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Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul's Writing

Mr Parsons teaches Ethics and Philosophy of Religion at London Bible College. The question of the basis of Paul's ethical teaching in his theology is one that continues to arouse discussion, and we welcome this helpful analysis of recent research on the subject, backed up as it is by a careful exegesis of some of the key passages.

The relationship between the indicative and the imperative in Paul's writing is sometimes and understandably seen as the basic structure of his ethics.[1] By 'indicative' we have in mind the fact that the new life in Christ is a work of God; it finds its origin in the death and resurrection of the Lord and comes into being through the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer is thus a new creation; a member of Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit; he is regenerated, and so on. By 'imperative' we mean that the apostle also indicates that the new life thus given is to be continually manifested and worked out by the Christian Believer. T. J. Keegan[2] suggests too much in expressing the relationship as 'a tension-producing opposition'; yet it is true that there is inherent in the relationship of the 'is' and 'ought' statements[3] a problem posed for readers of Pauline correspondence. To put this in the words of Stanley Hauerwas may usefully begin our discussion. He says, '. . . it is not clear . . . how the "indicatives" of the faith—God has done X and Y for you—provide the rationale or justify the imperatives: Do this X and Y. To put it concretely, there seems to be a problem

[1] See, for example, W. Dennison, 'Indicative and Imperative: The Basic Structure of Pauline Ethics' *CTJ* (1979), 1. 55–78, particularly 73; R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1 (ET, London, 1955), 315–332; A. Verhey, *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1984), 104–106.

[2] T. J. Keegan, 'Paul's Dying/Rising Ethics in 1 Corinthians' in R. J. Daly (ed.) *Christian Biblical Ethics* (New York, 1984), 220–244, particularly 228.

[3] J. C. Gagar, 'Functional Diversity in Paul's Use of End-Time Language' *JBL* (1970). 3. 325–337, distinguishes them in this way.

about how the admonitions Paul delivers in Romans 12 follow from and/or are integral to the claim of justification in Romans 3.'[4]

What follows is a brief attempt to outline the problem and to come to tentative conclusions which will, perhaps, be pointers to a clearer reading of Paul's letters and their ethical application. First the positions of Pauline scholars are distinguished—perhaps, rather artificially—as falling into three distinct categories: namely, that the indicatives and the imperatives are virtually not related; that they are so closely related as to be indistinguishable; and the middle position between these two extremes which holds that the indicatives and imperatives are very closely related yet that they maintain their distinctiveness. This will make clear the problem and show something of the marked divergence that recent attempts in this area have shown. Secondly, through an analysis of three individual examples (Rom 12:1–2; Phil 2:12–13; Gal 5:25) and a longer, sustained argument (1 Cor 6:12–20), the relationship between indicative and imperative in Paul's writing is shown to be, basically, that of the third position mentioned above. From this we can turn our attention to more specific conclusions that can be drawn from the study.

The virtual irrelation of indicative and imperative

C. H. Dodd is a principal and influential example of a New Testament scholar who seems to hold the indicative and the imperative of Pauline theology at arm's length from each other. This he does in an attempt to show that both are of equal importance, both are essential to the apostle's thinking.[5] It is true that Dodd seeks to bring them into and to define a relationship between them, but in the attempt, I suggest, he actually divorces the two aspects of Paul's thought. The reason for this can best be discerned from a brief examination of his ideas on this point.

Dodd recognizes two distinct elements in the New Testament's understanding of Christianity: the religious element and the ethical. The former aspect denotes, amongst other things, faith, worship, communion with God, salvation and hope; the latter includes conduct, moral judgement, and the like. Dodd realizes the need to discover a relationship between 'religion' (which, broadly speaking, corresponds to 'indicative') and 'ethics' (imperative). He says, for example, 'it is impossible to understand either the ethical content of Christianity or its religious content unless we can in some measure hold these two

[4] S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (London, 1983), 92.
[5] C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law* (Cambridge, 1963), 3–4.

together and understand them in their true, organic relations within a whole.'[6] Indicative and imperative *are* organically related, then. What does he make of this? How does he see the relationship? Surprisingly, perhaps, he seems effectively to drive a wedge between the two in his subsequent considerations of the problem. He speaks of them as two distinct 'parts': '. . . but the division between the two parts, though it is not absolute, is pretty well marked.'[7] How, then, is this 'well marked' division discernible in Paul's teaching and, perhaps more importantly, *why* is it there?

The division is seen, according to Dodd, very clearly in the division of the contents of Paul's letters. The epistles are 'divided into two main parts. The first part deals with specifically religious themes—deals with them, in the main, in the reflective manner which constitutes theology—and the second part consists mainly of ethical precepts and admonitions.'[8] For this idea he cites Romans, Galatians, Colossians and Ephesians as good examples, but insists that, by analogy, the other letters show the same tendency. This is supposed to be reflective of the earliest form of Christianity which was two-fold: kerygma and didache.[9]

By the use of 'kerygma' Dodd means 'proclamation', 'public announcement' or 'declaration' (that is, preaching, gospel) whose content was the life and work of Jesus Christ, together with his resurrection from the dead; the aim of which was to speak to men of present confrontation with God, who had acted decisively in history. It also spoke to men of judgement to come. Those who then responded would be instructed in the ethical principles and obligations of the Christian life. Dodd adds that this is 'distinct from the proclamation', this is didache (that is, ethics, life, moral exhortations and instruction, teaching). His summary, again, tends to divide indicative and imperative in an irretrievable way: he states, '. . . first the kerygma, then didache'.[10] Though, at

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[6] *ibid*, 4. Later, he describes the relationship as the ethical teaching being 'embedded' in a context which consists of a report of historical facts and an explanation of their religious significance. 8.

[7] *ibid*, 5.

[8] *ibid*, 5.

[9] *ibid*, 66. See 9–13; 66–67. This is discussed more fully in *The Apostolic Preaching and its Development* (London, 1936): lecture 1, 'The Primitive Preaching', 1–74; particularly 3–4, 17–18.

[10] *Gospel*, 10. Dodd defines 'kerygma' as that which God has done for men, and 'didache' as that which God expects of men. See 66ff. Also, see, *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), 83ff. Dodd here argues a clear distinction between 'living by the Spirit' and 'walking by the Spirit' which seems to closely correspond to the kerygma/didache distinction outlined elsewhere.

times, he insists that they *are* related, Dodd forces them apart. At best, kerygma is merely a corollary to the facts—not in any real way integral to them.

The reason for this unsatisfactory conclusion seems to be his view of the origin of the ethical elements in the apostle's writing. That is to say, he concludes on the basis of the recurrent presence of traditional ethical instructional material (catechesis) that Paul is simply following a partly stereotyped pattern of exhortation: 'It appears, then, that the ethical portions of the epistles are based upon an accepted pattern of teaching which goes back to a very early period indeed . . .'[11] This material is not necessarily to be conceived as Christian in origin: it may derive from the Graeco-Roman society in general, a society attempting to improve public morals. These ethical ideas were transformed, according to Dodd, by being brought into a context of Christian theology: principally with four concepts—Christian eschatology, the idea of the body of Christ, the imitation of Christ, and the primacy of love or charity. In other words, the basic building blocks are there in the society of Paul's day and are brought almost complete to a new relevance in Christian thought. No-one would argue that there is an absence of catechetical material in the New Testament, but Dodd's thesis has the effect of differentiating the imperative decisively from the indicative. Accordingly, the indicative and imperative are, and remain, quite separate.

This basic idea affected his exposition, of course. For example, on Gal 5:13 he states that 'Paul is clearly making a transition from the rather controversial theology of the earlier chapters to ethical instruction.' A similar comment accompanies the transition between Romans 11 and 12 where he says, 'Outstanding theological problems have now been disposed of . . .', now Paul turns to ethical exhortation.[12]

Both the strength and the weakness of this position are obvious. Having distinguished so clearly between indicative and imperative, Dodd is able to give due weight and to attach equal importance to each. However, the weakness of such an idea is that it divorces the imperative from the indicative so much that it prevents Dodd from questioning a relationship between them in such a way as to come to any real or worthwhile conclusion. This is precisely Furnish's criticism of Dodd's work at this point.[13]

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[11] *Gospel*, 20.

