

A Leap into the 'Slavery of Paul' from an Indian angle

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For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law . . . I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

The missionary stance of Paul in relation to the Jews, to the Gentiles and to the weak enables us to reconstruct the 'slavery motif' in Paul's self-understanding as the 'apostle of Christ to the Gentiles' (Rom. 11:13) which provides adequate 'models' for undertaking the theological task in the pluralistic society of India. The main purpose of this investigation is to examine 1 Cor. 9:19-23 closely with a view to unearthing the key elements in Paul's adaptability to men of different cultures.

In 1 Cor. 9:19-23, Paul expresses a kind of relationship between Christ and Paul on the one hand and Paul and 'all men' on the other. In v. 19 the idea of 'freedom' and 'slavery' is linked up in a unique way.¹ The notion of 'slavery' in 1 Cor. 9:19 can be traced back to the O.T. In the O.T., 'ebed came to be employed to designate those whom Yahweh chose as his instruments in the realization of his plan for humanity (cf. Is. 44:1). As the slave (*doulos*) of Christ, Paul carries out the mission of Christ to the Gentiles.

In order to discover authentic models for the mission of the Church in India, we have to examine 1 Cor. 9:19-23 exegetically.

Literary structure

The literary structure of 1 Cor. 9:19-23 shows evidence of 'rhetorical mastery'.² The opening and closing sentences (vv. 19, 22b-23) state

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¹ In sacral manumission, the concept has distinct religious overtones. See C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London, 1971), p. 52.

² For an analysis of the literary structure of 1 Cor. 9:19-23 see also Günter

the whole of the fundamental theme. All the sentences contain a verb dealing with the missionary adaptability of the apostle: *edoulōsa* (v. 19); *egenomen* (vv. 20, 22a, b); *poiō* (v. 23). There are concessive participial clauses defining the stance of the apostle: *Eleutheros ōn* (v. 19); *mē ōn autos hupo nomon* (v. 20); *all' ennomos Christou* (v. 21). Along with his missionary stance and adaptability, Paul sheds a flood of light upon his 'goal': five times *hina* ... *kerdesō* (or *kerdainō*); once *hina* ... *sōsō*; once *hina sugkoinōnos autou genomai*.

The key concept that we encounter in the above passage is *kerdainō* (to win), which occurs five times. In his analysis of the term *kerdainō*,³ David Daube points out that the word is not alien to the Rabbinic vocabulary, even though we cannot precisely date the Rabbinic texts. Having discussed the Rabbinic overtones of the term, Daube goes on to argue that *kerdainō* was used in the NT as a missionary term particularly in two senses: (i) conversion of a sinner as in Mat. 18:15, and (ii) conversion of a pagan as in 1 Pet. 3:1. It can be maintained that 1 Cor. 9:19-23 belonged to a traditional missionary scheme, and the term *kerdainō* has a missionary background.⁴

Pauline use of the term 'kerdainō'

In Paul, the verbal form *kerdainō* occurs five times (1 Cor. 9:19, 20, 21, 22; Phil. 3:8) and the noun *kerdos* twice (Phil. 1:21; 3:7). It is inferred that *kerdainein* and *sōzein* in 1 Cor. 9:22 are synonymously used. In 1 Cor. 9:23 and Phil. 3:7-8, we encounter similar ideas. In 1 Cor. 9:23, Paul simply states his motivation in the context of his adaptability to different groups of people. In Phil. 3:7-8, he describes his new understanding as the 'apostle of Christ' in terms of 'loss and gain'.

As the 'apostle of Christ', Paul's ultimate aim is 'to win' men for Christ. His missionary obligation (Rom. 1:5) is reflected in his use of the term *kerdainō*. The idea of proselytism was known to Paul as a Jew. The missionary activity of Judaism can be found in Matthew 23:15:

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte (Mat. 23:15).

Though the very word *kerdainō* is not found in Mat. 23:15, the idea was known in Paul's day.⁵ Paul gives new content to the idea of

Bornkamm, 'The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts,' *Studies in Luke-Acts* (1968), Festschrift für Paul Schubert, ed. L. E. Koch and J. L. Martyn, p. 194.

