CHAPTER ONE

THEY WALKED BY DAY AS IN DARKNESS

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon.

—Amos 5:21–22

With these and other words of Amos and of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Psalms, early Christian writers attacked Jewish sacrifice. They sought to prove that the sacrifices mandated of old were ordained not as a legitimate form of worship, but rather to combat the Jew's inclination to idolatry. This argument was part of the larger debate concerning the role of the Mosaic Law in a period when Christians understood Jewish messianic hopes to have been fulfilled.

This chapter will examine the course of that debate by tracing a specific exegetical device, which may be termed divine accommodation or divine condescension. Accommodation/condescension is divine revelation in human terms; that is, divinity adapting and making itself comprehensible to humanity in human terms. It is the adaptation and adjustment of the transcendent to the mundane; it is the fine tuning of divine order. Accommodation, as it is used in patristic sources, falls into two broad categories, which may be seen as "positive" and "negative" accommodation.

In patristic texts, accommodation is viewed negatively when it is applied to the Jews and Jewish ritual practice. The punitive understanding of Torah and its ritual observances is a prime example of that attitude. Yet, it must be remembered that any such negative connotation may seemingly be balanced by the preventative nature of that accommodation. That is, the Lord permitted certain ceremonies, such as sacrifices, to keep his people from becoming idolators. Negative accommodation then is both punitive and prophylactic.

Positive accommodation is used in patristic sources when the rise, spread, and triumph of Christianity is being discussed. Accom-
modation in the "Christian era" is a great boon, and as we shall see, the Incarnation will be interpreted as the quintessential example of divine accommodation. There is another aspect to positive accommodation; that is, the very act of God recognizing the bodily dimension of humanity—part of the creation—and thus a good in itself. The church fathers, influenced by Platonism, and occupied with polemics against Jews, pagans, and schismatics, not surprisingly tended to emphasize negative accommodation at the expense of positive accommodation. Yet as we shall observe, both explanations coexisted. One of the earliest apologists to stress negative accommodation was Justin Martyr.

Justin, a convert to Christianity, sought to explain how Christians, who, in Jewish eyes, did not observe the divine precepts—even though they were part of Scripture—hoped to merit any kindness from God and how they differed from Gentiles. Indeed, the task that Justin undertook was to compose an apologia for Christian nonobservance of Torah. His project demanded a full-scale examination of the Mosaic Code: its purpose, its details, and its historical role for the Jews, Gentiles, and Christians. Justin's views may best be appreciated when set against the general background of other theories of the Mosaic Code.

Perhaps the cornerstone for the essentially penal character of the Law, which often occurs in patristic literature, originated with Paul. According to the usual interpretation, Paul had viewed the Law inherently as a guardian (paidagōgos) to restrain humanity until the advent of Christ (Gal. 3:24). For Paul, the Law was inferior to faith; Moses inferior to Abraham. The Law in fact made transgressions possible (Rom. 3:20, 5:20, 7:13), and part of the salvific nature of Christ's advent included freedom from the Law and transgression (Gal. 3:13). Indeed, as Paul wrote to the Galatians: "Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19).

Paul's view that the Law was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator, who is understood, almost universally by modern scholarship, to be Moses, could be, and was understood, differently by other early Christian interpreters. Certain Gnostics would view these angels as demons who created the world and gave it an evil law. Justin had to contend with a wealth of different religious and philosophical beliefs. His wares were being hawked with a voice that had to compete with those of other Christian apologists, Jews, Gnostics, and pagans in a crowded, and noisy, theological market.

Justin's clearest and most elaborate exposition of his views is contained in his Dialogue with Trypho, recording a debate that sup-
posedly took place about 135 C.E. in Ephesus between Justin and the Jew, Trypho. Justin is the first Christian author to challenge the unity of Scripture by dividing the Law into three parts:

I mean that one commandment was appointed for piety and the practice of righteousness, and another command and action was in the same way spoken either as referring to the mystery of Christ or on account of the hardness [sklerokardion] of your people's hearts.

The Law then as understood by Justin contains ethical teachings, prophetic—Christological—teachings, and historical accommodations. The ethics contained in Scripture were universal in scope and application and are eternally valid. They are independent of the Mosaic Code as well as being embodied within it. They are applicable to humanity at large, and in enumerating them, Justin approaches the rabbinic concept of the “Seven commandments of the sons of Noah.” In his prophetic/Christological interpretation set out in chapters 40–42, Justin claims that everything established by Moses can be seen as types, symbols, and proclamations of those things that were to happen as a result of the Incarnation. Justin never conflates the two interpretations save in the case of circumcision, which he interprets allegorically and eschatologically.

It is the third part of the Law, the “ritual commandments”—sacrifice, Sabbath, circumcision, fasts, and so on—that Justin construes as decreed by historical necessity. These rituals were legislated for, and pertain solely to, the Jews. The Law is seen as an historical accommodation for the Jews, and Justin stresses repeatedly that the Law was mandated because of the “hardness of your hearts.” In contrast to the ethical teachings, which were universal, these rituals were particularly Jewish. This tension between the universality and the particularism in the Law forms a major component of Justin’s exegesis.

Justin’s essentially penal understanding of the Law was not the only interpretation current at the time. The Torah multiplied sin, which necessitated God’s bestowal of grace. This function of the Law ended with Christ.