[12] *ibid*, 16; *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London, 1970), 197, respectively.

[13] V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, 1968), 273.

Furnish sees the problem as 'Dodd's extraordinarily sharp distinction between doctrine and ethics . . .' Ultimately, then, Dodd's overemphasis on the distinction between the indicative and the imperative is unsatisfactory and unworkable as a true reflection of Paul's thought.

The fusion of indicative and imperative

A more widely held view of the relationship of indicative and imperative is that held, in different ways, by such scholars as Bultmann, Furnish and Ramsey, which posits such a close correlation between them that the two virtually become one; or at least two sides of the same coin.[14]

Bultmann certainly teaches that the indicative and the imperative structure is basic to Pauline thought and, indeed, this becomes his own chief interest.[15]

For Bultmann there is seen to be an inner unity between indicative and imperative which is reflected in Love.[16] This concept of unity is matched in the somewhat ambivalent way that Bultmann is able to speak of that relationship. On the one hand, he recognises that the imperative stems from the indicative.[17] The indicative is, in this sense, the Christian who is a new creature, and from this newness emerges ethical behaviour. 'Decision rests . . . in what at any given time I already am.'[18] On the other hand, it appears from Bultmann's theology that the reverse is also equally true. As Dennison puts it, 'For Bultmann the indicative can only be realised or laid hold of in the Christian's experience by the imperative, that is, man's daily existential decision to walk in the obedience of God by faith in the Christ-event.'[19] In this respect, then, Bultmann speaks of 'the love in which the new creation becomes a reality (Gal 5:6, 6:15)' and the eschatological event 'becoming real, *so far as* love is really present.'[20] For him, then, the indicative and imperative have become one in the

[14] One could add others to this list—notably, perhaps, B. Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ* (Slough, 1978), who holds a similar view, maintaining that the indicative *becomes* the imperative, (vol 1, 149–150; vol 2, 389, for example); P. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (London: SCM, 1963).

[15] See Dennison *CTJ* (1979) 55–78; Furnish, *op cit*, 262.

[16] R. Bultmann, *Essays* (ET London, 1955), 112.

[17] e.g. Bultmann, *Theology* vol 1, 332. He cites Rom 6:14; 1 Cor 6:11, (*Theology*, 1. 315).

[18] See, for example, Bultmann, *This World and Beyond* (ET London, 1960), 71; *Essays*, 80.

[19] Dennison, *op cit*, 62.

[20] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (ET London, 1961), 145, 245; *Faith and Understanding* (ET London, 1969), 79, respectively. (my emphasis)

moment of decision. It is this last phrase that is essential to our understanding of Bultmann's position. If we are to conclude that Bultmann's thesis at this point is fundamentally inadequate because it merges indicative and imperative too closely together—indeed, it makes them one—then we need to see *why* this is so. The answer to this seems to lie in two directions: that is, first, his existentialist presuppositions and, second, his subsequent fear of legalism.

Bultmann seeks to effect a synthesis between Christianity and existentialism[21] which is bound to affect his view of the indicative/imperative relationship. Following Heidegger (particularly his work *Sein und Zeit*) Bultmann suggests that man truly exists *only* when he chooses his freedom in responsibility in the moment of decision, or at the decisive time (*Geschichte*). He thus locates meaning only in the present—denying that existence is a continuum at all.[22]

It is clear from this that the structure assumes that the Christian existence cannot be termed 'an accomplished fact' and that, therefore, it would make nonsense of trying to separate the indicative from the imperative in the moment of decision. We can see that Bultmann's immanence philosophy has a controlling influence on his understanding at this juncture. However, it is an entirely inadequate starting point in theology. D. L. Baker indicates its inadequacy as 'a fundamental limitation of the existential method. By definition', he continues, 'its concern is with human existence and therefore only indirectly with God.'[23] Paul's ethical teaching rests on God's work accomplished historically by Christ and the subsequent status given to the believer—a point that escapes Bultmann's presuppositional stance.

The other reason for Bultmann's inadequate interpretation of Pauline ethics is his seeking to rid his theology from the danger of

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[21] There is, of course, a great deal of literature on this point. See for example, H.-H. Schrey, 'The Consequences of Bultmann's Theology for Ethics' in C. W. Kegley (ed.) *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (ET London, 1966), 183–200.

[22] R. C. Roberts, *Rudolf Bultmann's Theology: A Critical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, 1976), 50, says, 'It is neither static, nor does it develop'—that is, it is the present moment which is the whole of its reality. He further explains this: '. . . a man is not in existential time, but rather becomes temporal in the moment of decision.' (51)

[23] D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible* (Leicester, 1976) 175. Interestingly, R. Harrisville, 'Bultmann's Concept of the Transition from Inauthentic to Authentic Existence' in R. Harrisville/C. Braaten (eds) *Kerygma and Myth* (New York, 1962), 212, 228, argues that Bultmann's fault was not *in using* Existentialist philosophy, but in *misusing* it in his interpretation.

legalism and his consequent proposal for a radical obedience. The problem, as he discerns it, is that an ethical imperative could be learned and could become man's possession and security. He distinguishes, therefore, between 'formal authority/obedience' and 'radical authority/obedience'. The former is to be seen as a blind obedience to the commandment; for example, where man obeys simply because it is commanded. This, he argues, precludes man's complete obedience. The latter is a response to the demand of a concrete situation. Bultmann therefore rejects an articulated ethical system, believing that the command to love is not an ethical principle from which rules can be derived: 'I myself must at any given time perceive what it (love) demands at any given time.'[24] So, again, the indicative and the imperative must, on that basis, become virtually one in the moment of decision.

Roberts sees as positive Bultmann's fear of legalism as a motive in teaching radical obedience, but reasonably argues that it is not legalism merely to follow a rule. Legalism derives from motive and objective in following that rule.[25] Paul's writing itself is full of regulations, instructions and injunctions, and these are clearly not seen as threats to human responsibility and obedience.[26] It remains the case, also, that Bultmann nowhere develops a satisfactory reason for their existence or an approach to their use.

Ultimately, then, Bultmann's position is dialectical and distinctively existential and sees less of the transforming effect of the historical, as well as the present, indicative in the believer's empirical life than Paul seems to assert.[27]

A more moderate position is taken by V. P. Furnish who reaches the conclusion that the indicative and imperative are one in that the former includes the latter without necessarily identifying them and saying that the one *is* the other.

In his work *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, Furnish analyses Romans to show that a clear-cut distinction between indicative and imperative such as is suggested by Dodd cannot, in fact, be sustained.[28] He states, more generally, 'Not only do the letters serve to reaffirm, defend, and clarify the preaching, but—as the apostle himself specifically says in 1 Thess 2:11–12 and 4:2—his original evangelizing activity already included exhortation,

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[24] See, *Essays*, 79; also, 174–175. See *TNT* vol 1, 19; *History and Eschatology* (ET Edinburgh, 1957), 46; *Essays*, 155.

[25] Roberts, *op cit*, 278. See also, 72, 74, 275.

[26] e.g. Rom 12:13–14; 1 Thess 4:1f; 5:12f; 2 Thess 3:6f.

[27] See Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 138, 264. Also *TNT* vol 1, 338–339, 156.

[28] Furnish, *Theology*, 106–111, 112–114.

encouragement, and instruction.'[29] He bases his analysis on the assumption that Paul gives his theme in Rom 1:16–17: that is, that the whole of the letter is an explication of the gospel of righteousness from God, 'a righteousness that is by faith from first to last' (v. 17). This is seen to be worked out equally in the assertions of the first eleven chapters and the more obvious exhortations clustered from chapter 12 following. Therefore, he argues, rightly, that the objective of the final four chapters is the same—not different—to that of the first eleven. Furnish concludes, then, that 'Romans has, almost from the beginning, an hortatory aspect of which chs 12–15 are only, so to speak, the denouement . . .'[30]

Furnish further shows that an interpretation of the apostle's ethics dare not restrict itself to the so-called 'ethical sections' of his letters and goes on to question the division of letters into 'theological' and 'ethical' parts.[31] However, on this basis Furnish argues against the distinction between 'kerygma' and 'didache'.[32] He does this along three lines. First, he claims that 'kerygma' is not a series of theological propositions: rather it is the event of preaching (1 Thess 2:13; Rom 9:6; 1 Cor 2:4) 'and God's coming to men in the preached word, not the verbal substance of that preaching.'[33] 'Kergyma', that is, is almost synonymous (in Paul's usage) with both 'gospel' and 'the word of God'. Secondly, he says that it is misleading to define 'didache' as merely moral instruction as opposed to theological propositions. By 'didache' the apostle intends preaching (Rom 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor 14:6; 6:26). Thirdly, Furnish states that 'exhortation' can be used interchangeably with 'gospel'. Though Dodd assumes that paraclesis is synonymous with and designates 'moral instruction'[34], this is not, in fact, the case.