³ 'Kerdainō as a missionary term,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 40 (1947), pp. 109-120.

⁴ Cf. Schlier, 'Kerdos, Kerdainō,' *TDNT*, Vol. III, p. 673, n. 3. Schlatter has compared the gospel phrase 'fishers of men' with *Kerdainō*. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the First Corinthians* (London, 1972), p. 211.

⁵ See W. D. Davies, 'The Jewish State in the Hellenistic World,' *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (London, 1963), p. 691.

'winning men' for Christ. He wants to make it clear that his task is neither to lead men to legalism nor to continue the work of proselytism. This concept has tremendous missionary significance. The goal of missionary preaching is not to destroy one's cultural affiliation, but to lead men and their cultures to the sphere of Christ. How is it possible to win all men to Christ?

Missionary maxims

The missionary maxims of Paul⁶ are relevant to any missionary situation. The 'incarnational principle' is expressed in two ways: (i) the idea of accommodation and (ii) the concept of service and humility. The idea of accommodation is known in the Rabbinic and the pagan circles.⁷ Similarly the close association between service and humility has antecedents in Jewish culture. 'My humility is my exaltation, and my exaltation is my humility'⁸ is a saying which was attributed to Hillel. It implies that Hillel practised humility as a missionary method which stands in line with Paul's acceptance of others' stand point 'for the sake of the gospel'. The missionary maxims—accommodation, service and humility—are clearly set forth in Rom. 12:14-21. Paul's outlook in Rom. 12:14-21 is definitely wider than the scope of the Church. V. 14 recalls Mat. 5:44 and Lk. 6:28 where we find Jesus' exhortation to love one's enemies and 'pray for those who persecute'. V. 15 deals with the idea of 'rejoicing with those who rejoice' and 'weeping with those who weep'. The concepts of accommodation, humility and service are depicted here 'with challenging relevance'. To show 'active charity' to one's enemies (Rom. 12:20) and to 'outsiders' (Col 4:5) is the true test of humility and freedom. According to Paul, the noble ideals of accommodation service, and humility result in the conversion of the 'other person' (Rom 12:20b). Accommodation is so dynamic that it can challenge the cherished ideas and values of the 'outsider' (1 Cor. 10:31-33).

In the pagan and the Rabbinic circles, the sequence of adaptation moves from accommodation to humility and service. In Paul these concepts attain a new momentum in relation to the 'transforming power of the gospel'. In 1 Cor. 9:19-23 and in Rom. 12:14-21, the accent falls on humility. The logical progression of Paul's adaptability moves from humility to accommodation (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1). How is the missionary maxim related to Paul's strategy?

Missionary maxims and strategy

The basis of Paul's adaptation belongs to the idea of freedom which he holds vital to his missionary labour among the Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19). Now, therefore, let us analyse Paul's confession in relation to his missionary stance with regard to various groups:

⁶ David Daube, 'Missionary Maxims in Paul,' *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (1956), pp. 336-351.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

(a) *To the Jews*⁹

Paul is a born Jew; 'circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews' (Phil. 3:5). As to the law, he was a Pharisee (Gal. 1:14; 2 Cor. 11:22).¹⁰ What does it mean to say to become as a Jew? Did he continue to lead the Jewish way of life even after his conversion? Did he preach a 'Jewish gospel'? Did he incorporate some of the elements of Judaism into his gospel for the sake of the Jews? As far as the basic 'core' of his gospel is concerned, Paul did not make any compromise with it. Paul accepted Jewish customs and practices.¹¹ He accepted the Jewish classification of mankind as Jews and Greeks (Rom. 1:16; 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:22-24). He made use of the Rabbinic interpretation of the Scriptures.¹² (cf. Rabbinic exegesis of Gal. 4:21-31; Midrashic legends of 1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 4:29). The practice of quoting from the Law, the Prophets and the Hagiographa and the emphasis of grammatical exegesis belong to the traditional Rabbinic Judaism. After recognizing Paul's debt to Judaism, W. D. Davies writes:

The source of Pauline Christianity lies in the fact of Christ, but in wrestling to interpret the full meaning and implications of that fact, Paul constantly drew upon concepts derived from Rabbinic Judaism.¹³

We agree with Davies 'that his acceptance of Christ did not involve the rejection by him of the usages of his people nor a denial of commu-

⁹ For a discussion of the relation between Paul and Israel, see E. Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (London, 1969), pp. 183-187.