Paul further reflects the opinion of the LXX, Josephus and remarks in the New Testament (Acts 7:38, 53; Gal. 3:19–20) that the Law was given through a mediator, or through angels, who could, in extreme instances, be seen as demons who created the world and gave it an evil law. This was not Paul’s view, but it was the view that would be advanced by the Marcionites. And it was not only the Marcionites with whom Justin had to contend, but with other Gnostic groups including Valentinians, Basilidians, Satornilians, and others.
Justin’s emphasis upon the penal character of the Law provoked Trypho to respond. Indeed, argues Trypho, did not Christ himself observe the Law, thus, in essence validating it? Christ’s observance, answers Justin, is part of the divine oikonomia, the entire plan of salvation, and since Christ effected universal salvation, his observance of particular rituals, whose observance had nothing to do with salvation, in no way validated those particular rituals. In sum, then, for Justin the Law was neither evil nor unnecessary—it was ordained for a stiff-necked, hard-hearted people. As Justin noted:

We, too, would observe your fleshly circumcision, your Sabbaths, and in brief, all your festivals, if we did not know why they were ordained, namely because of your sins and obduracy. If we patiently bear all the evils put upon us by cruel men and demons, and yet, amid tortures and death that defy description, beseech mercy for our persecutors, and seek not the slightest retaliation, as our Law-giver decreed, why, Trypho, do we not observe those rites which can do us no harm, such as circumcision of the flesh, the Sabbaths and festivals?

Justin further elaborates how the Jews’ sins and obduracy affected their history and actions. God’s munificence is made manifest in contrasting Abraham and Moses:

The same is said of Abraham and his progeny until Moses, when your people, wicked and ungrateful to God, fashioned a calf in the desert. Therefore, the Lord accommodating [harmosámenos] Himself to that people, commanded that sacrifices be brought in his Name lest you practice idolatry. Even then you did not obey, for you sacrificed your children to demons; Sabbath observance was instituted, in order to compel you to remember Him, as Scripture states: “That you may know that I am God your Redeemer.”

Justin sharply delineates the difference between the New Israel and “your people” and in so doing distinguishes the particularity and limited nature of the rituals of the Mosaic Code from the ethical teachings. The emphasis again is upon the penal character of the Code. Sacrifices were enacted to prevent idolatry, and Justin applies the same reasoning to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord permitted the Temple to be built—not for his sake—but as a prophylactic device to restrain the inclination for idolatry.

In arguing about rituals of the Mosaic Law, such as circumcision and dietary restrictions, Justin will employ lengthy citations from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Ezekiel, Amos, and Psalms to buttress his
position. His anti-Jewish use of prophecy emerges as one of his most potent weapons. The prophetic citations are employed not only to demonstrate the abrogation of an old, particular law, but to contrast it with the promulgation of a new, universal code.  

Justin reiterates these ideas throughout the Dialogue, and several of them will be more fully developed by other Christian apologists. His tripartite division of the Mosaic Code, his association of the Mosaic Code with the incident of the calf, his frequent charge of Jewish idolatry—the most common one in the Dialogue—and his anti-Jewish use of prophecy seem to be original contributions to Christian exposition of Scripture.

Many of the themes encountered in Justin's work appear in Irenaeus of Lyon's Refutation of False Gnosis (Adversus Haereses). Irenaeus' discussion of sacrifice occurs within the larger issue of the creation of mankind. God created man because of divine philanthropy and chose the patriarchs “propter illorum salutem.” He appointed a people to teach the indocile to follow him, and prophets were sent to prepare humanity for the Holy Spirit in order to facilitate communion with God. Like an architect, the Lord sketched out the divine plan of salvation, and to the Jews, who were unruly in the desert, he bestowed a most apt Law (aptissima lex). The Law was appropriate to the condition of the people, and the Lord attuned humanity to his “symphony of salvation.” Irenaeus then focuses upon the Jews:

Thus He also gave the people the laws relative to the construction of the Tabernacle, the building of the Temple and the choosing of the Levites, the sacrifices and oblations, the purifications and other things relevant to the cult.

None of these things was needed by the Lord, who educated a people easily inclined toward idols, and the Lord employed pedagogical techniques apposite for the situation. He led them to primary matters by means of secondary ones: by the figurative to the truth, by the temporal to the eternal, by the carnal to the spiritual, and by the earthly to the celestial.

Employing a similar approach to the Law as Justin, Irenaeus mentions “natural precepts” contained in the Decalogue that were universally valid and that permitted people to obey the divine decrees. There were those who did not obey, and when the Children of Israel fashioned a calf and reverted mentally to their condition in Egypt, they were placed under the yoke of servitude.