Furnish's own position, which is essentially opposite to that of Dodd, becomes clear. Though he states that 'from the gift arises the demand' and says that the earliest church's ethical teaching 'was founded upon' theological bases[35], he suggests that it is not right to say that the imperative is 'based on' or 'proceeds out of' the indicative. In fact, grace is inclusive of obedience, and therefore he posits the idea of the unity of indicative/imperative:

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[29] *ibid*, 113.
[30] *ibid*, 101.
[31] *ibid*, 207, 110.
[32] *ibid*, 106ff.
[33] *ibid*, 107.
[34] Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, 8.
[35] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 156; *The Love Command in the New Testament* (London, 1973), 215, respectively.

'The Pauline imperative is not just the result of the indicative but *fully integral to it.*' This he calls 'the imperative indicative'.[36] Again, in a more recent work, Furnish draws the relationship by suggesting that love is 'a command inherent in the gift.'[37] It is because of this that Furnish rejects the notion of progress in Christian life. He says, 'If "progress" is to include the idea of increasing "achievement", then Paul allows no progress.' He bases this on the following reasoning: 'The idea of progressive achievement supposes that there is some programme of action which can ultimately be accomplished, such as full compliance with law or full correspondence to a pattern or example. But nothing of this sort exists for Paul.'[38] This is, of course, consistent with his general idea of the imperative indicative. He insists that achievement is wholly given, *not* attained.

The force of this conclusion is that it does draw a close relationship between the indicative and the imperative; a relationship lacking, say, in Dodd's position outlined above. This is brought out most clearly in the following paragraph: 'Paul's preaching of love does not' just stand alongside his emphasis on justification by faith but is vitally related to it. To believe in Christ means to belong to him, and to belong to him means to share in his death and in the power of his resurrection. Thereby one's whole life is radically reoriented from sin to righteousness . . .'[39] In this way it certainly appears to do justice to Paul's thinking. However, its inherent weakness is that in so fully combining the indicative and the imperative, Furnish virtually denies the possibility of genuine command and of the Christian pattern of conduct in Paul's thought.

Ramsey, in *Basic Christian Ethics*[40], sets out an ethics in which the indicative and the imperative 'coinhere in Christ'. It is an ethic of liberty, claiming that the law is entirely finished by Christianity in its new 'obligation to love'.[41] Ramsey argues that in the first letter to the Corinthians Paul's position can be summarised as

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[36] Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 226, original emphasis (see also 137–138, 157, 207, 211, 225) Furnish cites Rom 5:1 as the classic instance: but also Rom 6:4; 7:4; 13:120; 14:8; 1 Cor 2:14; 6:11; 12:27; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Thess 4:7.

[37] *The Love Command*, 207. In this, as we have seen, Furnish basically agrees with Bultmann: cf. *TNT* vol 1, 270, 338–339; *Essays*, 112, etc.

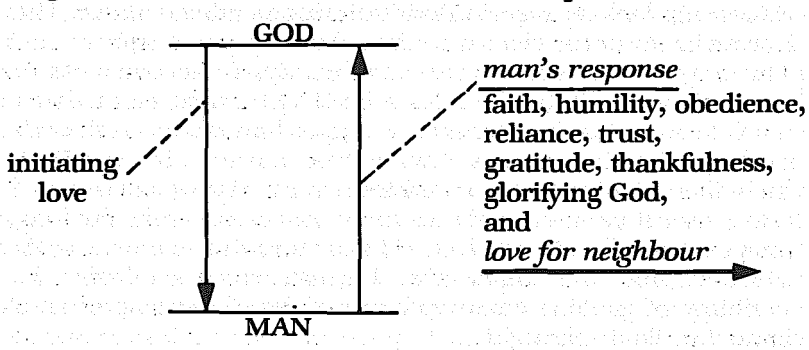
[38] *Theology and Ethics*, 239.

[39] *The Love Command*, 92. See, also, 103. At 109 he says, '. . . the obligation "to love one another" inheres in what *God* has done, in the new life he has granted the believer in Christ.' (emphasis original) See the appropriate passages in *2 Corinthians* (New York, 1984).

[40] Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (London, 1950).

[41] *ibid*, 74–76, 89.

'Love and do as you *then* please'.[42] In place of rules the apostle suggests self-regulation—not of a free and autonomous type and nature, but the self-regulation that is conditioned by the context of inter-relationship with others and their needs. Because of this, he argues that Paul's exhortations generally 'have authority only as love's directives, and hold in view the needs and "edification" or "building up of others".'[43] Love becomes *the* crucial organizing feature of Pauline ethics: 'What should be done or not done in a particular instance, what is good or bad, right or wrong, what is better or worse than something else, what are "degrees of value"—these things in Christian ethics are not known in advance or derived from some preconceived code. They are derived *backward* by Christian love from what it apprehends to be the needs of others.'[44] This is summed up in the concept that obedience comes from gratitude to God.[45] This is shown in a diagram taken from *Basic Christian Ethics*, p. 129:



The right hand side list indicates how the Christian stands before God, and is summarised by the word 'love'. Love has a purely responsive character; responding, that is, to the initiative and the love of God. The Christian stands in the state of total liberty before God, living out the indicative of his own experience in response to the love of the Father.

It would not be correct to suggest that Ramsey posits a Christian ethics without rules or virtues yet it appears that he fuses indicative and imperative to such a degree that the latter is

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[42] *ibid*, 77. (original emphasis)

[43] *ibid*, 78; see 81, 88.

[44] *ibid*, 78–79. (original emphasis) Again, 89, 'Absolutely everything is commanded which Love requires'.

[45] *ibid*, 78, 128. See also, Ramsey's essay, 'The Case of the Curious Exception' in G. H. Outka/P. Ramsey (eds) *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics*, 123, where he speaks of 'an ethic of gratitude'.

almost indistinguishable as the former is arguably put into an unPauline prominence in the relationship. Despite the fact that Ramsey speaks of rules it becomes clear that he subordinates them to 'agapé' and to the situation. He states, for instance: 'I also contend that it can be shown that a proper understanding of the moral life will be one in which Christians determine what we ought to do in very great measure by determining which rules of action are most love-embodying, but that there are also always situations in which we are to tell what we should do by getting clear about the facts of the situation and then asking what is the loving or the most loving thing to do in it. The latter may even be at work in every case of the creative casuistry of inprincipled love going into action.'[46] In other words, rules and imperative exhortations take a back seat: in practice, general norms and principles give the warrant for ethical action.[47]

One contributing factor to this ultimately inadequate position is, perhaps, that Ramsey, despite discussion on the matter, takes little account of the reality of sin in the believer, For him, sin is simply defined as 'the opposite of all that Christian love means' or as 'pride working through selfishness'.[48] Although, again, there is an element of truth in this, it is not good enough to suggest, as a consequence, that sin is no longer to be looked at as a particular 'infraction of a known moral law or series of such infractions'.[49] One wishes to agree with Ramsey that 'sinful man no longer images the will of God'[50] but seeks in vain to see how the will of God is given to man in any other way, according to Ramsey, than in the purely indicative, receptive and responsive state of a man loved by the Father. Again, we see that the indicative and the imperative merge and the latter loses its identity in the former.

A close relationship, incorporating a clear distinction between the indicative and the imperative

The two positions regarding the relationship between indicative and imperative that have so far been discussed show the extreme

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[46] *ibid*, 5.

