. 7-13), and that there are such things as daemons represented by these idols (10:19-22). Thus they are not to eat any food known to be dedicated to idols, just as Jews, who do not believe idols represent gods never the less do not eat idol food as if profane, but flee from anything that is associated with idolatry, or pay the price for not doing so (10:1-23). In the end, the only food that can be eaten is food that they do not know to be idol related, and even if they are guests and informed that certain food has been offered to idols previously, they are not to eat it (10:14-33).

Paul thus moves them from non-Jewish premises, since they are not Jews, to very Jewish conclusions, since they are Christ-believers, which represents a Jewish (communal, philosophical, religious, moral, etc.) way of being in the world—even for non-Jews. Paul leads these non-Jews to the same conclusions to which he would lead them if he was addressing Jews, arguing many of the same essential points (that God is One, that they must love their neighbor, that they cannot eat idol food if known to be such, that idols represent daemons, that Scripture teaches these things<sup>50</sup>), and incorporating allusions to Torah, as in the rhetorical question of 10:22: "Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" In this way, Paul has become like a non-Jew—rhetorically speaking, that is. If his addressees had been instead Jews, then I propose that we would have seen Paul appeal directly to Torah to discuss this matter, rather than begin with first principles or consideration of the other's sensibilities, or to the mere example of Israelites. We would have seen him instead becoming like a Jew, rhetorically, which would have been quite natural for him, since he was a Jew. Let us explore this matter in more detail.

### ***The Issue of "Becoming Like"***

One of the interesting facets of the prevailing lifestyle adaptability viewpoint is that it is supposed to be a straightforward explanation of Paul's tactic of how he "became as/like

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 95:5 LXX; 106:37; Isa 65:3, 11.

[ἐγενόμην...ὥς]" the other, or in the case of the "weak," simply that he "became" weak.<sup>51</sup> But "becoming as" (and all the more "becoming") someone from some group according to their relationship to Torah or law are not lexical equivalents to the notions expressed by the prevailing lifestyle adaptability interpretation. For "imitating," "mimicking," "pretending to be," "aping," and so on, are actually descriptions of merely adopting the outward behavioral conduct of the other, but not at the propositional level that behavior is designed to express. Thus the prevailing views are not based on what Paul has written, which is not a general case, but specific, and revolves around the contrary behaviors to be expected among each of the referents named. Paul is not understood to have actually "become like" each of them, although this logical problem does not seem to be generally recognized.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In short, this strikes me to be just another example of Paul's elliptical style and variation of language probably to be brief and get the readers/hearers attention, and thus that the missing ὥς should be understood to be implied, although it does not really effect my argument. Note too that the verb ἐγενόμην is missing for two of the four referents, but it is implied. See further discussion under referents.

<sup>52</sup> Pace Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 105-17. Although I appreciate the argument against interpretations that seek to protect Paul's integrity, on 111, after he concludes that Paul's "becoming like" signifies eating or otherwise behaving like each of the groups; nevertheless, Given's interpretation does not represent "the realm of being" rather than "that of seeming" anymore than do the viewpoints he criticizes (Glad in particular). On 112, Given uses "appearing as" synonymously with "becoming like." At the same time, I do not think that Given's reading need be far from the one I propose, if dropping *acting* like but keeping *speaking* like, for on 117 he concludes that Paul shapes his "insinuating rhetorical strategy similar to that imagined by Luke with respect to Jews and Gentiles." Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 104-5, also argues that, "He [Paul] does not say he adopted the language of those within law or outside of 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" (emphasis his). But Gooch is interpreting "becoming" in a certain way, as "behaving." That "becoming as" does not equate to ethical accommodation in behavior as in mimicking others is not apparently noticed. Since Paul cannot become opposites at the propositional level, i.e., he cannot observe Torah as a matter of covenant conviction and also discard Torah as a covenantal incumbent behavioral norm because he is with a different audience, for Torah by definition involves a way of life that maintains different behavior in the midst of the other nations to bear witness to God's righteousness. Paul can but only "mimic" their behavior in the way that Gooch, with the consensus, proposes, and thus is translating "becoming" into "mimicking" without an argument that this is what Paul must mean by it. There is no proof that Paul ever, e.g., ate like an idolater, or alternatively, that he ever ate contrary to Torah defined dietary norms. I am proposing herein that what Paul is doing in 1 Cor 8–10 is an example of the Socratic epistemology that he is in 9:19-23 identifying as his tactic. Glad, *Paul*, 259-60, reads this as "Paul's willingness to *associate* with all" (emphasis added).

For example, interpreters do not read Paul to mean he actually *became* "under law," however defined (e.g., a proselyte),<sup>53</sup> or "lawless," which if read as "wicked," to be discussed, is even more difficult to imagine than that he *became* a Jew. This last case, taken literally, would mean that Paul was not already a Jew, which he claims to have been, and still to be. Although many interpreters may work with the notion that Paul left behind Judaism and thus being a Jew in a religious sense, few claim that he left behind his ethnic identity as a Jew—albeit now defining him to be a "Christian," however described or labeled—even if it is not unusual to see perplexed references to this conundrum, as already encountered. Thus interpreters actually read this to connote that Paul *behaved* like a Jew, referring to *playing at* or *mimicking* or *pretending to* Jewish behavior, although not subscribing to the values of that Jewish behavior as a matter of conviction, of faith, of loyalty to Torah. Similarly, when Paul describes in his own case being "*enslaved to*" everyone, interpreters do not suppose that Paul is an actual slave to the other, but he says he becomes one. It is not literal slavery, but signifies that he puts the concerns of the other above his own, that he serves them instead of himself. He is "like" a slave, which connotes his empathetic concern for the other.

In short, when Paul writes *behaved like*, his denotation is read with the connotation of *mimicked the behavior of*, because it defies logic that he *became* each of these contrary identities. In other words, short of postulating the unimaginable model of convictional adaptability, to actually coming over to another's way of life because one believes what the other believes, every interpreter has to fill out what Paul means by "I became," or "I caused myself to *become*," if the causative quality of the middle voice of this verb is emphasized.