¹⁰ According to W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem* (ET, 1962), Paul was educated in Jerusalem. He bases his argument on Acts 22:3 and Acts 26:4, 5. Cf. E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 38, n. 2.

¹¹ Acts portrays the 'apostle to the Gentiles' as a Jewish Christian who is absolutely faithful to the law. To cite a few examples: (i) Paul begins his missionary preaching at the synagogue (Acts 17:1ff.). Only after a formal rejection by the Jews does he turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). (ii) Paul agreed to the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3); (iii) Paul took the apostolic decree to the Gentile churches (Acts 15:22); (iv) Paul took vows according to the Jewish customs (Acts 21:23); (v) Paul went to Jerusalem to participate in the Jewish religious festivals (Acts 18:21; 20:26); (vi) Paul participated in the purification ceremony for four Nazirites on the advice of James (Acts 21:17-26).

For a critical evaluation of the problems raised above see Philip Vielhauer 'On the Paulinism of Acts,' *Studies in Luke-Acts* (1968), pp. 33-50. Peder Borgen in an article entitled 'From Paul to Luke,' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXI, 2 (April, 1969), pp. 168-182, examines Vielhauer's thesis.

¹² A. T. Hanson, 'Paul's Use of Rabbinic Material,' *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (London, 1974), pp. 126-135 examines Paul's use of traditional parenthetic material drawn from Jewish background primarily based on Rom. 12:9-13:10.

¹³ *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1956), p. 323.

nity with them.¹⁴ Paul also alludes to his continued experience of synagogue jurisdiction. In 2 Cor. 11:24 he points out that 'five times he had received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes less one'. This means that he did not change his cultural affiliation even after becoming a Christian. 'Within the limits of the freedom granted in the gospel, Paul was among the Jews as a Jew in order 'to win' them.'¹⁵ He did not disown his religious and cultural heritage. In fact he made use of it in the service of the gospel. He makes it clear that the preservation of one's peculiar nationality is integral to God's purpose for the community. As F. Prat puts it:

The interests of truth did not require him to unlearn all that he had been taught.¹⁶

The freedom of the gospel does not destroy one's indigenous values, but transforms them by the power of the gospel.

(b) *To those outside the law*¹⁷

The adjective *tois anomois* (1 Cor. 9:21) refers to the Gentiles as they belong outside the scope of the Jewish law. The phrase *hōs anomos* does not mean that Paul led an unscrupulous and irresponsible life. Positively it means that he took upon himself the challenge of the Gentiles in the light of the gospel. Paul argued for the Gentiles taking their 'theological stance' (cf. Gal. 2:5). He did not insist that the Gentiles should observe Jewish laws. Gal. 2 speaks about the attitude of Paul to such problems like circumcision which indicates that Paul made the distinction between the 'authentic' and 'unauthentic' stumbling blocks of the gospel (cf. Gal. 5:11).

(c) *To the weak*¹⁸

Paul writes with boldness: 'To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak.' The immediate background of this affirmation is to be sought in 1 Cor. 8 where Paul deals with the problem of food offered to the idols. *Asthenēs* in 1 Cor. 9:22 refers to the weak in conscience (cf. Rom. 14). In 1 Cor. 8, the man of weak conscience is contrasted with the man of knowledge (1 Cor. 8:7, 9, 10). Even when he identified himself with the weak, he was not weak in his decisions. In

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁵ Günther Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

¹⁶ *Theology of St. Paul*, Vol. I, trans. John L. Stoddard (Westminster, 1930), p. 23.

¹⁷ The phrase 'those outside the law' means Gentiles. According to Acts, Paul showed a high sense of accommodation to the Gentiles and their thought forms, cf. Paul's speech at Areopagus (Acts 17:22-31) and at Lystra (Acts 14:16ff.).