[47] 'The Case', 73, 75. It is interesting to note that in his valuable work on abortion and euthanasia, *Ethics at the Edge of Life* (New Haven, 1980), Ramsey appeals, not so much to laws of any kind, but to concepts such as righteousness, faithfulness, loyalty, the awesome sanctity of life, the image of God, agapé, and the like. See also *Basic Christian Ethics*, 76.

[48] *Basic Christian Ethics*, 290, 291, respectively. 'Sin means anxious self-centredness or self-centred anxiety.' (291)

[49] *ibid*, 285. See also 107, 284ff.

[50] *ibid*, 278.

poles of thought: either the indicative and the imperative are so distinct from each other that the relationship is virtually not drawn at all; or, they co-exist in such a fusion that they become indistinct and are largely treated as one. However, the third approach in the area is that which posits the idea that the indicative and the imperative are closely related, but that they keep something of their own distinct existence in the apostle's thought.[51]

The imperatives are seen as based on the fact of a new nature and are therefore also a call to obedience to the one who has already established a relationship with the Christian; that is, the 'believer's every action is oriented on God's antecedent act in Christ'.[52] Ethical behaviour, then, is a consequence, not the cause, of the newness of the believer's being; it is an appropriation of what has already been assigned in the work of the Lord and of the Spirit. In Braaten's words: 'Being precedes act'.[52] On the other hand, Allen Verhey, for example, wishes to give an important priority to the indicative in Paul's thought, whilst keeping the relationship already suggested: 'The indicative mood has an important priority and finality in the process of the gospel, but the imperative is by no means merely an addendum to the indicative or even exactly an inference from the indicative.' He sees the concept of eschatology in Paul's writing to be decisive: 'The juxtaposition of indicative and imperative is possible . . . precisely because of the present co-existence of the old age and the age to come.'[54]

The interrelatedness of indicative and imperative is, of course, spoken of in various ways. Bornkamm, for instance, discusses, what he terms the 'collocation' and 'conjunction' of the gospel and the summons, whilst Kümmel speaks of the conjoining and juxtaposition, 'a necessary, an indispensable antinomy'. Haarbeck, on the other hand, calls it 'the dialectic of indicative and imperative, gospel and law, gift and task . . .'[55] Nevertheless,

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[51] For example, see G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (ET London, 1971), 201–203; T. J. Deidun, *New Covenant Morality in Paul* (Rome, 1981), 78; Dennison, *CTJ* (1979), 73; L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* vol 2 (ET Grand Rapids, 1982), 136; W. G. Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament* (ET London, 1980), 227; A. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet* (Cambridge, 1981), 133; R. N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (New York, 1964), 179.

[52] Bornkamm, *Paul*, 201.

[53] C. E. Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics* (Minneapolis, 1974), 121.

[54] A. Verhey, *The Great Reversal*, 104–105; see also 122.

[55] Bornkamm, *Paul*, 202; Kümmel, *TNT*, 224, 227; Haarbeck, καινός *DNTT* 2. 673, respectively.

these scholars rightly agree on the interrelation of indicative and imperative and place them together, adjacently, rather than merging them into a one-sided unity or divorcing them entirely.

This interconnection is brought out in Paul's writing, for example, by the way in which he can make the same subject-matter at one point an indicative statement, at another a summons. In his letter to the Galatians he tells the recipients that they have all been clothed with Christ (3:27), whereas, later in the epistle to the Romans he exhorts the believers to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ rather than to continue gratifying the desires of their sinful nature (Rom 13:14). This phenomenon is more pronounced when it occurs in the same letter as it does in Galatians. On the one hand, the apostle encourages them to live by the Spirit (5:16), but on the other hand, he also makes the statement that *they do*, indeed, live by the Spirit and exhorts them, on this basis, to keep in step with him (5:25). Again, in Romans, Paul is emphatic that believers have already died to sin (6:2), yet a little later he wants them to consider that this is the case—'. . . count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.' (6:11).

The close relationship between indicative and imperative is also seen in the way that Paul, for example, in Romans 6, combines assertion about 'the believer's new status in Christ with imperatives to encourage them to conform "the existing components"' of their lives 'in accordance with the new status'.[56] At verse 12 Paul uses language of exhortation in the form of inference to be drawn from what precedes: '. . . do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.' The believer has been repeatedly declared to be dead to sin and alive to God through Christ (v. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8) and on the basis of that he is exhorted to live in a particular way. It must be said that the relationship between indicative and imperative is seen to be defined by that sort of inference: 'Because of X, therefore Y'.

Although this does not get us very much further in identifying and defining the relationship it is, at least, clear that indicative and imperative come together in equilibrium rather than in fusion. Bornkamm helpfully suggests this in the following words: 'The believer's actions derive from God's act, and the decisions taken by obedience from God's antecedent decision for the world in Christ. Thus the two come together in equilibrium: to live on the basis of *grace*, but to *live* on the basis of grace.'[57]

The conclusion is both important and helpful, but we need to

[56] Moo, *Trinity Journal* (1982), 220.
[57] Bornkamm, *Paul*, 202–203. (original emphasis)

ask how the relationship can best be expressed. This question finds varying answers. For example, some scholars would summarise the relationship by the use of the phrase, 'Be what you are'[58]; others write, 'Become what you are' or 'Let us become fully what we already are.'[59] Both of these ideas have an element of truth yet both seem inadequate to express Paul's thought. The former ('Be what you are') gives weight to a rather static concept; the latter gives more stress to the idea of growth and development which is inherent in Christian living as Paul sees it. One has to agree with Deidun, however, who finds these summary-expressions inadequate as they stand.[60] The reasons he puts are, first, that they make no mention of God's role in either the indicative or the imperative; and, second, that they detach the imperative from the indicative and thereby 'overlook precisely what is most characteristic of Pauline ethics: that what God demands, he also effects.'[61] Deidun's argument—basically, that Paul intends that his readers realise that the indicative itself (the power of the Spirit effecting what God demands) enters into the realization of the imperative—and his concluding summary-expression (Let God be God in the core of your liberty[62])—are worth considering as alternatives to the suggestions so far outlined.

Deidun's reasoning seems fundamentally sound. In a paragraph he delineates his thinking: 'The Christian imperative demands only free acceptance of a gift that is made independently of it. The Christian is *under obligation* not to resist the inward action of God's Spirit which already *impels* him to free obedience. He must "abound" in holiness and love — that is, he must *let God be God* in the core of his liberty. This is the only formulation which, while doing full justice to the wonder of the indicative, gives full weight to the urgency of the imperative, and which respects both the sovereignty of God's action and the integrity of human freedom in the whole work of sanctification.'[63]

There are some important aspects of Deidun's work which need bringing out. He maintains, for example, that self-understanding is the basis for exhortation in Paul's writing and that this must include an understanding of belonging to God in the new covenant and of the activity of the Holy Spirit to bring

[58] e.g. Dennison, *CTJ* (1979) 72; G. Stahlin, νῦν *TDNT* 4, 1121; A. C. Thiselton, 'Realised Eschatology at Corinth' *NTS* (1975), 517; etc.
[59] Moule, *JTS* (1964) 14; Lincoln, *Paradise*, 51, respectively.
[60] Deidun, *New Covenant Morality*, 241.
[61] *ibid*, 241.
[62] *ibid*, 243.
[63] *ibid*, 243. (original emphasis)

about both indicative and imperative. It is this last idea which needs brief elaboration. He states it in the following way: 'Christian imperative is simply the necessary effect of God's inward activity in as much as this demands the continuing "Yes" of human freedom.'[64] Therefore, the believer is not to become what he is, but to let God be what *he* is. Although there is germinal truth in this we seem to have moved back to the idea of fusing indicative and imperative, which we previously rejected as inadequate to convey Paul's thought. Indeed, Deidun expressly states this, 'Here indicative and imperative are cojoined: the Christian's "new will", constantly flowing from the activity of the Spirit, is the divinely wrought indicative which *carries within itself* the Christian imperative. There can be nothing more "indicative", and, at the same time, nothing more "imperative", than the activity of the Spirit creating and sustaining my own personal instinct.'[65] Again, indicative and imperative appear to be one.