Thus the prevailing interpretations of this passage are based on supposed connotations, but not denotation. And they have as central to their adoption of the lifestyle adaptability model the presupposition that Paul does not observe Torah, certainly not as a matter of covenant fidelity. As I have explained—and as the many problems that emerge not only from Christian interpreters but also from non-Christian critics of the prevailing lifestyle adaptability view, as well as the defenses offered to those criticisms makes obvious—there is good reason to consider another model, that of rhetorical adaptability.

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<sup>53</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily XXII.5*, in Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series. Vol. XII. Chrysostom: Corinthians*, 128.

I propose that instead of "behaving like" according to the model of lifestyle adaptability, this language signifies how Paul *reasons like* and *relates* his convictions *like*, how he *engages like*, how he rhetorically meets people where they are, according to their own world views and premises. Paul *reasons with*, *relates to*, or *engages* Jews as (if he was) or like (in the manner of) a Jew, and so on. In this rhetorical, discursive sense Paul could actually *become like*—or even *become—everything to everyone*.

Interestingly, we have an example of Paul engaging in rhetorical adaptability by his earliest known biographer in Acts 17, regardless of whether this case accurately describes an historical event. It not only illustrates rhetorical adaptability in principle, but also that the author presumed it would be a persuasive example for his audience.

### ***An Example of Paul's Rhetorical Adaptability from Acts 17***

In Acts 17:17-31, Luke relates the story of Paul's proclamation of the One God and Christ in Athens. Paul does not start with a denial of the reality of the gods in which the philosophers and other elites gathered at the Areopagus believe, although he does eventually criticize the effort to make representations of the divine. Like a philosopher relating to fellow philosophers, he begins by recognizing them to be "very religious [δαιοδαιμονεστέρους]."<sup>54</sup>

Paul argues from within their propositional world-view towards declaring that the idol they have designated "To an Unknown God [ἄγνωστον θεῶν]," need no longer remain unknown to them. He does not introduce a new god, which is a function of the judiciary meetings held at the Areopagus, but discloses the identity of the One true God in whom they should logically already believe.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Paul is described to say that which the Athenians worship is done "without knowledge/ in ignorance [ἀγνοοῦντες]" (v. 23); he also refers to the "times of ignorance [χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας]" that his gospel declaration proposes to bring to an end (v.

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<sup>54</sup> This can be translated also "superstitious," and arguably the speech plays with this ambiguity throughout, but here likely in language that the audience would hear in positive terms, to be expected in an introduction, although recognized to have a negative twist by Luke's Christ-believing reader: see Hans Conzelmann, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus," in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 220; Given, *True Rhetoric*, 68-74, discusses the double, ironic language choices through this section.

<sup>55</sup> Lynn Allan Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religion in Acts* (Library of New Testament studies 277; London and New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 83-93, discusses the possibility that Paul draws on an allusion to Aeschylus' *Eumenides* here. See also David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, eds., *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (Book of Acts in its First Century Setting; Grand Rapids, Mich., and Carlisle, U.K.: Eerdmans and Paternoster Press, 1994), 446-48.

30). Paul draws on Scriptural concepts throughout his speech, and could have offered many proof-texts for his argumentative points. But Paul does not cite any Scriptures. Rather, the only explicit citations he incorporates include the inscription to the unknown deity on the altar, and a line from "some of your own poets": τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν ("for we also are his offspring"; v. 28).<sup>56</sup>

I submit that Luke's example represents the rhetorical strategy of "I became (i.e., reasoned) to the idolaters as [if I was] an idolater." Paul related his message to them—inclusive of challenges to their concepts, conclusions, and behavior—from within their own premises, in order to gain them to Christ.

This example from Acts was similarly drawn upon to interpret 1 Cor 9:19-23 by Origen and Chrysostom, *mutatis mutandis*, that is, granting that they were not seeking to make the overarching case that I propose for rhetorical in sharp contrast to lifestyle adaptability, and they interpreted Paul to be free of Torah as a matter of policy, indeed, to be free of Judaism. Nevertheless, Origen referred to the example in Acts 17:23, 28, to explain how Paul adapted his speech "to the lawless" by becoming "lawless": Paul "did not use either prophetic or halakhic terms, but if he had a memory of some Greek learning from his preparatory instruction he spoke about it to the Athenians," and he did not uphold that Paul behaved lawlessly in doing so.<sup>57</sup> In addition, Origen provided examples for two of the other referents in terms of adaptability, one rhetorical and the other lifestyle: he spoke to the weak as weak in 1 Cor 7:6; and behaved as a Jew when circumcising Timothy because of the Jews (Acts 16:3), and taking the Nazarite vow (Acts 21).<sup>58</sup> Commenting on 9:21, Chrysostom notes that others before him had already made the point: "But some say that he hints at his discourse with the Athenians from the inscription on the altar, and that so he saith, 'to them that are without law, as

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<sup>56</sup> Apparently from the Cretan poet Epimenides, and Paul's usage perhaps draws on criticism of some Cretans pointing to a tomb for Zeus to undermine his immortality, so that Paul may be playing off of a commonly known dispute about whether a statue undermines the reality of the deity to which it is built to point: Kirsopp Lake, "Your Own Poets": Note XX," in *The Acts of the Apostles: Part 1, Vol. 5* (ed. Kirsopp Lake and Henry Joel Cadbury; *The Beginnings of Christianity*; London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1920), 246-51; F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd revised and enlarged ed.; Grand Rapids, MI and Leicester, GB: Eerdmans and Apollos, 1990), 384-85.

<sup>57</sup> *Comm. in 1 Cor.* 3.43 (emphasis mine), ed. C. Jenkins, "Origen on 1 Corinthians," *JTS* 9 (1907-8): 231-47, 353-72, 500-14), 513; cited by Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation," 208.