¹⁸ The principal shades of meaning for the word *asthenēs* in Paul are: (i) 'physically weak' (1 Cor. 11:30); (ii) 'unimpressive' (2 Cor. 10:10); (iii) fig. 'weak', 'feeble' (1 Cor. 4:10; 12:22) and (iv) 'morally weak' (1 Cor. 8:7; 1 Thess. 5:14).

1 Cor. 9:22, Paul does not couple *hōs* with *asthenēs*. We would naturally expect *hōs* along with *asthenēs* because in the preceding verses (vv. 20, 21), where he speaks about his adaptability to different groups, he links *hōs* with them (v. 20: *hōs Ioudaios*; *hōs hupo nomon*; v. 21: *hōs anomos*). Does it mean that Paul's accommodation to 'the weak' is just a pretension? Then what does it mean to say 'to become weak'? Though Paul is strong in faith, he takes care of the interests of the weak because he is called 'to win' the weak. He looks at the ethical problem of the weak through the eye of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 8:11-13). For Paul, to take the food offered to idols is nothing because idols have 'no real existence' (1 Cor. 8:4). He knows that 'food will not commend us to God' (1 Cor. 8:8). Though he has freedom to eat the food offered to idols, he will not do so because his aim is not to create a 'stumbling block' between the weak and Christ (1 Cor. 8:9). The strong man should have to take seriously into account the falling of the weak. Paul knows that by 'becoming weak' in the sight of the strong, he does not lose anything. Thus the missionary motif of Paul finds a new expression in the exercise of his freedom. His accommodation to the level of the weak does not mean that he accepted the values of 'the weak' as mandatory for Christian life. His primary goal was evangelical.

(d) *All things to all men*

By identifying himself with different cultural and social groups, Paul thinks that he has 'become all things to all men'. The phrase 'all things to all men' does not mean that he was the same person to all groups of people. It simply means that he was sensitive to the challenges of each cultural group. In his relation to the Corinthians, Paul took a different stance regarding the exercise of his apostolic rights (1 Cor. 9:18). But his relation to the Philippian Church was different in the same matter (Phil. 4:18). The cause of the gospel is set over against any personal interests (1 Cor. 9:27). The basis of his adaptability is determined by the norm of the gospel.

H. Chadwick in his article 'All things to all men'¹⁹ makes out a strong case to show the depth of Paul's confession. In his survey of the Pauline letters, Chadwick affirms that Paul shows tremendous capacity to adjust himself to the needs of his hearers without sacrificing the essentials of the gospel. He takes the charges of his opponents and quotes them back in an ironical tone (2 Cor. 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 7:11; 10:12-18; 12:11). As his argument advances, his distance from the position of his critics increases. He begins from where they are. He had 'an astonishing elasticity of mind, and a flexibility in dealing with situations requiring delicate and ingenious treatment which appears

¹⁹ *New Testament Studies*, Vol. I (1954-1955), pp. 261-275. For a discussion of Paul's basic stance 'to all men', see also H. L. Ellison, 'Paul and the Law—All Things to All Men,' in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. W. Gasque-Martin (1970), pp. 195-202.

much greater than is usually supposed.²⁰ Paul's slavery motif is the key to his accommodation.

In short, Paul wants to make it clear that he is completely at the disposal of Christ and 'there is nothing in his own peculiarities and practices that could erect a barrier between Christ and the community.'²¹

The above investigation raises two questions: (i) Did Paul change his gospel at different places? (ii) If not, what is the basis of his adaptation?