However, the merit of Deidun's conclusion is that he forcefully reminds us that the work of the Holy Spirit of God is integral to both indicative and imperative in Christian living; and that this does not preclude the believer's obligation to the concrete declarations of God's will contained in the apostle's injunctions.[66] Deidun's alternative, then, does some justice to the Pauline insistence that sanctification is of God; yet it is arguable whether he fully takes into account Paul's equal emphasis on man's role in this task.[67] Deidun's summary-expression seems to underline this problem: 'Let God be God in the core of your liberty'. Perhaps a combination of emphases would give a balance more in line with apostolic usage. Would the exhortation: 'Work out your own salvation in Christ by the Spirit' be a more suitable and Pauline conclusion?

Examples of Paul's use of the imperative based on the indicative

Having briefly examined the relationship of indicative and imperative as it is presented in theology: having come to the conclusion that they are certainly and closely related yet distinct, we now turn to analyse one or two examples from the writing of the apostle Paul. The passages clearly reflect the idea outlined

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[64] *ibid*, 82–83.
[65] *ibid*, 79–80. (original emphasis)
[66] See his section 'Paul's Directives', *ibid*, 175–183.
[67] e.g. Phil 2: 12–13: an example to which we return below.

above: they are Rom 12:1–2; Phil 2:12–13; Gal 5:25 and the longer exhortation of 1 Cor 6:12–20.

Romans 12:1–2

Rom 12:1–2 is a passage that lends itself to analysis of indicative and imperative. Here Paul exhorts his readers on the basis of God's mercies to live in a particular way. The phrase 'by the mercies of God' (RSV) is probably closer to Paul's intention than, for example, 'in view of God's mercies' as the New International Version translates it. That is, on the ground of the indicatives already outlined and argued, Paul requires 'a voluntary and enthusiastic response'[68] to which he now urges them. Bowen seems to be far from the mark in asserting here that 'because of God's mercy towards us, *we owe him a duty*.'[69] This interpretation lacks something of the truth set out in Ramsey's thinking, for example, which stressed an 'ethic of gratitude': because of God's initiating love and grace we love him and do his will.

However, it is clear that with Romans 12 a fresh and concluding section of the epistle begins, as one writer puts it, 'with a transition from what has been predominantly theological exposition, conducted for the most part in general and somewhat impersonal terms, to parenesis marked by the first appearance in the epistle of Παρακαλῶ and Paul almost for the first time addresses his readers in the first person with apostolic authority.'[70] This transition needs to be examined in order to relate the admonitions of the apostle to the indicatives from which they spring.

Although Evans, for example, concludes that 12:1–2 does not play much part in determining the selection of the parenesis that follows[71] the question remains to be answered, 'With what does 12:1–2 connect, and to what does the οὖν refer?' Is it merely denoting a 'headline' for what follows, as some think, or is it better to see it as indicating inference with the force of 'Therefore', rather than merely as a transition-particle. The latter view seems most probable, particularly as it is supported by an appeal to the mercies of God, as Barrett points out.[72]

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[68] W. Hendriksen, *Romans* vol 2 (Edinburgh, 1981), 403.

[69] R. Bowen, *A Guide to Romans* (London, 1984), 154. (my emphasis)

[70] C. Evans, 'Romans 12: 1–2; The True Worship' in C. K. Barrett, et al (eds) *Dimensions de la Vie Chrétienne* (Rome, 1979), 9. The whole essay (7–33) is worth consideration. It is a useful examination of the language and ideas of the passage.

[71] *ibid*, 33.

[72] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London, 1973), 302ff.

I suggest, then, that the opening words, 'Therefore, I urge you . . .' indicate, first, a connection with the foregoing teaching; and, secondly, that this is a conclusion to be drawn from the preceding verses. Cranfield sees it as indicating that what is going to be said follows from what has already been said, and concludes that Paul's ethics are theologically motivated.[73]

But, we might ask, what does Paul mean by 'the mercies of God'? Many commentators and scholars would see this as a reference to the whole of the epistle so far which has shown the action of the merciful God in salvation[74]—though it must be admitted that others do not. Evans, for example, says that to see the phrase as covering the whole of Romans 1–11 is to beg the question. The words ἔλεος and ἐλεεῖν are entirely absent from chapters 1–8.[75] Minear also argues against this. He sees chapters 12 and 13 as addressed to the self-assured Gentile Christians in Rome accustomed to scoff at the Jewish Christians—that group addressed previously in chapter 11, and, later, in chapter 14; the 'strong in faith', those who need to reject their earlier anti-Semitism and therefore to reject conformism to the age in which they live.[76] Wright, less radically, expresses dissatisfaction with the view—arguing that the phrase refers particularly to chapters 9–11 (though not necessarily excluding 1–8, thereby).[77]

Nevertheless, it is arguable that Paul had in mind the whole of the letter as the theological context of these exhortations which now cluster in the final chapters. Barrett expresses it in his summary: 'We have read of the universal sinfulness of mankind, and of the universal grace of God; of his infinite love in sending his Son to die for our sins, and of the free justification by faith alone which, in his mercy, he offers. We have read of the power of the Spirit of God to bring life out of death; of predestination, and God's eternal purpose for his creatures.' And, more succinctly, 'Because God is what he is, and has done what he has done, certain things follow; or rather ought to follow.'[78] Viard concurs

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[73] C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans* vol 2 (Edinburgh, 1975), 596.

[74] *ibid*, 596. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minnesota, 1961), 745; Bornkamm, *Paul*, 201; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* vol 2 (Grand Rapids, 1968), 110; H. E. Stoessel, 'Notes on Rom 12: 1–2. The Renewal of the Mind and Internalizing the Truth' *Interpretation* (1963), 162; Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 102; Bowen, *A Guide*, 154; etc.

[75] Evans, *Dimension*, 9.

[76] P. S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith* (London, 1971), 82–84.

[77] N. T. Wright, *The Messiah and the People of God* (Oxford, 1980), 224.

[78] C. K. Barrett, *Reading Through Romans* (Philadelphia, 1977), 65.

and makes an interesting cross-reference to 11:35, which says, 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?'[79]

Paul has shown previously God's character in his saving work—closely aligned to the idea of 'mercy': kindness (2:4), patience (9:22; 11:22) Love (5:5; 8:35, 39) and grace (1:7; 3:24; 4:16; 5:2, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15, 17; 11:5, 5), for example, and, although the words οἰκτίρειν, ἔλεος and ἐλεεῖν are absent from chapters 1–10 the mercy of God is never far from Paul's mind. This is clear thematically as he outlines God's faithfulness to Jew and Gentile (chs 1–3) and that despite their sin (e.g. 3:9, etc); justification by faith and life in Christ (chs 4–7) and life by the Spirit (ch 8). However, it is correct to say that 'mercy' is the particular keynote of chapters 9–11 (e.g. 9:15, 16, 18, 23; 10:12, 13, 20, 21; 11:22, 31, 32) as Paul reaches the climax of his teaching on the gospel of God's righteousness (1:17).[80] That, then, is the basis upon and by which the apostle motivates the believers to offer themselves to God—ethics thus rests upon the foundation of redemptive accomplishment: the imperative is grounded in indicative.

Paul urges those at Rome to offer or present their bodies 'as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God'. What does he mean? There seems no contextual reason for accepting Murray's intepretation that by 'bodies' the apostle means their physical bodies only.[81] This does not fit well into vv. 3–8, nor 9–21, which exhort to attitude (v. 3, 9–12, 15–16) as well as to action (v. 6–8, 13, 17, 20, 21). Rather, it seems more likely that Paul indicates their whole beings[82], or, perhaps, their whole beings in the concrete realities of life[83]. Evans suggests that if the singular θυσίαν ζῶσαν after σώματα may be pressed here; Paul is seen to be addressing his readers as a single community who are to offer themselves corporately as a single sacrifice.[84] This may, indeed, be the case—it would certainly seem to follow both from the words used and also from the context of Rom 12:3–8 (particularly) in which the apostle addresses the Roman Christians as the

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[79] A. Viard, *Saint Paul Épitre Aux Romains* (Paris, 1975), 256: 'Cet appel se fonde sur ce qui précède. Tout dépend de Dieu (cf. 11:35); et cela est surtout vrai du salut.'