<sup>58</sup> Origen apparently did not provide an example of becoming under law to those under law, which he took to mean non-Jews who placed themselves under law, but he was sure there were examples; from *Ibid.*, 306 n. 58, referring to SC 157.400-2.

without law."<sup>59</sup> He concludes that in Athens Paul "was speaking to pagan Greeks, who believed in none of our sacred books, and so he used arguments from their own beliefs to subdue them."<sup>60</sup>

An example of Paul's rhetorical adaptability in terms of becoming to Jews as a Jew is illustrated just prior to his arrival in Athens among the idolaters. In Acts 17:1-3, Paul is described proceeding immediately to the synagogue upon his arrival in Thessalonica:

<sup>1</sup>After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days *argued* with them *from the scriptures*, <sup>3</sup>*explaining* and *proving* that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you." (NRSV, emphasis mine)

Such an argument would have made little to no sense to non-Jews, for example, among the philosophers at the Areopagus. He would have to describe why he appealed to Scripture as proof, what a messiah is or why that should be of concern to them, especially his suffering and rising from the dead. And that is just the point that Luke makes about the problems that emerge for Paul among the philosophers. For even though these Jewish premises are not the place from which Luke portrays Paul to begin his argument with the philosophers, as already discussed, these are nevertheless the kinds of topics to which his speech drives, even if Luke also describes the results encumbered by this propositional gap. The philosophers are puzzled by some of his premises, and elements of the conclusions to which he seeks to move them. Paul does not make as clear a case for the relevance of these matters as he can among Jews, because he (or Luke) is unaware of adequate analogies from their non-Jewish culture, or do not know how to prepare an argument that will effectively bridge the cultural divide between them.

Thus in two almost immediately concurrent examples, the author of Acts offers two examples of variability in terms of the rhetorical adaptability model. And note that in the case of the synagogue example, Luke presents this to be "his custom" to argue in this manner at

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<sup>59</sup> *Homily XXII.5*, in Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series. Vol. XII. Chrysostom: Corinthians*, 128.

<sup>60</sup> *Adv. Jud.* 5.3.2; translation from Paul W. Harkins, *Saint John Chrysostom: Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* (The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 68; Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 1979), 105; see also Chrysostom's comments on speaking to Jews differently, in *Adv. Jud.* 5.3.3.

Sabbath meetings (17:10-12 continues this pattern in Beroea, and in v. 17, it is implied that he argues thus in the synagogues of Athens, but not the way he is shown to argue in the marketplace with the philosophers; and immediately after Athens, it is the way Paul is presented to proceed in the synagogue of Corinth in 18:4-5, and throughout ch. 18 as he moves from place to place).<sup>61</sup>

Luke's example of rhetorical adaptability among philosophers seeking to win each other to their positions or schools is not the only example of the discussion or presentation of this model among Paul's contemporaries.

### ***Antisthenes on Odysseus as Polytrope***

The tactic Paul describes can be compared to that of Odysseus as interpreted by Antisthenes, a student of Socrates several centuries before Paul's time. The similarities are not exact, and there is a tendency in the discussions of Homer's passage on Odysseus to blur the lines between lifestyle and rhetorical adaptability just as arises in discussion of Paul's passage, where I am trying to draw a sharp line between these models for the sake of clarifying what I propose Paul meant. Moreover, the few interpreters discussing this parallel (of whom I am aware), conclude that Antisthenes' Odysseus model stands in contrast to Paul's message; but that is largely based on their view of Paul's language in the direction of the consensus lifestyle adaptability model, including that he was indifferent to Torah, if not opposed to it in principle.<sup>62</sup> From the perspective I propose the dynamics are much more suggestive of similarity, although the frequent blending with topos such as that of the physician to patient, which are not the same as patient to patient, and discussions of motives rather than simply tactics, lead to an examination that must be carefully nuanced and critical of every example discussed.

The simplest way to interpret the opening line of the *Odyssey*, "Tell me, Muse, of the *polytropic* man," is to signify that he will wander on his journey home rather than taking a

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A new Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 41-74.

<sup>62</sup> For application to Paul, from which I learned much, albeit taken to somewhat different conclusions, see W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1992), 91; Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 100, 118-19 (91-119); Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 97-98, 251, 272-73; David Reis, "Flip-Flop?: John Chrysostom's Polytropic Paul," *JGRChJ* 4 (2007) <[http://jgrchj.net/volume4/JGRChJ4-1\\_Reis.pdf](http://jgrchj.net/volume4/JGRChJ4-1_Reis.pdf)> accessed September 7, 2007, 17-23 (9-31).

direct course.<sup>63</sup> By the fifth century BCE, the image of Odysseus had taken on the negative ethical connotation of "often changing one's character, hence unstable, unprincipled, unscrupulous," a chameleon-like quality that moralists condemned among party politicians of the period.<sup>64</sup> After all, with Odysseus, the innovator of the Trojan horse and many other cunning disguises, it does not take much to get to a model of lifestyle adaptability in the negative sense of duplicity and expedience over principle, and this had been the subject of philosophical discussion for some time.<sup>65</sup> Already Achilles had declared the moral depravity of the man who compromises his character for expedience: "For hateful in my eyes as the gates of Hades is that man who hides one thing in his mind and says another" (*Iliad* 9.312-13; trans. Murray and Wyatt). Many Athenians found fault with Odysseus and Homer, especially in the context of the stricter ideals of morality and truth following from Pythagoras and Xenophanes versus the style of the Sophists, who were unscrupulous to achieve their ends, since this kind of model was used to justify political exploitation by those who relished self-aggrandizement and ambition over truth, and debased moral values along the way, just as they did the Athenian coinage, according to Thucydides.<sup>66</sup> Political victory became associated with the immoral expedience, to success at all costs, and thus, with Homer's trickster hero.<sup>67</sup> The Sophists, ironically, were also critical of Odysseus's character, including his clever use of language.<sup>68</sup>

Antisthenes countered this interpretive tradition with a controversial reading of Odysseus according to the model of rhetorical adaptability. It stands in stark contrast to the prevailing readings, which were based on the model of lifestyle adaptability:

And what then? Are we perhaps to believe that Odysseus is wicked because he is called *polytropos*? Nevertheless, the poet has called him that at a point where he is thought wise (*sophos*). Perhaps, in fact, the word *tropos* is not applied to moral character (*ethos*), as much as to his skill in speaking (*logou khresis*)? One is called *eutropos* if one has a moral character that is "turned" (*tetrammenon*) toward the good, and in discourse *tropoi* are called diverse styles (*hai*

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<sup>63</sup> Porphyry's scholion on *Odysseus* 1.1, begins the epic with Homer's request: "Tell me, Muse, of the man of many devices [πολύτροπον]...."