Paul's gospel and adaptation

In his accommodation to 'the Jews', 'the lawless' and 'to the weak,' Paul makes it clear that there are two kinds of stumbling blocks: (i) The stumbling block of the message of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11). He does not want to make a compromise with it; (ii) The messenger as the stumbling block. Paul is very particular that he should never be a stumbling block between the gospel and his audience. Paul Tillich has rightly reflected the mind of Paul when he writes:

But there are two kinds of 'stumbling blocks': One is genuine . . . There is always a genuine decision against the gospel for whom it is a stumbling block . . . What we have to do is to overcome the wrong stumbling block in order to bring people face to face with the right stumbling block and enable them to make a genuine decision.²²

Though he adapts himself to various groups, he fights for the preservation of the 'truth of the gospel' (cf. Gal. 2:3-5). The textual and exegetical examination of Gal. 2:3-5 enables us to conclude that Paul did not insist that the Gentiles should be circumcised. For Paul, the question of circumcision is not a marginal issue. It belongs to the 'truth of the gospel' which he preserved for the Gentiles (Gal. 2:5). But he did not argue that the Jews should not be circumcised! He makes himself understood to others as one who is standing 'under the law of Christ'. The 'law of Christ' is the norm of his adaptation to 'all men'.

The norm of adaptation

Paul makes himself a slave to all as one who is under 'legal obligation' to Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1). How does Paul view his adaptability and flexibility in relation to *ennomos Christou*?

C. H. Dodd in his article entitled *Ennomos Christou*²³ makes out a case to show that Paul in 1 Cor. 9:21 and in Gal. 6:2 (*ton nomon tou Christou*) refer to a 'new Torah', the nucleus of which is a group of traditional sayings of Jesus.²⁴ According to Dodd, there are several

²⁰ H. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

²¹ H. L. Ellison, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

²² *Theology of Culture* (New York, 1959), p. 213.

²³ *More New Testament Studies* (1968), pp. 134-148.

²⁴ See the summary of Dodd's arguments in Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, 1969), pp. 59-65. We agree with Furnish's analysis.

'reminiscences' of Jesus' teaching in the Pauline letters, especially in Rom. 14, and hence one may think that the traditional sayings played a large role in Paul's ethical instructions. He adds that 1 Cor. 9:21 and Gal. 6:2 belong to specific contexts where Paul expects response from his congregation. In order to support his arguments, Dodd cites 1 Cor. 7:10 and 1 Cor. 9:14 where we find references to the command of the Lord. Dodd thinks that such demands are in Paul's mind when he speaks of himself as under the 'law of Christ'. So he concludes that in 1 Cor. 9:21, the term *nomos* is used to imply 'the body of regulative precepts analogous to the Torah according to which the Christian is obliged to walk.'

Dodd's thesis is unacceptable to us on the following grounds.²⁵ Dodd leans heavily upon the notion of the 'reminiscences' of Jesus in Paul. There are only four instances in the Pauline letters where he cites the 'words of the Lord'.

They are 1 Cor. 7:10; 9:14; 1 Cor. 11:23 ff.; and 1 Thess. 4:14-15. Of the four instances three are from Corinthians and the fourth one is only a possible instance. Will the above evidences give sufficient clues to affirm that Paul in 1 Cor. 9:21 alludes to some traditional teachings of Jesus? The identification of Jesus' teaching in Paul is often a highly subjective process. Moreover we find only a limited number of such identifications. In order to establish his thesis, Dodd points out that 1 Cor. 7:10 and 9:14 are citations 'from the Lord' which have specific contents. One observes that Paul uses 'verbal forms' to express the idea. In both cases the idea is not the formulation of a set of rules as Dodd thinks. In 1 Cor. 7:10, the command of the Lord applies to the community and in 9:14 it applies to the apostle. But Paul does not obey the rule propounded in 9:14²⁶ which shows that he is not bound to the 'command of the Lord' though he cites it. Hence it is difficult to believe that Paul's mind moves within the framework of a fixed pattern which he meticulously follows. Another difficulty in understanding Dodd's thesis is that the parallel phrase in Gal. 6:2 is found in a context where we do not find a single citation of the Lord's words. We believe that the idea behind the phrase *ho nomos tou Christou* should be sought in the 'love-commandment'. For Paul, love is a dynamic concept. In Rom. 13:8, it is described as the fulfilment of the law. In Gal. 5:14, Paul's mind also reflects upon the 'fact of love'. The idea of freedom which is the key issue in Galatians (Gal. 5:1, 13) is linked up with 'love' (Gal. 5:13). The same idea is found in Gal. 6:2 when Paul writes: 'Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' The concept of love is a dynamic reality which makes the Christian to serve others. For Paul, living and walking in the Spirit is the source of love. Since the Spirit is the mediator of love (Rom. 5:5), the Spirit which works through Paul as the agent of Christ to the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16-18) equips him for mission in terms of giving a new norm for