[80] Wright, *op cit*, 224.

[81] Murray, *Romans*, 110.

[82] Barrett, *Romans*, 231; Cranfield, *Romans*, 599; J. Calvin, *Romans* (ET Grand Rapids, 1979) 452; Hendriksen, *Romans*, 401; etc.

[83] F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ET London, 1961), 302; Lenski, op cit, 747. H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (London, 1977), 259–260, says that the parenesis is directed toward 'the new manhood.'

[84] Evans, *Dimensions*, 24–25.

body of Christ to which each member belongs. However, the individuality in v. 3 has to be retained: Paul exhorts them 'For by the grace given me I say to every one of you . . .' (literally, 'to each one among you').

The apostle uses language of the sacrificial ritual, transforms and amplifies it[85] to urge believers to live lives pleasing to God who has been merciful to them. Deidun states it in these words: 'They must accomplish an act (παραστῆσαι)—aorist) of radical self-detachment, whereby the totality of their existence is given over to God: this is their λατρείαν.'[86] That is, they are to consecrate themselves to God in a separation from 'the pattern of this world' and in orientation to God.

This, Paul says, is their 'spiritual worship'. The exact interpretation of this idea is notoriously difficult—a difficulty expressed in the variety of translations.[87] One of the problems with the phrase is that the word λογικός occurs only here in Paul's writing and in 1 Pet 2:2. Evans makes out a good case to suggest that the word requires the translation 'rational'. He does this by reference to its usage in Philo where the word is so often used as a necessary adjective qualifying πνεῦμα; in which case it cannot mean 'spiritual'. His conclusion is that the Philonic usage, reflecting popular philosophy, shows that λογικός is employed frequently in the sense of 'rational': so much so that it suggests that this sole occurence of the word in Paul should also be given that sense unless there is a strong reason to the contrary.[88] So λογικός probably points to the concept of the rational, in contrast to that which is automatic and mechanical: 'conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion . . .'[89] This would certainly correlate with Paul's use of the word 'νοῦς' in 12:2, which indicates renewed understanding, if this verse is seen as an explication of what the apostle states in v. 1.[90] The question to be answered, briefly, is 'To what does "rational" relate?' Is Paul speaking of worship that is of the mind and therefore 'rational'? Wright presents a good case for his conclusion that, as 'spiritual worship' is much too vague it

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[85] G. W. Forell, *The Christian Lifestyle* (Philadelphia, 1975), 5.

[86] Deidun, *New Covenant Morality*, 98.

[87] e.g. 'spiritual worship' (NIV, RSV); 'reasonable service' (AV); 'intelligent worship' (Phillips); 'the worship offered by mind and heart' (NEB); etc. Moffatt translates it '. . . that is your cult, a spiritual rite'.

[88] Evans, *Dimensions*, 19; see also 17–22 for a fuller discussion.

[89] Murray, *Romans*, 112. (See Bowen, *A Guide*, 157).

[90] The word ἀνακαίνωσις (in the phrase ἀνακαίνωσις τοῦ νοός) possibly Paul's own coinage, probably points to eschatological ideas here. The re-creation of the mind is now taking place because of the coming of the new age.

should actually be paraphrased 'the worship to which our argument leads.'[91] This is a distinct possibility and one which ties together, as premise and consequence, the indicatives of chapters 1–11 ('the mercies of God') and the imperatives of chapter 12 and following.

However this particular idea is translated, the main point of inference from this connecting verse, and those that follow, is that which Calvin makes, '. . . this exhortation teaches us, that until men really apprehend how much they owe to the mercy of God, they will never with a right feeling worship him, nor be effectually stimulated to fear and obey him.'[92] That is, the imperative of Paul's thought is based upon the indicative (in this case, the mercy of God). The indicative and the imperative are, therefore, closely related but distinct in the apostle's writing at this point. The latter is an inference of the former.

Philippians 2:12–13

Phil 2:12–13 is important in the present context for two reasons: first, because it shows the indicative ('salvation') in a close juxtaposition with the imperative ('work out . . .') and, secondly, because it demonstrates that God's work is integral to both, not just to the indicative of redemption. This is the case in that the apostle, who earlier points out that the good work going on in the Philippian believers originated with God and will be carried on by him 'until the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil 1:6) and that they share in God's grace (1:7, 28),[93] also here in Phil 2:12–13 shows that God is at work in the believer's life of obedience (see also 3:12, 14).

Warren analyses the word translated 'work out' (κατεργάζεσθε).[94] He establishes that it occurs mostly in the writing of Paul (i.e. notably, several times in Rom 7: but also Rom 1:27; 2:9; 4:5; 5:3; 15:18; 1 Cor 5:3; 2 Cor 4:17; 5:5; 8:11; 11:11; 12:12; Eph 6:13—cf. James 1:13, 20; 1 Pet 4:3). The word is always transitive and always governs an object which is already in being and is normally rendered 'to work'. Based on this, he reaches the

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91 Wright, *Messiah*, 224.

92 Calvin, *Romans*, 450.

93 It is worth noting that J.-F. Collange, *L'Epître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens* (Neuchâtel, 1973), 97, sees v. 6–v. 11 as the salvation to which the apostle refers. This is certainly possible but not necessary for an understanding of v. 12–v. 13. The connection between v. 1–v. 11 (particularly v. 6–v. 11) with v. 12–v. 13 is rather that Paul wishes his readers to work out their salvation in the same attitude that Christ, too, was obedient to the Father.

94 J. Warren, 'Work out your own salvation . . .' *EQ* (1944), 125–137.

following two important conclusions. First, that the salvation mentioned in Phil 2: 12 is 'here and now available or liable to be operated on or with, exercised drawn out, brought into action.' His second conclusion is that the believer, therefore, is not being exhorted to accomplish his salvation himself as this is already done for him in Christ.[95] Here, then, the apostle is admonishing the believer to finish, to carry to conclusion, to apply 'to its fullest consequences what is already given by God . . .'[96] Collange seems to have the point exactly: 'Ce qui est demandé c'est de "parachever", de "faire fructifier" . . . ce qui est déjà donné.'[97]

In this the relationship of indicative and imperative is clearly seen as one of dependence, closeness, yet distinction. But here the apostle takes it further and demonstrates, as it were, something of the role of God in the imperative: '. . . it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.' The Spirit is part of the indicative state of those who belong to Christ. That is, the possession of God's Spirit is, for Paul (and for the rest of the New Testament) integral to the salvation given to believers; it is part of sonship (Gal 4:16), concomitant with belonging to Christ (Rom 8:9, 11). Paul sees the Spirit as the eschatological gift[98] with whom comes the power of the new age that has already broken into the old. The Holy Spirit is the link between 'the renewal which is taking place now in the inner man (2 Cor 4:16) and the consummation of the renewal in the heavenly body.'[99] The Holy Spirit, then, stands in closest possible relation to the ethical life of the believer: Rom 8 and Gal 5 make this abundantly clear, as does Paul's description of the Spirit's work as essentially that of sanctification (e.g. Rom 15:16; 2 Thess 2:13). It is within this general context that Paul speaks of God's working with the Philippians. It is, in fact, because he is at work that the Philippians are to 'work out' their salvation. Bornkamm is correct in affirming that 'the action is not divided up between God and man making two propositions supplementary to each other. Each proposition substantiates the other.' He concludes, 'Because God does everything you too have everything to do.'[100] Collange, on the

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[95] *ibid*, 128–129. See the confidence of the apostle in Phil 1:27 and 3:20, for example.

[96] J. J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, 1976), 90.

[97] Collange, *Philippiens*, 97–98.

[98] See Ridderbos, *Paul*, 66–67, 87.

[99] Lincoln, *Paradise*, 67, 142.

[100] Bornkamm, *Paul*, 202.

other hand, is right to insist that it is God's work which motivates, energises and provokes man's activity.[101]

There seems good reason for accepting, along with Beare for example, that Paul's words in Phil 2:12–13, are directed to the corporate body, the church. However, this must not be pushed to the extent of losing sight of the individuality of each member (see, for example v. 4 'Each of you . . .).[102] The point is that, whether corporately or individually, they are to work out that which has already been given in Christ, namely, 'salvation'. The imperative is grounded upon and is the consequence of the indicative.