<sup>64</sup> Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, 99.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-99.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-1.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96, 146.

*poi ai plaseis*). Homer has also adopted the word *tropos* with regard to the voice and variety of melodies, as in the case of the nightingale: "... changing (*troposa*) it over and over again, she pours forth her many-toned voice" (Odyssey 19.521). Therefore, if wise men are skilled in speaking and know how to express the same thought in many ways (*kata pollous tropous*), those who know many ways of expression concerning the same thing can rightly be called *polutropoi*. The wise men are therefore also excellent men (*hoi sophoi kai agathoi eisin*). For this reason Homer bestows upon Odysseus, as a wise man, the epithet *polutropos*: because he can speak with men in many ways. So it is also said that Pythagoras, having been invited to speak with children, used the language of children; in speaking with women, the language appropriate to women, in speaking with rulers, the language of rulers; in speaking with youths the language of youths. For it is a mark of wisdom to discover a form of wisdom appropriate to each person, and a mark of ignorance to use only one form (*monotropo*) of speech with dissimilar people. This is a specialty which also belongs to medicine, in a case that is well treated. For the care of the ill ought to be *polutropos*, because of various predispositions of the cured. *Tropos* is therefore that which changes, that which is variable in the human spirit. The multiplicity of the ways of speaking (*polutropia logou*) and the use of varied speech for various ears becomes a single type (*monotropia*) of speech. For one thing is appropriate for each person. Thus, that which is adapted to each person reduces variety of speech to one thing—that which is suitable for each person. But that which is uniform and unadapted to different ears renders a speech (which is rejected by many) *polutropos*, because it has been rejected by them.<sup>69</sup>

Antisthenes begins his appeal by reference to the fact that the context of Homer's language usage calls for a challenge to the prevailing interpretation of it because of the logical inconsistency it creates between Odysseus' words and the moral character of Odysseus that Homer is otherwise seeking to communicate, which sets up a very close parallel to the problem under discussion about Paul's language. Antisthenes thus argued that this description of Odysseus exemplified rhetorical rather than lifestyle adaptability.<sup>70</sup> *Polytropos* does not refer to Odysseus adapting his lifestyle in duplicitous ways, with the concomitant ethical problems of the lifestyle model, but to Odysseus as the example of the virtuous man who adapted his figures

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<sup>69</sup> *Antisthenis Fragmenta* 51 (Fernanda Declava Caizzi [ed.], [Milan: Instituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1966], 43; translation by Augusto Rostagni, "A New Chapter in the History of Rhetoric and Sophistry," in *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis* (ed. Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin; trans. Phillip Sipiora; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 25-26 (23-48)(underline emphasis mine).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, 99; Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 272.

of speech ("tropes") to his various audiences ("poly") in order to persuade each of them in terms to which they could relate. He linked Odysseus' adaptability to that which was exemplified and taught by the austere Pythagoras, famed for his commitment to moral fidelity and truth, but who never the less recommended rhetorical adaptation to one's various audiences: the right word for the right person at the right time is the way of the wise.<sup>71</sup> The concern to match different verbal styles of rhetorical presentation to suit different character types to enhance persuasion became a focus of rhetorical theorists seeking to match various speaking styles to different famous orators.<sup>72</sup>

Antisthenes and his Odysseus became the heroes and models for the Cynics and Stoics—or the heroes and models to oppose—including in the matter of rhetorical adaptability.<sup>73</sup> Diogenes Laertius writes that "of all the Socratics Antisthenes alone is praised by Theopompus, who says he had consummate skill and could by means of agreeable discourse win over whomsoever he pleased" (6.14; trans. Hicks). And Dio Chrysostom maintained that the philosopher must teach "sometimes by persuasion and exhortation, at other times by abuse and reproach, [hoping] he may rescue some from folly...taking them on one side on their own but also admonishing them together, whenever the opportunity arises, with gentle words at times, [and] at other [times] harsh" (*Or.* 77/78.35-38).<sup>74</sup>

There is not space here to develop the topic, and I do not propose Odysseus to be a perfect analogy for Paul. But the tradition for reading Odysseus in terms of *rhetorical* adaptability is suggestive and parallels my own effort to read Paul here, *mutatis mutandis*. It

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<sup>71</sup> Rostagni, "New Chapter," 30-31.

<sup>72</sup> Nancy Baker Worman, *The Cast of Character: Style in Greek Literature* (1st ed.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 33.

<sup>73</sup> Diogenes was famous for "a wonderful gift of persuasion, so that he could vanquish anyone he liked in argument" (*Diog. Laertius* 6.75-76; Loeb). Crates became famous for *philanthrōpia*, nicknamed "the Door Opener"—the caller to whom all doors fly open—from his habit of entering every house and admonishing those within" (*Diog. Laertius* 6.86; Loeb). In an epigram echoing funerary epithets, Meleager expressed his cosmopolitan variability, bidding each in their own language: "Be you Phoenician, *naidios!* Be you Syrian, I bid you *salam!* Be you Greek, *chaire!* – and you respond in kind" (*Anth. Gr.* 7.419.7-8; Menahem Luz, "Salam, Meleager!," *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 6 (1988): 222-31). Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 35-48, 95-119, discusses the conflicting views of Odysseus among Cynics, which has to do with a range from more rigorous to less so kinds of Cynics, whether he was the father of Cynicism or not. The cloak is an issue, he wore it once, versus Diogenes, who wore it all the time, etc., so that Diogenes is upheld as father by the more rigorous such as Ps.-Crates and Ps.-Diogenes. Rigorous Cynics rejected his adaptability of speech (109-12). Stoics celebrated Odysseus as an example of virtue and wisdom, sensible, in control his passions, adaptable, courteous, and affable to everyone in his every word (cf. Cicero, *De Off* 1.113-14).