Irenaeus, in launching his attack upon Jewish idolatry, uses the prophets, especially Amos and Ezekiel, to buttress his attack and
assert the essentially punitive nature of the Mosaic Law. In choosing Acts 7:39–43 as a proof text, Irenaeus accuses the Jews of emotional and intellectual error:

This man [Moses] received the living precepts of God to give us, whom your fathers did not obey, but thrust him away, and turned back in their hearts [corde suo] to Egypt, saying to Aaron, “Make us gods who will go before us, for Moses who led us out of Egypt, we know not what has happened to him.” And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their hands.\textsuperscript{26}

The error of their ways is clarified by appeal to Amos 5:25–26 and Acts 7:39–43, which recounts Israelite worship of Moloch and the star of Rephan. Thus, the Israelites did not worship natural things, such as the sun or moon, but objects of their own creation. Irenaeus asserts that the Law was given to the Jews not by another God (as some Gnostics might believe), but by the very same God of the new dispensation. However, he adjusted it to their condition at that time. In fact, certain precepts were prescribed not because the people desired them, but because they were needed due to the hardness of their hearts.\textsuperscript{27}

Irenaeus contends that human frailties were considered not only when the Old Law was mandated, but even governed the promulgation of the New Law:

If, therefore, even in the New Testament, the apostles are found granting certain precepts in consideration of human infirmity, because of the incontinence of some, lest such persons, having grown obdurate, and despairing altogether of their salvation, should become apostates from God—it ought not to be wondered at, if also in the Old Testament the same God permitted similar indulgences for the benefit of his people, drawing them on by means of the ordinances already mentioned, so that they might obtain salvation through them, swallowing the saving fishhook of the Decalogue, and being restrained by Him, should not revert to idolatry, nor apostasize from God, but learn to love him with the whole heart.\textsuperscript{28}

Irenaeus, in the issues he raises and choice of language, may be reflecting silent polemics over the essential difference in the Jewish-Christian understanding of, and attitudes toward, the Law.

Perhaps a tale about an anonymous righteous man best exemplifies the rabbinic attitude toward the Law:
It happened to a Hasid that he forgot a sheaf in his field, and was thus enabled to fulfil the commandment with regard to forgetfulness [Deut. 24:19]. Upon he bade his son go to the temple, and offer for him a burnt-offering and a peace-offering, while he also gave a great banquet to his friends in honor of the event. Thereupon his son said to him: "Father, why do you rejoice in this commandment more than in any other law prescribed in the Torah?" The Hasid answered that it was the occurrence of the rare opportunity of accomplishing the will of God, even as the result of some oversight, which caused him so much joy.\

The story reflects the joy with which Judaism taught that the Law must be observed. Rabbis of the Talmudic and medieval period unanimously mention joy as an ingredient necessary for the proper performance of religious obligations. God, his salvation, and his Law are three things in which Israel rejoices. Indeed, the attitude of the rabbis could hardly be in sharper contrast to the punitive theories of Justin and Irenaeus.

In retelling the story of the fashioning of the Golden Calf, Irenaeus follows the account in Acts 7:39 and notes that the people "in their hearts" (corde suo) turned back to Egypt. After contrasting the Old and New Law, he affirms that God wished men to love him with the "whole heart." Perhaps Irenaeus was still "Jewish" enough to use this term most calculatedly. For him, the heart was not the seat of emotions, but the seat of the deepest, unsocialized identity (what Freud would call the id). This may not have been simply another penal interpretation of the Mosaic Code, but a challenge to nascent rabbinic views of biblical history. For rabbinic Judaism, the heart was the dwelling of man's evil inclination—the yetzer ha-rah—to which all of man's organs show obedience; obeying the yetzer ha-rah was tantamount to idolatry.

Irenaeus maintains that after the giving of the Law Jews were subject to idolatrous urges. This assertion flew in the face of certain rabbinic claims to the contrary, which held that the impulse for idolatry no longer existed among Jews. Whether or not Irenaeus knew of, or was responding to, such claims, his punitive view of the Law is antithetical to certain rabbinic conceptions.

The giving of the Torah at Sinai provided Israel with a unique moment and opportunity in history. A Midrashic passage explains:

When Israel (at Sinai) heard the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" [Exod. 20:3], the evil inclination was uprooted from their hearts; but when they came to Moses and said
unto him, "Our master Moses, become the messenger between us [Israel and the Lord], as it is said, 'Speak with us... but let not
God speak with us lest we die' [Exod. 20:19], the evil inclination
came back at once in its place." They came again to Moses and said,
"Our master Moses, we wish that God should again reveal himself
to us." He answered them, "This is impossible now (but will take
place in the future)." 34

According to this Midrash, the revelation at Sinai had eradicated the
evil inclination from the hearts of Israel and would have rendered
Israel immune from various sins—especially from idolatry and sexual
excesses. However, the opportunity was lost. 35

Irenaeus' insistence that the Jews were idolaters implies that the
Jews had not lost this inclination, and the rabbinic Midrash may be
an answer to this Christian polemic. But the attack may have been
more pointed; the very value, meaning, and purpose of Torah for
Judaism may have been assailed. And it is noteworthy, that certain
Midrashic statements speak directly to the issue.