Galatians 5:25

Gal 5:25 has been termed the *locus classicus* for the indicative/imperative relationship.[103] Here the indicative and the imperative are placed in an emphatic (chiastic) relationship: εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν. The apostle wishes to draw out a practical exhortation from the doctrine on which he has written: 'if the Spirit of God lives in us, let him govern our actions.'[104] Some would see this verse as simply the conclusion to the foregoing section (v. 13–25);[105] others take it to be a programmatic statement for 5:25–6:10,[106] but it seems better, with Bonnard for example, to visualise the verse *both* as the conclusion of the preceding section and as a springboard for the new development.[107]

It must be emphasized that the apostle is speaking in v. 25, as throughout the chapter, of the Spirit of God, *not* of man's own spirit (renewed or otherwise). A most unsatisfactory conclusion is reached by Lenski on this subject. He insists that the word is to be interpreted as meaning the human spirit.[108] This runs contrary to the very point Paul makes—now, having received the Spirit (3:2b), they have a new power and ability to master the flesh: the believer is to take hold of that new possibility. Again, Bonnard

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[101] Collange, *Philippiens*, 99.

[102] Beare, *Philippians*, 91. Collange, *Philippiens*, 97–99.

[103] Deidun, *New Covenant Morality*, 241.

[104] J. Calvin, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids, 1979) 169.

[105] This seems to be the conclusion of P. M.-J. Langrange, *Saint Paul Épitre aux Galates* (Paris, 1950), 153, for instance.

[106] e.g. G. Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel* (ET Philadelphia, 1985, 259, J. Bligh, *Galatians: A Discussion of St. Paul's Epistle* (London, 1970), 480–81.

[107] P. Bonnard, *L'Épitre de Saint Paul aux Galates* (Neuchâtel, 1972), 116.

[108] Lenski, *Galatians* (Minnesota, 1961) 280. For a fuller discussion consult, e.g. D. Lull, *The Spirit in Galatia* (Chicago, 1980), 103–188.

makes this very clear. He asserts that 'the Spirit', here, denotes not merely an ideal, nor is it an impersonal force, but it is the action of Christ in both the believer and the church. Ridderbos makes a similar assertion: 'It is precisely the Spirit who is the great Inaugurator of the gift of the new aeon that has appeared with Christ; and consequently the contrast, so constitutive for Paul's preaching, between Spirit and flesh is not to be taken as a metaphysical or anthropological, but as a redemptive-historical contrast, namely as the two dominating principles of the two aeons marked off by the appearance of Christ.'[109]

Briefly, then, three things in particular are worthy of notice for our discussion of indicative and imperative. First, it is important to realise that the first phrase, 'If we live by the Spirit', implies no uncertainty. Lightfoot makes a mistake in saying that Paul is here speaking of 'an ideal rather than an actual life: it denotes a state which the Galatians were put in the way of attaining rather than one which they had already attained.' Burton is closer to the mark when he interprets it to mean that the apostle assumes that they so live, but then incorrectly qualifies that remark by the phrase 'or intend to live by the Spirit'.[110] It must be stressed that the conditional clause supposes a present situation, it refers to a reality and is, therefore, not a matter of doubt, but rather a definite assumption. In this sense the New International Version is correct in translating the phrase 'Since we live by the Spirit . . .' This is the indicative state of the believers in Galatia.

Secondly, the whole point of the indicative is that Paul is reminding them that they *do* live by the Spirit; something which they had evidently forgotten (cf 3:3; 4:6). His exhortation to 'Live by the Spirit' (5:16) is a reminder of their true and present reality, their freedom in Christ; that the Spirit is the author of their new creation and new life (cf 6:15). It is important to notice that Paul is not exhorting them to do what they have not been doing; rather, he wants them to continue to 'keep in step with the Spirit' (literally, 'walk in rank with the Spirit'—virtually synonymous with 'live' and 'conduct yourself').

The chiastic shape of the verse shows clearly the relationship of indicative and imperative envisaged by the apostle. It emphasises equally the givenness and the responsibility of life and freedom which we saw above in connection with Phil 2:12–13. Life

[109] Bonnard, *Galates* 116; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 215, respectively. Ridderbos later speaks of the Spirit as 'the creating and renewing power of God . . . and the life principle of the congregation of the future'.

[110] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, 1981), 214; E. de Witt Burton, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh, 1980), 322, respectively.

originates with the Spirit, he is its author: yet his is also the dynamic and the direction. In reality, then, God makes possible the life which he demands; that is, Paul 'justifies an imperative on the basis of an indicative'[111] as we have previously observed.

Thirdly, the indicative carries with it unavoidable responsibility. Having expressed their 'principal relation to the Spirit'[112] Paul then exhorts the Galatians to the acitivity which is required on the basis of the indicative. If the Spirit creates a new life-style (5:22–23) then it must be evidence in the spiritual life of the believer. This is the moral corollary to the indicative statement that precedes it—their conduct should be evidently governed by the Spirit of God. That is, the imperative action considered by this verse is, on the basis of the promissory future of 5:16 (οὐ μὴ τελέσητε—with the force of 'then you will not. . .'), assured by the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. This parallels Paul's thinking in Phil 2:12–13, as we have already seen. Bruce sums it up: 'Here . . . we have the characteristic Pauline interplay between indicative and imperative; we live by the Spirit (granted); therefore let us keep in step with the Spirit.'[113]

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

So far in our study we have shown something of the relationship between indicative and imperative by analysing single texts, albeit in their own context. However, it is interesting and instructive now to turn to a passage in which two indicative ideas are seen to be the theological premise on which Paul exhorts his hearers to holiness in the area of sexuality. 1 Cor 6:12–20 shows very clearly that as it is the radical relationship that the Christian sustains to the Lord that is vital for the whole of life; so it is not merely an appeal to respectability alone, nor to human dignity, nor simply to 'natural morality', but it is the ethical significance of the status of the believer in relation to Christ (v. 15) and to the Spirit (v. 19) which is of utmost importance as the ground for exhortation.[114]

Hurley,[115] rightly notices the recurrent sequence in this passage:

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[111] Ebeling, *The Truth*, 259.
[112] Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 210.
[113] Bruce, *op cit*, 257.
[114] See C. Wiéner, 'Notes sur 1 Cor 6:12–20' in V. Guénel (ed) *Le Corps et Le Corps du Christ dans la Première Épitre aux Corinthiens* (Paris, 1983), 93.
[115] J. B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in 1 Corinthians* (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1973), 113.

v. 12 quotations set out as assertion and then qualified by a retort opening with ὁ δέ

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v. 13–18a *another slogan-retort sequence*
1. slogan v. 13
2. retort employing τὸ δέ v. 13–14
3. exposition of Paul's view beginning from a commonly held tenet introduced by οὐκ οἴδατε v. 14–15
4. exhortation v. 18

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v. 18b–20 *same pattern*
1. slogan v. 18b
2. retort employing ὁ δέ v. 18c
3. exposition of Paul's view introduced by οὐκ οἴδατε v. 19–20a
4. exhortation v.20b

This is helpful to our present study. For our purposes it should be observed that the exhortations can be seen to be the negative and positive sides of the same coin: that is, 'Flee from sexual immorality' (18a) and 'Honour God with your body' (20b). We need to examine Paul's argument to see how and, perhaps more importantly, *why* he reaches these conclusions from the indicatives that he assumes.

There is general agreement that the quotations in v. 12 ('Everything is permissible for me' cf 10:23) and in v. 13 ('Food for the stomach and the stomach for food'), which the apostle then qualifies, were in general use at Corinth. However, *the origin* of the former is less clear. It may have originated from the Gnostic group which was so troubling the young church, or with the apostle himself in his polemic against the legalism of Judaism. It may, therefore, be an idea that the Corinthians had grasped from Paul but had misinterpreted. It is perhaps likely though that the slogan initially came from the apostle in his preaching and exposition of the gospel and then used by the Gnostics at Corinth in a wrong way—for Paul seems, certainly to have given qualified agreement to the words themselves but not to the conclusion to which they had been forced.