<sup>74</sup> Citation from Reis, "Flip-Flop?," 16.

certainly legitimates the direction of this challenge to the prevailing view, which proceeds to read Paul's language here as if self-evidently bearing witness to a variation of *lifestyle*, just as did the prevailing interpretation of Odysseus. Quite unlike the clever "Nobody" of many disguises, I submit that Paul was easily recognizable as somebody Torah-observant and willing to suffer misunderstanding and much more to announce a controversial if not dangerous interpretation of his nation's ruler as the savior of the world. At the same time, and in keeping with the universal aspirations of that message, like one enslaved to ply the wine-dark seas, Paul cleverly turned every phrase in every way he could to make it intelligible to everybody.

Paul need not be a student of Homer or aware of this debate to practice rhetorical adaptability, or to expect his readers to understand him to be describing that behavior here. Nevertheless, Paul and his audiences were products of a Greco-Roman culture in which debates about adaptability were lively, and included the topics of rhetorical versus lifestyle and the ethical consequences thereof, witnessed in the works of Philo, Plutarch, Maximus of Tyre, Philodemus, Horace, Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus, and Lucian, among others.<sup>75</sup> And it is perhaps relevant that in verses 24-27, immediately following our passage, Paul's competitive metaphors resemble those closely associated with Antisthenes and the Cynics, and there are many other similarities throughout the Corinthian correspondence.<sup>76</sup> Abraham Malherbe goes so far as to suggest that Paul may have thought of himself within the Antisthenic model.<sup>77</sup> That

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<sup>75</sup> Glad, "Paul and Adaptability," 21-22, 26, 28-29. idem, *Paul and Philodemus*, 273, notes that "By Paul's time versatility and charges of cunning focused both on behavior and speech; one could adapt both by conforming to different manners as well as being discriminating in speech. Discrimination in speech is already seen in Pythagoras' practice of teaching his disciples to speak to children in childlike terms, to women in womenlike terms. Such concerns are also present in the moralists' focus on character portrayal. Because of this, and in light of the intricate connection between the philosopher's *sxēma* and *logos*, we should be careful not to focus solely on adaptation in behavior when explicating Paul's statements on adaptability." See also Reis, "Flip-Flop?," 10-12.

<sup>76</sup> The similarities can be multiplied: There are similarities in word usage and conceptually. One to investigate is the philosophical level Antisthenes is here drawing on, which involves a Pythagorean tradition focused on the right word for each circumstance, which varies, and given that Paul is engaged in explaining the variable of the theoretical "good" in terms of food and eating, given variable factors and social circumstances, it may be productive to consider this topic at work in Paul's approach to his audience in Corinth.

<sup>77</sup> Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 118-19; cf. Hermann Funke in "Antisthenes bei Paulus" *Hermes* 98 (1970): 459-71); William D. Desmond, *Cynics* (Ancient Philosophies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 106-7.

Odysseus is portrayed as the wise man who plays the fool, which is how Paul also describes himself in this letter, may also suggest further comparisons at work.<sup>78</sup>

The tradition of interpreting Odysseus in terms of rhetorical rather than lifestyle adaptability represents a minority position, to be sure.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, whether it accurately characterizes Odysseus as Homer and the Homeric tradition intended remains an open question. But the tradition bears witness to a deep awareness of the moral problems which arose from the prevailing interpretations of the great-hearted sacker of cities as a morally compromised chameleon who expediently disguised his true convictions by mimicking the lifestyle of different people in order to gain victory when he might otherwise risk failure—and thus the place for challenging that interpretation in terms of rhetorical adaptability. Surprisingly, that stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing tradition of interpreting Paul's language in 1 Cor 9:19-23 solely in terms of lifestyle adaptability, modified occasionally by the addition of rhetorical adaptability, even though it yields morally reprehensible results for Paul's character, significantly effects the interpretation of other texts, and plays a profound role in larger constructions of Paul, and thus Christianity.

### **Some Problems Resulting from the Prevailing Interpretation that this Rhetorical Adaptability Reading Avoids, Solves, or Further Problematizes, and Some Challenges that it Presents**

#### ***1. Lexical/Exegetical issues:***

**A. Evaluating this passage.** The primary issue is how to interpret ἐγενόμην... ὡς ("I became like"). Paul did not "become" or "become like" any of these referents literally, that is, according to the convictional adaptability model.<sup>80</sup> Thus all exegetical approaches must offer an interpretation and implicit if not explicit translation substitute for this verbal phrase.

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. L. L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1-4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition* (Early Christianity in Context; London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 149-50.

<sup>79</sup> Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*; Luis E. Navia, *Antisthenes of Athens: Setting the World Aright* (Contributions in philosophy 80; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 39-52.

<sup>80</sup> Paul *does* actually become like those *xōris nomos* on the prevailing views, but that requires reading *anomos* as *xōris nomos*, another exegetical decision that is suspect; discussion below.

**Lifestyle** = "live like/as/in the manner of" as in "conduct like/as/in the manner of."

Thus Paul cannot be Torah observant consistently or as a matter of covenant fidelity; Paul and his communities represent a new non-Judaism movement.<sup>81</sup>

**Rhetorical** = "reason/argue like/as/in the manner of," or amplified, "reason/argue (from the premises of) like/as/in the manner of," or "reason/argue (for truth claims) like/as/in the manner of." Paul can be Torah observant consistently and as a matter of covenant fidelity. Paul and his communities can represent Judaism or a Judaism movement.

