

The Divine Imperative and Indicative
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During one of those electrifying times of fellowship that so delight the soul, a small circle of friends and I were enjoying that golden thread which emerges very early and runs throughout the whole of scripture, declaring all things as accomplished, complete, perfected.

We were all aware that each of us had been impacted by this truth, and each one had grasped it with some measure of understanding. We were not unaware of the many biblical passages that would seem to stand in contradiction to this assertion, not to mention the apparent incarnate contradictions in our own lives.

Personally, a number of years before, I'd been confronted by the Spirit of Truth, and been made to understand, that henceforth, I was to take my stand upon the Father's finished work in Christ which accrued to me along with all men, for Christ Himself and we all, in Him, are essentially what God has completed. With that stand, while properly acknowledging all that existentially and stubbornly takes its stand against that perfection, I was to never yield one iota of our established perfection in Christ under the pressure of any and all intimidating contrarianism that rebelliously stood in denial of the Truth.

In other words, I must explain all apparent contradictions in the light of the perfected New Man in Christ, in Whom we all have been granted an allotment so that, in Him, we, collectively, are the foreknown and predestined New Quality of Humanity that is the passionate goal of God.

I was not to do the reverse, for if I afforded that which stood in contrariness to the Truth a place within truth, I would necessarily diminish the Truth and trim it down to the size of a theologically comfortable rationale.

Our dear friend, Harry Robert Fox, with his marvelously informal manner, was leading our discussion and, you might say, presiding, by the agreement of us all. We had all, long ago, recognized Harry's gift

for leading small group discussions. Added to this, he was more spiritual father than teacher to several of us. For me, it was a defining moment, a moment when, as it were, you build an altar on that spot, for I met God afresh when Harry introduced two cohesively explanatory words into the discussion, "indicative" and "imperative."

He simply pointed out that all the "imperatives" of scripture are based upon the "indicatives." His use of the word "indicative," in the context of our discussion, fit Webster's definition of the grammatical use of the term, "stating or expressing something actual, not merely possible or desirable...." His meaning of "imperative" was obvious, referring to that which is necessary and unavoidable, must be, or be done, be accomplished or come to pass; generally, among preachers, it's the stuff that makes for exhortation.

Yes, yes, YES; those two words provided for me, what I would later call, "semantic hooks" upon which one can hang a premise in order to hold it up to the Light." I was immediately granted an understanding that those two words, used as Harry used them, showed the relationship between all that scripture imperatively commissions us to embody, personify, bring to pass, and that which it indicatively asserts us to be, that is, "expressing something ACTUAL, not merely possible or desirable."

Theologically, though, I would replace "actual" with "real" or "true."

Allow me to point out some glaring examples of this biblical principle. The apostle John presents an imperative when, in his first epistle, he writes of what has been called, "the beatific vision." Reading in Chapter 3, Vs. 2b, speaking of the Father's appearance in Christ: "We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is" (NAS). The "...we shall be like Him" part of the verse, because it expresses the ultimate unavoidable, non-avoidable and necessary destiny, what must come to pass, I hang it on the divine imperative "hook." The "...as He is" part of "...we shall see Him as He is," introduces the divine indicative. I say, "introduces" because, as we shall see, in chapter four he follows up on this introduction of the divine indicative with a full presentation of its centrality in the purpose of God.

Down through the centuries Christians have held this hope in their hearts, "to be(come) like Jesus" and the more mature in understanding have known that this is not essentially a matter of some long awaited eschatological event, but the unfolding to us inwardly of Christ as He truly is and thus of the revelation of ourselves in Him as we truly are.

Now, the language in that portion of 1 John, in and of itself, might leave us simply looking forward to the imperative of our final perfecting. But, dear fellow saint, please take the most serious note of the fact that "we shall be like Him" must not be interpreted in a way really inconsistent with another of John's statements in regard to us.

For in the same epistle, he provides the indicative foundation for the building of the imperative structure. In verse 17 of chapter 4 we read: "By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as HE IS, so also ARE WE in this world." (emphasis, mine)

(Please, if you will, be patient with me, and imagine the following conversation between myself and the beloved apostle):

[John G. to THE John]: "Oh, oh, you mean to tell us, John, that what we aspire to, we really are? Is this the center of the center of the gospel? John, maybe you were careless in your choice and arrangement of words. You said, '...as He is, so also are we in this world.' You're pushing it, beloved John. Don't you realize that you've written that as He IS (in His glorified perfection NOW) so also ARE we? And, you don't even qualify your statement by expressions such as, 'in the Spirit,' or 'in the eternal realm,' or 'positionally,' you simply wrote that we ARE as He IS "in this world."