²⁵ For an alternative position on Dodd's thesis see *ibid.*

²⁶ Cf. David L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Philadelphia, 1971), pp. 25f.

adaptation. Therefore the 'law of Christ' is the 'law of love'. The law of love becomes the authority for Paul's missionary adaptation.²⁷ Love has a vertical and horizontal dimension. Since love is the key to divine motivation and finality, Paul believes that it can create authentic missionary models in any cultural situation. This is the challenge from the 'slavery of Paul'.

From an Indian angle

The slavery of Paul gives a clue to the evolution of relevant models for the communication of the gospel in India today.

Dynamism of the gospel

Paul's understanding of Christian freedom (1 Cor. 9:19) implies that we should not absolutize any human structure. For a long time, the Indian Church has overlooked the 'inherent freedom of the gospel': The inherent freedom of the gospel implies that all inherited forms, western or otherwise, can and must be challenged. What we need in India today is not the destruction of the old forms, but the summoning of the old forms to become the bearer of the new.²⁸ It is imperative that the existing structure of the Church should be made more flexible to allow maximum adaptability and mobility. A ministry authentic to India, as we learn from Paul, must be set within the servant ministry of Christ.²⁹ The ardent struggle for 'taking every thought captive to obey Christ' has to be implemented through accommodation and flexibility in dealing with the life-situation of the community at large. 'To the Indian, the Church has to become an Indian' is the call of the Spirit. The personal element on which the dynamism of the gospel rests is reflected in Paul's confession of becoming all things to all men. This poses a challenge to the Church in India. As collaborator with God (1 Cor. 3:9), the human agent has a part to play in the naming of Christ. It is quite possible that the human agent can be overlooked in the religious context of India. In India, tolerance of religious ideas is well known.³⁰ Moreover the Hindu view of life is concerned with the contemplation of eternal principles. The role of the human agent is integral to the dynamism of the gospel. This poses a challenge to religious India with all its mystical aspirations.³¹

Taking risks

God took a risk in getting into contact with the world of human cultures. This is clearly stated in the slavery of Paul. Kosuke Koyama

²⁷ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:14; Col. 3:17.

²⁸ Cf. James A. Bergquist and P. Kambar Manickam, *The Crisis of Dependency in Third World Ministries* (Madras, 1974), p. 99.

²⁹ Cf. *loc. cit.*

³⁰ See S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Culture* (Delhi, 1968).

³¹ Paul uses a large number of mission words, of 'speaking and listening', 'sending and proclaiming' in the communication of the gospel. In all these verbs Paul accentuates the 'human element' in fulfilling the task of revealing the mystery of Christ.

in his article 'Syncretism and Accommodation'³³ speaks about the relation between syncretism and accommodation in the missionary perspective. He makes it clear that accommodation is a theological concept. It derives from our astonishment at the grace of God which has come to us in a tangible way. What we lack in India is a theological perspective on accommodation as a missionary method. Hans Küng has warned us of the possibility of stagnation in our 'accommodative process'. He writes:

It is perfectly possible for a mission to abhor and condemn racial segregation and yet to remain alien at heart from the race with which it is concerned; this happens when the church does not bodily graft herself into the national culture, feeling, thinking and life of the race. The Catholic church did thus graft herself onto the Greek and Latin culture and then again on the Germanic and Slavonic cultures; so that she became like St Paul, Greek to the Greek and barbarian to the barbarian. But has she become Bantu to the Bantu, Chinese to the Chinese, Indian to the Indian?³⁴