**Additional issues** for discussing the lexical and exegetical elements, many discussed in the Excurses below on defining the referents, include:

1. completing the ellipses;
2. defining referents like Ἰουδαῖος as Jew or Judean; ὑπὸ νόμος as under law or conventions in what sense, and which laws or conventions; ἄνομος as "lawless" as in "wicked" (which is hardly workable for the prevailing view), or as in "without law," perhaps signifying "non-Jews," and also whether ἄνομος (also ὑπὸ νόμος) is used here in related to Jewish law/Torah, or as in law or convention in other terms, including Roman, local, universal; what does Paul mean by ἐννομος ("in Christ"); and who are the ἀσθενής ("weak"), and what is the basis for their weakness;
3. whether Paul is describing tactics that are evangelical, or pastoral, or both, including to what he seeks to win or gain these people or groups;
4. what Paul means by slavery and freedom, including from what/whom and to what/whom;
5. evaluation of whether Paul's language expresses the benign sense of a physician lying to a patient (which might apply elsewhere,<sup>82</sup> but is that what he is signaling here, which would seem to require becoming like a patient to patients instead?).

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<sup>81</sup> I will not try to present the alternative views in this discussion, because they have the same implications overall as the prevailing views. They also interpret as "lives like" as in "conducts himself like," but emphasize "associates with" (in a way that involves living like, conducting himself like to some degree). Thus Paul cannot be Torah observant consistently or as a matter of covenant fidelity, except perhaps in some qualified way.

<sup>82</sup> In Galatians, e.g., Paul's accusations about the influencers' motives and supposed failure to fully inform the addressees of the cost rather than just the desirability of the option they offer, as well as

**B. Evaluating the larger context** in which this language arises:

1. of the verses just before and after in ch. 9;
2. of chapters 8 – 10;
3. of the overall letter;
4. of 2 Corinthians;
5. of Paul overall;
6. of Acts;
7. of the NT overall, and the origins of Christianity in Greco-Roman world among Jews and non-Jews.

**2. Ethical issues** that arise from each interpretive option:

**A. Ethical misrepresentation** arises from the prevailing views because Paul does not share the propositional values for adopting or not adopting Torah conduct in the company of these various groups, since such conduct is undertaken by those of each group for convictional reasons that are contrary to the convictional reasons of the other groups' conduct.

*Lifestyle:* Paul's lifestyle adaptability involves conduct that can be variously described as "mimicking," "imitating," "deceiving," "tricking," or "aping" the conduct of the other in Torah-defined terms, either to observe or not observe Torah, but without sharing the others' propositional bases for or against Torah-observance. Paul is by definition not Torah-observant consistently or as a matter of conviction. At the same time, he implicitly if not explicitly shares the propositional bases of non-Jews who do not observe Torah, although perhaps for different reasons, as in the case of idolaters. In both the cases of Jews and idolaters he misrepresents his convictions and those concomitant with the message he delivers to them.<sup>83</sup>

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suggesting that they or someone has effected the addressees with an envious evil eye, are all cases discussed in Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, and they are more in keeping with the physician topos. But I submit that this is not what Paul is trying to explain about his tactics in 1 Cor 9:19-23.

<sup>83</sup> Some alternative views emphasize different motives, but otherwise are the same, with the same consequences overall. A few exceptions reject that Paul shared the propositional bases for not observing Torah with non-Jews, and maintain that he did share at least the lifestyle of observance even if for different propositional reasons. But that only reverses toward whom the morally compromising conduct is aimed.

**Rhetorical:** Paul is not describing lifestyle adaptability so his language does not imply any kind of moral compromise.<sup>84</sup> Rhetorical adaptability can be morally neutral and is to be expected of one seeking to be persuasive in speech. Because Paul's motive is to bring others to a change of propositional beliefs and concomitant lifestyle changes, however, it is not a good model for inter-faith dialogue today, unless that motive is altered, and mutual effort to understand and respect the worldview of the other participants is also made one's goal. I assume that Paul agrees with the propositional bases of Torah-observant Jews, and the motive of covenantal fidelity, regardless of probable interpretive and halakhic differences between each person and group. But that position is not required of the rhetorical adaptability option.

**B. Ethical duplicity** also arises from the prevailing views because the end result of undertaking the course to which Paul seeks to persuade is not evident to the one being persuaded, thus Paul has masked this implication by his own behavior when among them.

**Lifestyle:** On the one hand, non-Jews who are idolaters are not made aware that becoming Christ-believers in response to Paul's message will result in no longer behaving in the manner he has mimicked among them, but withdrawal from idol rites and idol food known to be associated with it, at least when observed by the "weak," however defined. This same consequence can be applied to many different referent categories. On the other hand, Jews, especially Torah-observant Jews are not made aware that becoming Christ-believers in response to Paul's message will result in no longer behaving in the manner he has mimicked among them, but withdrawal from Torah-observance as a way of life or faithful expression of covenant loyalty. To the degree that they continue to practice Torah "habits" this will represent a weak and immature expression of faithfulness to Christ. The exception for them will be in the case of mimicking other Torah-observant Jews in order to also dupe them in the same way, and thus a spiral of duplicity is generated. This whole phenomenon is more reminiscent of a central negative value of the

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<sup>84</sup> Gooch, "Ethics of Accommodation," 105, recognizes that a rhetorical adaptability approach does not raise the same kind or level of moral problems as the lifestyle adaptability approaches, such as his own, and the consensus approaches do, although I disagree with his implicit interpretations of the passages offered as examples.

deceiver who is the opposite of godliness, the serpent in the garden misrepresenting the outcome of eating the fruit, a strange parallel for the apostle upheld to be the quintessential proclaimer of the gospel of Christ. Does this policy represent the ideals of love?

**Rhetorical:** No such duplicity is involved, and thus no similar moral compromise. One would be led to a new set of perceptions and convictions and concomitant behavior, but that is all part of the conclusion of the argument made, which is understood to be undertaken to move one from a set of convictions to another set.

**C. Ethical inconsistency or hypocrisy** arises for the prevailing views because Paul changes his behavior as he switches from one group to another, but he seeks to mask this alternating behavior from each of them.