A Midrash on Deuteronomy 11:18—"Therefore impress—
vesamtem—these My words upon your very heart: bind them as a
sign on your hand, and let them serve as a symbol upon your fore-
head"—elucidated the historical and moral importance of the Torah.
Interpreting the verb—vesamtem (impress)—as two nouns—sam tam
("a perfect remedy"), the Midrash continues:

This may be compared to a man who struck his son a strong blow,
and then put a poultice [retiyah] on his wound, saying to him, "My
son! As long as this poultice is on your wound you can eat and drink
at will, and bathe in hot or cold water, without fear. But if you
remove it, it will break out into sores." Even so did the Holy One,
blessed be He, speak unto Israel: "My children! I created the Evil
Inclination, but I (also) created the Torah, as its antidote; if you
occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into its
hand... but if you do not occupy yourselves with the Torah, you
will be delivered into its hand..." 36

Two antithetical approaches to Torah and its value emerge quite
graphically. God had created the inclination and its treatment. In
Sifre, God says: "My sons, I created for you an evil impulse; I created
for you the Law to temper it." 37 What for a Jewish author is a poultice
is, for Irenaeus, a straightjacket.

Irenaeus' arguments must be seen in the context of his battle
against the entire Gnostic tendency to dismiss the Law entirely as an
oversight of a foolish creator. That approach would have excused the Christians from even trying to fit the problem of the Law into God's providential scheme. Yet, Irenaeus accuses the Valentinians themselves of using accommodation for their nefarious purposes:

These most vain sophists affirm that the apostles did with hypocrisy frame their doctrine according to the capacity of their hearers . . . so that the Lord and the apostles exercised the office of teacher not to further the truth, but even in hypocrisy, and as each individual was able to receive it.38

Irenaeus asserts most emphatically that the glory of Christianity is its truth and that neither the message nor the messengers made any accommodation to the masses. This is in fact a positive aspect of an absolutely explicit accommodation theology, which we shall see approached in Origen's exegesis. Indeed, the author of The Second Treatise of the Great Seth launched the following attack on “orthodox” Christianity:

. . . we were hated and persecuted, not only by those who are ignorant (pagans), but also by those who think they are advancing the name of Christ, since they were unknowingly empty, not knowing who they are, like dumb animals.39

The criticism of the orthodox for being “dumb animals” implies that they possess an accommodated gospel, while the Gnostics, who possess the “real”—that is, an unaccommodated—gospel, are the true Christians and represent the true Church. If the orthodox established objective criteria for its adherents, the Gnostics stressed spiritual maturity. The Second Treatise of the Great Seth claims that the true church is composed of members “united in the friendship of friends forever, who neither know any hostility, nor evil, but who are united by my gnosis. . . .”40

One of the contested issues was, who possessed the proper understanding of the gospel. The Gnostic critique of orthodoxy centered, not on the fact orthodoxy had a false gospel, but that it did not properly understand the gospel it had. That is, the Gnostic position excoriated the orthodox for being tied solely to the most elementary level of interpretation, which precluded the possibility of obtaining the deeper truth contained in the text. The problem was that the orthodox failed to apprehend and appreciate the deeper gnosis available to those who could dive through the various levels of Scripture and plumb the great depths.41 All levels of Scripture contained truth,
but the deeper levels were suited to the more mature; the more superficial levels to the immature. This approach led to confrontation with the orthodox positions on doctrine, ritual, and ecclesiastical hierarchy: the basic elements of church organization. The attack of Irenaeus, the orthodox bishop of Lyons, against the Valentinians was part of the ongoing process of Christian self-definition; accommodation played a role in that process.

Irenaeus employs the Gnostic understanding of scriptural accommodation when he turns to the revelation given to the Jews and conflates it with medical imagery, a turn that was to prove very popular with many later exegetes. According to Irenaeus, the Lord did not prescribe medicine according to the whim of the patient, but gave the patient what was needed. "He therefore did not address them in accordance with their pristine notions, nor did He reply to them in harmony with the opinion of His questioners, but according to the doctrine leading to salvation, without hypocrisy or respect of person." Irenaeus insists that the Law was given to the Jews not by any God, but by the same one the Christians worship. Thus, accommodation, as applied by Irenaeus to the Jews, was essentially negative in character; yet, the concept was an accommodating one, and was to develop remarkably.

If the initial interpretations of sacrifice led to an incipient theory of accommodation, the schools and scholars of Alexandria were to refine and embellish it. Supported by the wealth of an intellectual tradition embracing Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian elements, Alexandrian exegetes would justify accommodation's use in Christian thought.

Perhaps it was Philo's comment on Genesis 11:5—"The lawgiver talks thus in human terms about God, even though he is not a human being, for the advantage of us who are being educated, as I have often said in other passages"—which underlay the entire edifice. It fell to Philo's most creative Christian student, Origen, to give accommodation perhaps its most eloquent expression.

Origen's major theological work, *On First Principles*, is a textbook on accommodation; explaining how the divine message is to be interpreted for human salvation. Origen's allegorical system equated the tripartite division of body, soul, and spirit with three levels of interpretation and scriptural truth. Each level has importance and is beneficial for the "multitudes of sincere and simple believers." (This, of course, was the issue between Irenaeus and the Valentinians.) Origen views this threefold nature of Scripture as a very good thing; not only does it enable the spiritual person to attain the highest level of truth, but it shields that level from the masses.
They Walked by Day as in Darkness

Origen conceded that simpler minds may understand Scripture in a superstitious way, but their only error is to misunderstand the divine purpose. Yet, they may be true in their belief. As Origen observed: "We teach about God both what is true and what the multitude can understand, though intelligent Christians understand it in a different sense." But Plato himself thinks it justifiable to tell a lie to a homicidal lunatic.47