"Dear brother, from one John to another, how am I, as a teacher, to explain that to my fellow saints? You're stretching credulity to the breaking point. Shouldn't you, as a responsible apostle, have responsibly included some kind of disclaimer to somehow explain the apparent discrepancies in our lives. Hey, man, I've got to say, it sounds like you're in a state of denial."

[John Sr., to John Jr.]: "May I refer you to our brother Paul, for if you're having trouble with what I've written, you have every bit as much trouble with where Paul's coming from in his epistles. You speak of discrepancies in our lives. Those lives are not our lives, for according to brother Paul (who brother Peter said, "writes things hard to understand" (II Pet. 3:16), Christ is our life and our life is concealed with Christ in God.

"So why are you making ANYTHING significant out of some life (which is not life, but the lie of death parading as life) to which only the carnal mind grants any credulity?"

[Leaving my imaginary conversation with John, the Beloved, let's give Paul a further hearing]: Every bit as mind blowing as John's heavenly perspective of believers, is Paul's way of treating the fulness of God in the epistle to Ephesians. In the first chapter, he describes the church as "...His (Christ's) body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all" (clearly an indicative statement), but goes on in chapter three to explain to the church how he prays for them. As briefly as I can, let me just say that he writes of praying for them to be so spiritually furnished as to enable them to "be filled with all the fulness of God" (Vs. 19).

May God give you the focus and clarity of thought to grasp what Paul is presenting. In a word, he writes that he's praying for them to be filled with **WHAT THEY ARE**. That's possibly the most striking example of the imperative based upon the indicative in all of scripture. In one way or another, huge edifices of Christian religion are constructed upon the need to get us to the final place where we will be filled with all the fulness of God.

It is a major pillar in the theology of sonship/kingdom teaching and I don't mean to sound disparaging, but, how often do we hear that the imperative that is ahead of us, imperatively calling to us, is that which we Now Are "in this world?"

We ARE the fulness of God. Don't start hacking away at that to trim it down to fit into what you feel is practical and sensible.

I'm sorry, but much of what we have to say on this subject reminds me of Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration. Having just witnessed

the glory of God out-raying from Jesus, Peter figures he's got to say something, and in so doing, personifies one of the great examples of "foot-in-mouth" in sacred history.

God help us, we (or that impostor posing as us) just have to say something stupid when confronted by the glory. At least Peter didn't try to explain it. He just wanted to make an elitist encampment around the event. We do him one better, we make an encampment around our explanation (which is not an explanation, but an explaining-away) of that which cannot be explained from a perspective that looks at heavenly things from an earthly vantage point.

You've got to see what really is "in this world" from the heavenly perspective, and require that the former bow to the latter. Also, how about Paul exhorting us in 1 Cor. 10, "whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," and in the next chapter declaring that "he (man) IS the image and glory of God." Do it (imperative); you are it (indicative). Do what you are! One more example and I'll not labor the point any more.

This example is brilliantly seminal and succinct, wrapped up in one short expression of Jesus Himself.

The gospel of John records what I'm referring to in chapter 4, verse 23:

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers." Christianity is quite comfortable with "an hour is coming" (the imperative hour).

Wow, are we inundated with exhortations to get to the place spiritually where we worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But we just don't know how to handle the statement by Jesus, that the coming hour "now is" (the imperative hour is constituted by the indicative hour).

Yes, that's what He said, the hour WHEN true worshippers shall worship in spirit and truth, an hour which is coming, NOW IS. The "hour is coming" is imperative, but it is rooted in the indicative hour which "now is." Mind blower: it's the same hour! Don't write to me with your theological "buts." "Oh, John, what you wrote is true, BUT....."

(ad infinitum, ad nauseum). Just butt out. Don't explain what you can't explain. Try this on for exhortation: SHUT UP.

If you need a "but" try this one. After we've had our say the Lord says:

"But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him" (Hab. 2:20). and, "...the temple of God is holy, which temple YE ARE" (1 Cor. 3:17b KJV, emphasis, mine). Shhh, don't say anything. Shut up. Just stand in the light and let it soak in and you soak in it.