**Lifestyle:** This inconsistent or hypocritical behavior is defended to be in the service of a higher cause. But justifying the motives does not remove the problem. It does not demonstrate equality or fair play, or respect for free will. On the one hand, this approach reveals supersessionism and superiority at work, for seeking to justify it in this manner emphasizes that the other is not equally entitled to regard their cause as equal if not superior, and on the other hand, it does not respect their right to know that their own cause is being subverted instead of challenged outright, so that a defense can be mounted. It arrogantly presumes to be the all-knowing and all-caring physician, and the other to be the ignorant and misguided patient who needs to be tricked into the course that is best for them, even if, being revealed to them, it would be their choice to refuse the treatment.

**Rhetorical:** None of these problems result; quite the contrary, each party has an opportunity to understand the message in their own terms, by one who represents in his lifestyle the propositions it upholds, and to challenge the arguments, if they so choose, or to proceed to be convinced by them, aware of the cost (to some degree, at least). Often the very different lifestyles of the speaker will be evident, even emphasized as such in order to illustrate the proposition for which he argues, as we often witness Paul doing.

**D. Expedience versus Principle:** this policy raises the additional ethical problem for the prevailing views of making a principle of putting expedience above principle.

*Lifestyle:* If Paul gives priority to expedience above principle in this matter it brings up at least two other problems for the assessment of his character in terms of hypocrisy. One is that this contradicts his own insistence for his audiences to put principle above expedience, which include many appeals to himself as an example of that teaching, in spite of suffering as a result of doing so (e.g., 1 Cor 4:10-16; 6:7, 12-20; 8:7-13; 9:1-27; 11:27-34; 15:30-34; 16:13-14). The other involves his accusations against others for putting expedience above principle. This includes accusations of the motives and conduct of third parties when addressing his audiences, e.g., writing about the influencers in Galatian (Gal. 1:6-10; 4:17-18; 5:7-12; 6:12-13), and accusations made directly to others, e.g., Peter at Antioch, at least as he reports it to his addressees in Galatia (Gal 2:10-21).<sup>85</sup> This is hard to reconcile also with the overall portrayal of Paul in prevailing views when not discussing this passage in particular, as an apostle putting principle above expedience in many areas, and thus, in conflict with the Jerusalem apostles, e.g., for their failure to withdraw from Torah-observant practices because they are supposedly unwilling to pay the price for social deviance among their Jewish neighbors and authorities, even though they should because the idea of the gospel is freedom from Torah at any cost, including death on a cross, like their, and Paul's Lord.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Paul is inconsistent to teach against proselyte conversion so emphatically in Galatians; he should only teach against it if done for the wrong reasons. For it would have been expedient to allow those in Galatia wishing to become proselytes to do so, and only to have challenged motives. He actually took the principled route of denying them what they wanted, risking losing them instead of gaining them, which seems to go against what he states here to be his policy, as usually understood.

The Gentiles in his congregations would see occasional Torah-observance legitimated to be expedient and conclude that, since they cannot play the Jewish card, they are indeed in an inferior position because they have not become proselytes. This is precisely what I understood to have developed in Antioch as explained in Gal 2. Paul is the one who says that kind of tactical behavior is against the gospel, for it leads non-Jews to conclude that they must become Jews to have equal standing within this movement, that the supposed truth of the gospel that non-Jews are equal members of the people of God, children of Abraham apart from becoming members of Israel, is a lie.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., in the logic of the prevailing interpretation of Gal 6:12, where Paul is understood to condemn the Jerusalem church representatives' motives, accusing them of putting expedience above principle and thus compromising the gospel by seeking to avoid to "suffer for the cross of Christ," unlike Paul (5:11; 6:17).

**Rhetorical:** Does not have these problems. Moreover, it actually eliminates a lot of problems and discussions about the tensions if not contradictions between this passage and texts such as Galatians 2.

### **3. Tactical and Practical issues:**

**A. Level of effectiveness:** it is difficult to understand how Paul supposed that this tactic would succeed as it is developed in the prevailing views.

**Lifestyle:** If Paul conducts himself in opposite ways in terms of Torah and other similar convictional matters in the same community or even between communities, it would soon become evident to those in each group, whether by observation or rumor, that he was guilty of duplicity. A tactic undertaken for expedience would undermine its own legitimating principle of ends justifying means, because the means would become known and thus reveal the implicit but undisclosed ends. To Torah-observant Jews he would in effect become like the opposite, like a non-Jew, even an idolater. Likewise, in reverse, he would become like a Torah-observant Jew to non-Jews and idolaters. In the same congregation, for those who argue that this is a pastoral as well as evangelistic tactic, the problem is all the greater. Besides alienating rather than attracting interest, it simply would not work.

**Rhetorical:** This problem does not arise. Any philosopher or rhetorician should be able to make their cases in various ways to various people, even when speaking to one group made up of a variety of people. One is arguably less effective and wins less respect if unable to adapt rhetorically.

**B. Additional practical problems** arise for the prevailing views depending upon how one defines the referents:

**Lifestyle:** E.g., if *Ioudaios* refers to Jew, then how could Paul become a Jew since he was one already, or must one suppose that he no longer considered himself a Jew? If the ones "under law" refers to proselytes, how can he conduct himself like a proselyte, or if to Gentiles who place themselves under Torah, how could he become like such a Gentile? If the *anomos* are lawless as in wicked, how could Paul actually conduct himself like them? If he did, that would involve moral decadence. Or if it refers

simply to non-Jews per se, and thus in general to idolaters, how could he conduct himself like them? If "weak" refers to those whose eating (or not eating) is defined in terms of their sensibilities based on believing that the gods represented are real in keeping with the beliefs of those conducting those rites, how could he actually share those sensibilities? E.g., how Paul could respect those gods or their food as holy, or become ambivalent, insecure, or overscrupulous?<sup>87</sup>

**Rhetorical:** These problems do not arise. Paul can argue beginning from the premises of any person or group, and attentive to their convictions and sensibilities.