This entire process of education was one that accommodated itself to different stages of human development, and for the Christian teacher, the problem was compounded. He must speak without upsetting the simple, yet without boring the more intelligent. Had not Paul accommodated his teachings to the carnal Corinthians, providing milk and not meat?48

Origen insists repeatedly that human weakness required a poor and humble style of Scripture.49 Scripture provided the signposts for salvation; it was a written revelation, but there was even a greater revelation, namely, the Incarnation:

While the Incarnation is a veritable revelation of God, it is the ladder by which we are to ascend from the flesh to the spirit, from the Son of Man to the Son of God. The incarnate Lord, like the written revelation in inspired scripture, is a veil that must be penetrated. It is an accommodation to our present capacities in this life. The Church’s present gospel will one day be superseded by that which the Seer of the Apocalypse calls the everlasting gospel, a heavenly comprehension of truth that will surpass our present understanding by at least as much as the new covenant surpasses the old.50

Nor is a superficial reading of Scripture sufficient for proper understanding, for the three levels that Origen delineates are often intermingled:

A similar method can be discerned also in the law, where it is often possible to find a precept that is useful for its own sake, and suitable to the time when the law was given. Sometimes, however, the precept does not appear to be useful. At other times even impossibilities are recorded in the law for the sake of the more skillful and inquiring readers, in order that these, by giving themselves to the toil of examining what is written, may gain a sound conviction of the necessity of seeking in such instances a meaning worthy of God.51

Origen recognizes, as did Irenaeus, the historical accommodations made in Scripture, yet his interpretation differs greatly. Origen
seems to understand two dimensions to positive accommodation. The first is to use scriptural style and language as a challenge, for without impossibilities being recorded in the Law the "more skillful and inquiring readers" would have little incentive to pore over the sacred page. The Lord thus spurs the more skillful student on to deeper truths. The second is the way in which Scripture stoops to accommodate the simpleminded. These dimensions of accommodation would become more prominent in later exegesis.52

In concluding his remarks on the proper exegetical method, Origen states his position emphatically:

Let everyone, then, who cares for truth, care little about names and words, for different kinds of speech are customary in different nations. Let him be more anxious about the fact signified than about the words by which it is signified, and particularly in questions of . . . difficulty and importance. . . . Our aim has been to show that there are certain things, the meaning of which it is impossible adequately to explain by any human language, but which are made clear rather through simple apprehension than through any power of words.53

For Origen, this is the second side of positive accommodation and is expressed through the metaphor of the adult stooping to help the child. "He condescends [sygkatābē] and accommodates Himself to our weakness [ástheneía], like a schoolmaster talking a 'little language' to his children, like a father caring for his own children and adopting their ways."54 Was that not what Origen was doing for the simpleminded? He labored to bring higher insights to the attention of inferior capacities; to provoke and cajole so that in time they might comprehend things presently beyond their range.55

In replying to Celsus' critique of biblical anthropomorphisms, Origen will exploit the same metaphor, though more expansively:

Just as when we are talking to very small children we do not assume as the object of our instruction any strong understanding in them, but say what we have to say accommodating it to the small understanding of those whom we have before us [all harmosámenos prós to ástheneías tôn hypokriménōn], and even do what seems to us useful for the education and upbringing of children, realizing that they are children: so the Word of God seems to have disposed the things which were written, adapting the suitable parts of his message to the capacity of his hearers and to their ultimate profit.56

Perhaps Origen's most extended and dazzling use of the familial metaphor—which would be employed no less spectacularly by Chrysostom—
occurs in his elucidation of Jeremiah 18:6–10, which seems to describe God changing his mind and repenting of evil he contemplated. For Origen, accommodation explains how God could be said to change. After presenting biblical citations culled from both testaments, Origen writes:

But when divine providence [oikonomia] is involved in human affairs, God assumes human intelligence, manners and language. When we talk to a child of two we talk “baby-talk” because he is a child, for as long as we maintain the character appropriate to an adult age, and speak to children without condescending [mé sygkatabainontas] to their language, it is impossible for children to comprehend. Now imagine a similar situation confronting God when he deals with humans especially those who are still “babes” [népion]. Notice too how we adults change the names of things for children, we have a special name for bread, and we call drinking by another name without using “grown-up” language, but we use another language adapted for infants and nurselings . . . [lérei tini paidikê kai brephôdei]. And if we name clothes to children we give the clothes other names, as if we made up a special children’s language. Are we then immature because we do this? And if someone hears us speaking this way with children, would he say, “This old man is losing his mind, this man has forgotten that his beard has grown, that he is a grown-up?” Or is it permissible for the sake of accommodation [symeriperhoran], when we are speaking with a child not to speak the language of older and mature people [presbûtikê mèðe eneilei], but to converse in a child’s language [paidikê]? God surely speaks to children.57

Origen truly displays his genius in this superb description of divine accommodation. Accommodation helped him explain divine revelation, the relationship between God and man, divine providence, and other issues.58 It provided him with a powerful tool with which he could try to teach his less gifted brethren truths that they could not, by themselves, grasp. Origen might have employed accommodation as a speculative theologian and philosopher, but as a teacher, he utilized it because it served his needs so well. His embrace of this exegetical device assured it a place in Christian thought. And it is with Eusebius of Caesarea, deeply indebted though he was to Origen for his theology, philosophy, and exegesis, that accommodation, in addition to being an exegetical and polemical device, would emerge as a tool of historical examination.59