With Hans Küng we affirm that Christian adaptation to each cultural milieu is a theological process. In our accommodation to each cultural situation, we have to give expression to the concept of 'humility and service' as the new life style of the gospel oriented community. It is imperative that the religious fabric of the Indian Church be broken for the sake of permitting the flow of love into the heart of India. There are several unauthentic stumbling blocks, created by traditional Christianity, between Christ and the religious India.³⁵ The bearer of the gospel is also found to be a stumbling block between Christ and the non-Christian community. What we need today is an examination of the past and the present situation as objective as possible.³⁶

Pressure of love as power of Christ

Since accommodation is the process of inviting the life-situation into the context of the grace of God, we cannot make a clear cut distinction between 'mission' and 'indigenization'.³⁷ The 'slavery of Paul' makes it clear that indigenization is a theological process which is concerned with the taking of cultural expressions and ideologies to the 'obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The task is tremendous as it

³³ Kosuke Koyama, *Theology in Contact* (Madras, 1975), pp. 54-69.

³⁴ Cited by Swami Abhishikhananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point* Bangalore, 1969.

³⁵ For a fuller analysis of 'identifiable distortions', see *The Biennial Consultation—1971, Religion and Society*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (March 1972), pp. 91-93.

³⁶ See T. V. Philip, 'Search for Church Unity in Kerala', paper presented at the C.I.S.R.S. Study Convention, Adoor, from Sept. 11-14, 1970, pp. 1-8.

³⁷ See D. S. Amalorpavadass, 'Indigenous Expressions in Cathedrals,' *Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (Jan-Mar 1975), p. 37.

envisages leading 'culture to be possessed by Christ'. Hence accommodation is really contextualization. We accommodate in order to root³⁷ the love of Christ.' Paul's norm of missionary strategy implies that the missionary goal is not to withdraw from the cultural milieu, but to exert the pressure of love as the sign of the new age. By doing so, we raise the voice of indigenous culture to the presence of God for the realization of His plan.³⁸

Indigenization is possible through our sensitivity to the local culture and its demands. 'To become all things to all men' means that we should express deep concern for all kinds of people. In India, there are several attempts for expressing the missionary obedience in indigenous categories. The missionary work of Robert de Nobili was a pioneering effort in this direction. D. Jayraj in his article entitled 'The Contribution of the Catholic Church in Tamilnadu in the 17th-19th Centuries to an Understanding of Christ'³⁹ gives an exhaustive survey of Robert de Nobili's contribution to indigenous Christianity. De Nobili had two main missionary motives, first of all to correct some distortions in the very idea of mission, secondly to present the gospel against the cultural background. He believed that the gospel was presented to India through Western and colonial idioms. Paul's challenge 'to become a Jew to the Jew' has given inspiration to De Nobili. He had expressed his missionary concern in two ways: (i) Personal accommodation to the Indian culture, and (ii) Adaptation of indigenous idioms and concepts for the presentation of the gospel to India. He accepted Brahmin dress which he thought would introduce him to the Hindu fold without any hindrance. He also cut his hair like a Brahmin and wore the sacred thread like the Brahmins. He worked as a Hindu *sanyasin*. The Hindus held him in high esteem because of his imitation of Pauline principles of slavery: humility and accommodation. S. Rajamanickam gives credit to De Nobili when he writes:

De Nobili coined the terms for Christian theology and prepared a proper vehicle for conveying Christian ideas. He Christianized certain words and infused into them a new meaning; *prasadam* for instance signified a gift from the temple. That he uses for grace, the gift from God... The Christian message became incarnate in Tamil, thanks to his effort.⁴⁰

³⁷ Cf. Kosuke Koyama, 'Syncretism and Accommodation,' *Theology in Contact*, p. 68. See also Visser't Hooft, *Confessing the Faith in Asia Today* (Hong Kong, 1968).

³⁸ The Bangkok Conference on 'Salvation Today' remarks that 'culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ'. Cited from 'Culture and Identity', *Bangkok Assembly Report*, Section I (Geneva, 1973), p. 73.

³⁹ *Indian Journal of Theology*, Vol. XXIII, Nos. 3 and 4 (July-Dec 1974), pp. 181-190.

⁴⁰ 'Robert de Nobili and Adaptation,' *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. I, No. 2 (Dec. 1967), p. 85.