#### 4. New Challenges Resulting from this Proposal

**A.** This reading removes a central passage that the prevailing portrayals of Paul have employed to argue that he was indifferent to if not against Torah, and only observed it himself either from habits he was not able to free himself from completely, or when seeking to evangelize among Jews. It does not demonstrate that Paul did not observe Torah consistently, or to express his covenant fidelity. Concomitantly, it also does not support the prevailing view, often working at the implicit level, that Paul's version of Christianity subscribed to Gentile norms, that is, to non-Torah defined ways of evaluating reality, for example, that all food was good to eat, except if it troubled someone else to see one eating it.<sup>88</sup> It also does not indicate that Paul has left Judaism for a new religious movement that is something other than Judaism. At the same time, it does not prove that Paul was Torah observant, or his movement within Judaism.

**B.** This passage does not support charges that Paul was guilty of moral dishonesty, inconsistency, and the various elements just discussed for the prevailing views. That may not

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<sup>87</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich. and Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans and Paternoster Press, 2000), 705, raises this problem, specifically Paul "behaving as if he felt ambivalent about his ministry," although it is not clear to me that he solves it. Although Thiselton defines the impaired in ch. 8 as Christ-believers, he suggests non-Christ-believers to be the referent for the impaired in 9:22 ("Paul is speaking here of winning converts"), and emphasizes their socio-economic condition, which seemed to be his preferred option in ch. 8 also, but he also describes them as insecure or overscrupulous.

<sup>88</sup> The prevailing views do not pay sufficient attention to the difference between food's intrinsic quality as good in Jewish interpretation, as created by God, but at the same time that it is not good to eat all of it simply because God has said so, that is, its purity or impurity valuation is imputed, not intrinsic. Paul argues similarly. See Nanos, "Polytheist Identity."

be a welcome result for his critics, and critics of Christianity. This is an ironic outcome for a Jewish investigator to support, and should not be understood to mean that I do not find any fault with Paul or his teachings, but it is faithful to what I find to be the most historically probable reading of this text.

C. This passage could be used as a warrant and guideline for how to conduct the evangelizing of Jews in addition to other people. Inter-faith dialogue also involves learning the premises and cultural world-view of the other, but for very different reasons. It seeks to understand the other on their own terms, and to successfully explain one's own premises and worldview in cross-culturally intelligible terms in order to advance mutual respect and beneficial relationships going forward. I cannot speak for the other people, certainly not for Christians, but I hope that in view of the history of Christian pronouncements about and policies and actions toward Jews, that such adaptability will be hermeneutically qualified as no longer warranted or reasonable in evangelistic but only in inter-faith dialogical terms. Jews have had more than enough opportunity to be made aware of Christian propositional truths, including by coercion, and have suffered enough for them, that it is no longer necessary or appropriate to evangelize Jews with the hope that they become Christians. Christianity is no longer Judaism, unlike the case was for Paul.

I welcome learning from the seminar members of any other implications I have not considered here.

### **Conclusion:**

Since the earliest commentators on Paul, 1 Cor 9:19-23 has been explained in terms of lifestyle adaptability. Central to that interpretation is the overarching concept that Paul was no longer Torah observant to express covenant faithfulness, but rather that he taught indifference to and freedom from Torah (i.e., gentileness) as the norm for those who believe in Christ, although he did intermittently pretend to Torah observance in order to evangelize among Jews. A few interpreters recognize rhetorical adaptability as at least a facet of the tactic Paul describes. These arguments have generally not been developed in detail, and primarily appear

designed to defend Paul from charges of moral dishonesty arising from the lifestyle model, to which they still subscribe, but in modified ways. For example, they draw attention to Paul's motives as noble, and modify the degree to which he would adapt his conduct to facilitate association. A few have even objected to the prevailing view that Paul adopted a Gentile ideological view of the value of Torah and its observance.

I read 1 Cor 9:19-23 with the working hypothesis that Paul was Torah observant as a matter of covenant fidelity, and known to be so by his audience when reading/hearing this text. Thus Paul's language does not signify lifestyle adaptability. Rather, Paul is explaining his evangelistic tactic of adapting rhetorically, a discursive strategy also evident in his pastoral approach to his audience throughout this letter. A similar interpretation of Paul's tactics can be demonstrated at points in Luke's interpretation of Paul, and it is mirrored in the interpretation of Odysseus by Antisthenes, which was developed among the Cynics and Stoics of Paul's time.

Reading this passage in terms of rhetorical adaptability yields a coherent and productive interpretation. It also significantly impacts the interpretation of critical elements for overall constructions of Paul. And it offers many other important benefits too. It eliminates the basis for the charges against Paul and the movement he inspired of moral dishonesty, hypocrisy, inconsistency, subversion of principles for expedience, and practical shortsightedness, all of which ineluctably result from the traditional and still prevailing interpretations. In addition, it removes a thorny obstacle to improving Christian-Jewish relations.

These results come with a challenge to several longstanding elements central to the interpretation of Paul and thus Paulinism, including a challenge to important ideological elements in the constructions of Christianity, and in its conceptualizations of Jews and Judaism as the "other" by which to define superior difference. On the other side, it eliminates elements central in Jewish ideological reactions to the traditional Christian interpretations of Paul. In other words, it is clear that our historical-critical interpretation of this passage implicitly carries important ideological freight; in view of the downsides that are readily apparent, is it not time to re-examine both?

I trust that this study will help to clarify just such matters, and offer a starting point for reconsideration of the meaning of Paul's language here and throughout this letter, as well as in

constructions of Paul and Paulinism. The implications have the potential to challenge Christian (mis)perceptions of Judaism as well as Jewish (mis)perceptions of Christianity where Paul's voice is concerned, and thereby to advance Christian-Jewish relations. In view of such desirable possibilities, is it wrong to hope that rosy-fingered dawn might rise on a different Pauline tradition in years to come, including new perspectives on Paul and the Jews?