Eusebius’ works must be set in the context of his life. He lived in a part of the Roman Empire that had strong Christian roots. His
early years saw little persecution of Christianity, and the attacks on the nascent faith that his middle years witnessed yielded to the rule of a Christian emperor. He "began as a scholar, made himself into a historian, and turned to apologetics only under the pressure of circumstances. ... The three dominant characteristics of his thought are a continual emphasis on the Bible, an intellectual framework which derives from Origen, and the celebration of the success of Christianity in the Roman world."60

Eusebius began composing his two tracts on the gospel shortly after Licinius defeated Maximinus in 313 and completed them before Maximinus' fall eleven years later.61 The Preparation for the Gospel (Praeparatio Evangelica) surveys the historical relationship between Christianity and Greco-Roman civilization, and The Proof of the Gospel (Demonstratio Evangelica) explores the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. In our examination of Eusebius, we shall focus on the latter work.

In setting forth his "proof of the gospel," Eusebius employed all of his skills and demonstrated his expertise in secular and sacred history, classical literature, philosophy, geography, exegesis, and even mathematics. He sets forth his central thesis in his Church History, refines it in his Prophetic Extracts, and displays it fully in The Preparation for the Gospel and The Proof of the Gospel.

Eusebius asserts that Christianity is nothing else than the religion taught by the prophets of Israel; that is, not only a true faith but the faith primeval. With that as his starting point, Eusebius, as we shall see, spins a web of great size and suppleness, embracing the totality of human existence. It is noteworthy that the Prophetic Extracts form part of his General Elementary Introduction,62 a work written to convince pagans not only of the inferiority of their own tradition to the Judeo-Christian teaching but the superiority of the Christian component of the latter. Eusebius defends his position by attacking the "incorrect" Jewish interpretations and the "heretical" views of such teachers as Marcion.63

Eusebius well understood that his message had to be adapted to his audience:

For who of the faithful would not confess that the stores of salvation concerning the Word of God are incomparably superior to every bodily pleasure and benefit, being suited for the acquisition of truly beneficial and healthy correctness of belief? To respect this is necessary not only for those who have made moral progress and are called "kings," but also for those who are at a lower level and are

© 1993 State University of New York, Albany
just approaching the divine word for the first time. I think that my enterprise will be especially suitable for them, so that they may be able thereby to understand thoroughly the truth of matters about which they have been informed (Luke 1:4). Pure and simple faith possesses the firm force of conviction all the more when a man uses his reason and first lays foundations by demonstration and then receives elementary instruction in the certain apprehension and knowledge of what must be accepted on faith.  

Eusebius believes that God has revealed himself to man only twice in history: once to the patriarchs of Israel and again in the Incarnation of the Logos. During that long intervening period, mankind had no direct apprehension of the divine. Since the patriarchs came before the Mosaic dispensation, they were, of course, Gentiles, yet they knew the Lord. The Mosaic dispensation was geared to those who followed the patriarchs and knew of God only indirectly and through shadowy representations. The Mosaic Code fit the times in which it was given, though it did contain all the details necessary to recognize Christ when he appeared. The Mosaic Code paved the way for the Incarnation, and properly interpreted, it yielded its prophetic treasure. The Jews, not recognizing what they had been given, turned against Christ, and thus lost their political independence. The ongoing punishment of the Jews in Eusebius' own time and the great strides made by Christianity only proved Eusebius' assertions.  

The great discrepancies between the ill-fortune of the Jews and the good fortune of the Christians are repeated constantly in the Prophetic Extracts and in another of Eusebius' works, the Second Theophany:  

This was uttered before the event; the Savior foretold what would be, and it soon came about, so that fulfillment of the events was seen by men's eyes not long afterward. Since his time, throughout the whole inhabited world of man, among all races, the symbols of the kingdom of God have been visible through his churches, with myriads living in them according to the gospel of salvation and endearing to worship God like the ancient prophets and Abraham himself, Isaac, and Jacob. For they too, though they preceded in time the laws of Moses, were conspicuous for living and conducting themselves according to the gospel, since they despised the polytheistic error inherited from their fathers and received the knowledge of the supreme God. For this reason, it was said that the majority of the gentiles would come from east and west, and that they would become equal to Abraham and those other blessed men because of
their equally good way of life. How the descendants and successors of those same men, called sons of the kingdom because of their forefathers (for potentially, like their forefathers, they had a share in the heavenly kingdom), have been deprived of their promised blessings is shown clearly by the sack of their city, the siege of their temple, their scattering among all the races of mankind, their enslavement to their enemies, and, in addition, their deprivation of worship according to Jewish custom, their ignorance of Christ, and their alienation from the teachings of the gospel. All these things should be manifest signs of the darkness which has enveloped them, into which they have stumbled because they oppose the light of salvation.  

For Eusebius, the verdict of history is final and without appeal. The Jewish people have forfeited what had been theirs; they have been supplanted and replaced by the Gentiles who recognize Christ. This entire scenario and approach are, by now, well known, and Eusebius displays his enormous creativity and exegetical skill in The Proof of the Gospel. Eusebius elaborates an interpretation fully consonant with that in his other works, and thus the following analysis may serve as a representation of the totality of Eusebius’ thought.