The names of Krishna Mohan Banerjea (1813-1885), Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907), P. Chenchia (1886-1956), V. Chakkarai (1880-1958), Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973), A. J. Appasamy (1891-1974), Klostermaier, R. Panikkar and others are worth recording here. None of these scholars follows a fixed pattern. In the light of the accomplishments of these scholars, J. R. Chandran writes:

Indian theology has taken many different shapes depending upon the background of the theologian and variations in the situation. Following this tradition, we need not expect Christian theology in India to take any particular shape. We would recognize the possibility of different theologies developing, each seeking to make the Christian faith meaningful in different situations in different ways to help the contemporary mass to respond to the Gospel in faith and obedience.⁴¹

What we need in India today is to initiate a meaningful 'cultural dialogue'.⁴² The cultural dialogue⁴³ is an expression of love as it is concerned with the reality, the freedom and the fulfilment of the other. It enables us to find out the 'authentic changes which the Gospel offers'.⁴⁴ It is in the context of living in constant dialogue with men of other faiths

⁴¹ 'Christian Theology in India Today,' paper presented at the general committee meeting of the S.C.M. of India at Hyderabad: 1970-1971, p. 2.

⁴² See M. J. Joseph, 'The Encounter of Christian Faith with Hinduism,' *Arunodayam*, Vol. XXV, Nos. 10 and 11 (Oct -Nov. 1969), pp. 16-18. A. P. Nirmal in his paper entitled 'Indigenous Theological Accomplishments of the Indian Church' presented at the conference of Younger Theologians arranged under the auspices of NCCI at Bangalore from May 25-28, 1973, gives a good survey of different 'theological models' that we find in the indigenous efforts to interpret Christ to India. The main models of classification can be outlined as follows: (1) 'The Unsympathetic Model': Nehemiah Goreh, Narayan Sheshadri and others; (2) 'The Strategic Model': Thomas Stephens, Robert de Nobili and others; (3) 'The Syncretistic Model': Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chunder Sen and others; (4) 'The Poetic Model': H. A. Krishna Pillai, Vedanayagam Sastriyar, N. V. Tilak and others; (5) 'The Synthetic Model': Brahma Bandhava Upadhyaya, Raymond Panikkar, P. Chenchia and others; (6) 'The Model of Mysticism and Piety': A. J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai, Sadhu Sundersingh and others; (7) 'The Ethical-Political Model': P. D. Devanandan, M. M. Thomas, J. R. Chandran, E. V. Mathew and others.

⁴³ The cultural dialogue is a prerequisite for the discovery of the most suited structures of communication. F. N. Dillistone, *Christianity and Communication* (London, 1956), p. 59, writes:

... according to the witness of the Bible God did not ignore or despise the structure of communication which had already come into existence within the course of human development.

⁴⁴ Cited from, 'The World Council of Churches and Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths and Ideologies: An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines adopted by the Central Committee of the W.C.C. at its meeting in Addis Ababa, January 10-21, 1971,' p. 5.

and ideologies that we become conscious of expressing the core of the gospel in cultural forms that 'are transformed, redeemed and judged in the light of the gospel'.⁴⁵ Any attempt to accommodate, to adapt or to indigenize the core of the gospel should maintain a dialectical tension between Christ and culture. It is in this tension that the 'word of God' incarnates in the given cultural context giving direction and purpose. Thus there is a close link between 'mission' and 'cultural dialogue'.⁴⁶ The insights from cultural anthropology, social psychology and the history of religions can contribute much towards the unfolding of the mystery of Christ to India. The Pauline models are more conceptual tools for an interpretation of Christ to India with challenging relevance.

⁴⁵ The commission on World Mission and Evangelism at Bangkok expressed its concern for dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies for the meaningful presentation of the gospel.

⁴⁶ It is through 'cultural dialogue' that adequate 'conceptual tools' are evolved. R. H. Fuller in his book, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York, 1965), speaks of the tools which the early Church employed to interpret its understanding of Christ. By 'tools', he means the terms, images, concepts and patterns which were used by the community to express its faith in the Risen Christ.