It seems that the Corinthians largely undervalued or, perhaps, devalued the importance of the body both as a result of the philosophical influences in the church and, possibly, because of their over-enthusiastic anticipation of the resurrection which they interpreted as purely 'spiritual'. These ideas seem to underlie the

whole section from 5:1 to 7:40; indeed they also inform the apostle's rigorous defence of the physical resurrection in ch 15. Hence, in 6:12–20, Paul stresses that God, who raised Jesus from the dead[116] will also raise the Corinthians bodily. The body, he assures them, is meant 'for the Lord' (v. 13–14).

The question needs to be answered: to what does 'body' (σῶμα) refer? This is vital to our understanding of the indicatives of the passage. There is no lack of support for the idea that 'body' here indicates more than that which is physical, and that it actually refers to the whole person, 'myself'. Further, many would suggest that the word means the individual in relationship with the community and with Christ.[117] Orr and Walther, for example, suggest it from v. 16: 'Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?' To this they bring the idea that sexual intercourse is an act of the whole person: 'To become one flesh is the proper desire of those who incorporate their sex desires into a total relation of love and loyalty so that *they become one joint personality* and in their relationship express faith in God and love for each other. *This cannot be done in the isolated, commercialized action of prostitution.*'[118] With this statement, as it stands, one has to concur. But it is *not* what the apostle is actually stating in this passage. In fact, Paul deliberately singles out 'body' (as physical) precisely because the Corinthians were so devaluing the whole concept.

The believers, who thought nothing of their physical existence, had taken the guideline 'Everything is permissible for me' without any qualification. They had presumed, perhaps, that the body (as physical) had no permanent value because of its deterioration at death (see v. 14). From this they seem to have concluded that nothing done in the body had any moral value. Paul insists that this is not so. The body, taken in this sense, is essentially part of us as whole beings[119] and so in 'joining with' or 'uniting to' a

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[116] See 15:3–4; 12–34; with the argument of vv. 35f: 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?'

[117] Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 147, for whom 'body' is a neutral term representing the human self at the place of decision. See also, R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms* (Leiden, 1971), 260. V. Guénel, 'Tableau des emplois de sôma dans la première lettre aux Corinthiens' in V. Guénel (ed.) *Le Corps*, 73; and J. Rouquette, ' "Une Seul Corps." Nourriture et Sexualité dans la première épître aux Corinthiens' in *Le Corps*, 143; both emphasize the communal setting here and the relational understanding of the word.

[118] W. F. Orr and J. A. Walther, *1 Corinthians* (New York, 1976), 203. (my emphasis)

[119] This is the conclusion of, for example, R. H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1976),

prostitute physically (v. 15–16) a man is inherently involved in the whole of his being (v. 18). Whether we understand the prostitute as involved in temple prostitution or not, Paul is clear that such union should not take place, and urges them to 'Flee from sexual immorality' on the one hand, and to honour God with their bodies, on the other.

First, Paul puts the exhortation negatively. They are to flee, or shun; that is, to take strong evasive action, in this area (φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν). Secondly, the apostle seeks to indicate the positive. Although Conzelmann, for example, wishes to make the latter part of v. 20 refer generally and not to be restricted to the specific context of fornication and its avoidance[120] it seems clear that the apostle exhorts them to consider finally the honour which should be brought to the God who has bought them with a price (v. 20a). However, it should be noticed that Paul is very concerned with outsiders' opinions of the church, the gospel and, therefore, of God (5:1; 6:6; 6:20).

This, then, is the situation which Paul addresses. He exhorts the believers in Corinth to be sexually moral. What theological premises does he use in his argument? What indicatives form the base on which his imperatives stand? There are basically two foundational or organizational statements in the passage. We need to look briefly at them and to examine their relationship together and with the imperatives.

The first important indicative is found in v. 15: 'Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?' What does he indicate by the phrase 'members of Christ'? It must be suggested, firstly, that he has a real connection in mind; that is, it is not merely a figure, there is no thought here of mystical union.[121] The word 'unite' (v. 16, 17) signifies 'to join together', 'to cling to', 'to enter into close relationship with'.[122] Some have inferred that Paul is speaking of the church, the body of Christ; others, of Christ personally.[123] But I would suggest that, *as they stand*, neither position is adequate; that is, the phrase *cannot*

51–80, particularly 79–80; and J. B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Leicester, 1981), 149f and, idem, *Man and Woman in 1 Corinthians*, 89.

120 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 113; cf Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 152.

121 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 111. 'mystical union', that is, with any idea of absorption. As Conzelmann says, "This is obvious at once from the counterpart—union with a prostitute." (see footnote 30)

122 On this and its implications see R. A. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery* (Leiden, 1971) 34ff.

123 Conzelmann, op cit, 111; Grosheide, *1 Corinthians*, 148; Gundry, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, 61, take the former view; whilst Fisher, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 217, adopt the latter.

simply refer to the church because the contrast is a personal one—between being joined to Christ and united to a prostitute (v. 16–17); and yet the idea does not indicate Christ personally, *alone*, for in the context of the letter union with Christ is union with his church also (cf 12:12, for example). Notice the implication for ethics, however. Being united to Christ, it is utterly inconceivable that believers would join with prostitutes. They belong to him, they are his—both in spirit and in body (that is, wholly). They are members of Christ.

The second organizing indicative is closely related to this one. In v. 19 the apostle reminds them that they are, individually, temples of the Holy Spirit whom God has sent and that being such shows that they belong to God. Whether the idea of a price having been paid relates to a ransom concept[124] or to a rather crass, but striking, analogy with the price paid for a prostitute[125] the thrust of what Paul says is that the transaction is complete. If the Holy Spirit dwells within them they have no 'rights' of their own; the transfer of ownership has taken place and they now belong to the Lord. The exhortation then comes 'honour God with your body'. So the point of both indicatives is the fact that the believers in Corinth belong to the Lord, and in saying that, Paul stresses the fact that their bodies as much as their spirits are God's. Therefore, it does matter how the believer behaves physically.

Clearly, Paul searches for statements of truth concerning the status and condition of the believer which he considers will answer the question 'Why should/shouldn't I behave in such and such a way?' Having discovered two such reasons (indicatives)—that the believers are members of Christ and that each is indwelt by the Holy Spirit—he brings them to bear on the pastoral situation with which he is confronted.

Conclusions

A number of points can be made briefly in order to conclude our thinking on the relationship between the indicative and the imperative in Paul's Letters.

It must be stated that the indicative and the imperative are closely linked yet distinct aspects of the apostle's thought and writing. The connection is indissoluble—they cannot be separated. This position seems warranted by Pauline usage and also strongly

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[124] See 1 Cor 7:23; Gal 3:13; 4:5—Old Testament references, for example, would include Ex 6:6; 13:13; Ruth 4:4; Ps 103:4; Isa 43:1; etc. See Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 152–153.

[125] See Ruef, *1 Corinthians*, 51.

counters the possibilities of the fusion of the indicative and the imperative, on the one hand, and their virtual irrelation, on the other.

But, what of their relationship? In one way the indicative/imperative connection can be understood in terms of our actions flowing from our being ('Being precedes act'), but the matter is more complex than that.

The indicative speaks of that which has been accomplished by God in and through Christ—but does not denote simply the divine element as opposed to the human activity in fulfilling the imperative. We have noted that Paul's ethical admonition is directed to, and is determined by, the present redemptive-historical situation. The new age that dawned with Christ's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit determined that this should be so. The Spirit, himself, then, is the link between the indicative and the imperative of Christian reality and existence. He is at once an element of the former and a constituent part of the latter.

The imperative is grounded on the reality that has been given, appeals to it and is intended to bring it to full development (Phil 2:12–13). The moral behaviour of the believer is to reveal something of the character of the new life given by God. Therefore, the indicatives—past, present and eschatological—demand an application on the part of the recipients of Paul's correspondence: they are a motive force in the apostle's parenesis: a corrective factor to misbehaviour, and a sanction to right living before the Lord.

It is undoubtedly the indicative aspect of salvation as much as anything else which gives Paul his confidence in ethical exhortation—a confidence best summed up in his own words: 'Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.' (1 Cor 15:58).