As Eusebius undertakes his reconstruction of Jewish history, he notes that the righteous of old did not observe any of the ritual practices of Judaism; they were neither circumcised, nor observed dietary laws; they knew nothing of the Sabbath, but lived “according to the Gospel of Christ.” Eusebius weaves together passages from Job 31 and Matthew to show how the righteous who existed before Moses struggled to live a virtuous life.

He summarizes his presentation:

So and in such ways the pre-Mosaic saints [theophílon àndrón] (for from the record of one we may imagine the life of all), waged their renowned contests for good, and were reckoned friends [phíloi] of God, and prophets. What need had they of the commandments of Moses, which were given to weak and sinful men [phalots àndrási kai moxthérots]? From all this it is abundantly proved that the Word of God announced to all nations the ancient form of their ancestors’ religion, as the new covenant does not differ from their form of holiness, which was very ancient even in the time of Moses, so that it is at the same time both old and new [tòste homoi kai palaian aútén elnai kai neán]. It is, as I have shown, very, very old; and, on the other hand, it is new through having been as it were hidden away from men through a long period between, and now come to life again by the Saviour’s teaching.
Eusebius thus advances not an antinomian theory, but an “antinomian” theory; that is, Christianity is a return to the status quo ante. It is not a return to an ecclesia vera et primitiva nor a synagoga vera et primitiva. It is a return to that faith, pure and true, which preceded the Mosaic Code; it applauds people who were not so much before the Law, but in the truest sense of the word, above the Law. The true Law existed and was hidden away, only to emerge once again through the message of Christ. The Law has been superseded, not by a new Law, but by an “old yet new” Law. That is, Christianity is the older, truer faith; if you will, the “old” Israel reborn. Judaism thus becomes an intruder, and Eusebius explains this intrusion:

And it was in this intermediate period, while the ideal of the new covenant was hidden from men, and as it were asleep, that the law of Moses was interposed [pareiselthôn] in the interval. It was like a nurse and governess of childish and imperfect souls [hotâ tis népion kai átelôn psychôn epitropos kai oïkonómos]. It was like a doctor to heal the whole Jewish race, worn away by the terrible disease of Egypt. As such it offered a lower and less perfect way of life to the children of Abraham. For through their long sojourn in Egypt, after the death of their godly forefathers, they adopted Egyptian customs, and, as I have said, fell into idolatrous superstition.\textsuperscript{70}

The Old Law for Eusebius, basing himself upon Romans 5:20, was an intruder that had been stealthily inserted into history. It came as a pedagogue and physician. Eusebius interprets the Law using the metaphors of his experience; that is, the image of Roman tutela of minors. It came to cure the “disease of Egypt”; the idolatrous practices associated with Egypt. For Eusebius, the Jews became like the Egyptians in all respects, including idolatry. It was Moses who tore them away from their godless polytheism and led them back to God.\textsuperscript{71}

The “disease of Egypt” was idolatry. Laws were enacted to proscribe many acts that had hitherto been freely practiced. Yet, for Eusebius, this was not the sum total of Moses’ accomplishments; they were more numerous and are enumerated:

He rescued them from their wild and savage life [paralabôn dê èk ánêmêrou kai thēriôdous bión], and gave them a polity based on better reason and good law as the times went, and was the first lawgiver to codify his enactments in writing, a practice which was not yet known to men. He dealt with them as imperfect, and when he forbade idolatry, he commanded them to worship the One Omnipotent God by sacrifices and bodily ceremonies. He enacted that
they should conduct by certain mystic symbols the ritual that he
dAINED, which the Holy Spirit taught him in a wonderful way was
only to be temporary: he drew a circle round one place and forbade
them to celebrate their ordinances anywhere, except in one place
alone, namely at the Temple in Jerusalem, and never outside it.72

Eusebius has presented a sweeping reinterpretation of Jewish
enslavement, manumission, and revelation that reverberates with
the whole mystique of the end of the "beast-like life" and raises the
question of the origins of society. This was an issue explored by many
classical authors and is perhaps best encapsulated in the myth of
Athens. Eusebius' historical exploration fits into that tradition and
anchors him firmly in the classical tradition shared by educated pa-
gans and early Christians.

Perhaps the most famous example of this genre is the Panathenaic
Discourse of Aelius Aristides.73 This study of Athens and its place as
the mother of civilization, composed between 165 and 170 C.E., praises
the Athenians as the creators of civilized life and paideia.74 Aristides
took his place in a long line of authors of encomia to cities and took up
the themes adumbrated by Diodoros and others. As Diodoros observed:

If it can be said of any other people, the prestige of the city of the
Athenians deserves our reverences, and we may well return to
them our gratitude for the benefactions they have bestowed upon
man. For it is they who first gave to the Hellenes a share in a food
gained by cultivation of the soil, which, though they had received it
from the gods for their exclusive use, they made available to all.
They it was who discovered laws, by the application of which the
manner of men's living has advanced from the savage and unjust
existence to a civilized and just society.75

A most interesting inscription at Delphi contained a decree of
the Delphic Amphictyony in honor of the Athenians and likens their
mission to a religious duty. The decree in part praises the Athenians
for contributing laws, agriculture, tragedy, and comedy, indeed, all
drama to humanity. One line in particular merits consideration. We
read that the Athenians led mankind out of an animal (savage) exist-
ence (….ἐγ Μὲν τῷ θήριωδους βίου μετέγαγεν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰς
ἡμερότη) into civilization.76 The entire treatise, which traces Athe-
nian history, attempts to prove that Athens attained its importance
through cultural imperialism—that is, the conquest of others by means
of her language, literature, and philosophy.77 Indeed, Athens is seen
as the intermediary between the human and the divine.78
What is at stake in this remarkable discourse is much more than simply praise of a city. In asserting that Athens was the mediator between the divine and human, Aristides was reclaiming the Logos for the pagan side. No longer was it to be thought of as the Christian Christ, nor was it the Jewish Torah, but the forces of the Logos—the men of Athens—were to lead the battle against the demonic forces of the world.79 Aristides contrasts the noted antipathy of Christians and Jews for the rest of mankind with the philanthropia of the Athenians, and Aristides’ voice harmonizes with Celsus’ critique of Christianity.80

Aristides stressed the ethos of the Athenians, and in so doing no doubt saw Christianity more as a form of barbarism than as a simple aberrant form of Hellenism. Aristides’ language, at times, assumes religious colorings and raises the vision of history suffused with additional quality and meaning. This aspect of thought is also found in Justin, repeated in the Panathenaic, and taken up again by Celsus. Aristides used the same language as Eusebius, though for very different purposes and with different intents. Where Aristides drew on a pagan tradition of great antiquity and wealth, Eusebius, heir to the same tradition, employed Scripture instead.

Eusebius understood the role of the Law to be a positive one in leading humanity out of its animal and savage existence into civilization. His view stands in opposition to the interpretation advanced by Justin and Irenaeus. For them, the Law was punitive in nature and was given to combat the untransformed evil inclination resident in Israel. Eusebius adopted a more progressive attitude than either of his predecessors. And where they polemicized with their view and interpretation of the Law, Eusebius’ more positive view was also part of the Jewish-Christian polemic.

Perhaps Jewish-Hellenistic literature as well as rabbinic sources demonstrate the issues at stake. Various Midrashic comments uphold the opinion that all culture and civilization itself are traceable to Adam. It was he who brought blessings to humankind, but these were lost after his error in Eden. One ought not be surprised to find that Socrates was a student of Ahitophel, nor that Plato had studied with Moses.81 Indeed, one need only recall Numenius’ famous quip that Plato was simply an “Atticizing” Moses.82

Eusebius, in the Preparation of the Gospel, preserved the writings of Artapanus, a Hellenized Egyptian Jew who meticulously set out the Jewish contributions to civilization. Indeed, Abraham is praised as the father of astronomy and astrology; Joseph is thanked for introducing an orderly society into Egypt, as well as its territorial divi-
sions; Moses is the author of writing; and of course, the Jews gave the world philosophy.\textsuperscript{83}

Some of Eusebius' comments about Moses seem to echo Jewish claims on his behalf. For Eusebius, Moses put God's Law into a written form and presented the Israelites with a new way of life, while rescuing them from their debased life-style. Dealing with them according to their level, Moses restricted religious practices to Jerusalem. Eusebius advances his interpretation of Jewish history:

And they have come to this impasse, although Moses himself foresaw by the Holy Spirit, that, when the new covenant was revived by Christ and preached to the nations, his own legislation would become superfluous, he rightly confined its influence to one place, so that if they were ever deprived of it, and shut out of their national freedom, it might not be possible for them to carry out the ordinances of his law in a foreign country, and as of necessity they would have to receive the new covenant announced by Christ. Moses had foretold this very thing and in due course Christ sojourned in this life, and the teaching of the new covenant was borne to all nations, and at once \textit{parachrêma} the Romans besieged Jerusalem, and destroyed it and the Temple there.\textsuperscript{84}

Moses, according to Eusebius, knew the fate of the Law even as he was proclaiming it. Its observance was purposely limited so that it might eventually pass away and allow the "return" of the new and true covenant. The Romans, acting out their role in the mystery of redemption, destroyed the Temple, immediately \textit{parachrêma}\textsuperscript{85} abolishing the Old Covenant. The Romans annulled one law and fulfilled another; Christ came to restore the Law to its pristine state. With the destruction of the city and Temple, the whole of the Mosaic Code was abolished, and those who continued to observe it were cursed, for they observed a nonexistent law (cf. Deut. 27:26). The Lord could now be worshiped anywhere (cf. John 4:23), and Eusebius is quick to point out the effect of his interpretation:

Presently, \textit{parachrêma} not long after, Jerusalem was besieged, the holy place and the altar near it and the worship conducted according to Moses' ordinances were destroyed, and the archetypal holiness of the pre-Mosaic men of God reappeared. And the blessing assured thereby to all nations came, to lead those who came to it from the first step and from the first elements \textit{têς prôtês stoicheiôseôs} of the Mosaic worship to a better and more perfect life. Yes, the religion of those blessed and godly men, who did not worship in any one place exclusively, neither by symbols nor types, but as our Lord and saviour requires "in spirit and in truth," by our Saviour's ap-