

'ΟΡΓΙΖΕΣΘΕ IN EPHESIANS 4:26: COMMAND OR CONDITION?¹

DANIEL B. WALLACE
Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX 75204

It would be very appropriate to develop in this paper something of a "theology of anger," or, more specifically, a "theology of righteous human anger." Such a study is sorely needed. But it must be built on the exegesis of several key passages. Our goal, therefore, is far more modest: we wish to focus on only one text which, nevertheless, contributes heavily to such a theme. Eph 4:26 is arguably the crux interpretum in the NT regarding the validity of man's δικαία ὀργή (as the Greeks put it)--man's righteous indignation.

Why is this so? How can this one verse be regarded as so crucial to the issue? It is simply because we have great difficulty finding explicit statements in the NT in praise of human wrath. (One overly zealous writer went so far as to use the anger of the king in the parable of the wedding feast [Matt 22:7] as a proof-text for the validity of righteous human indignation²--in spite of the fact that

¹ This is a revision of a paper read at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society held at Gordon-Conwell Seminary (December 5, 1981).

² H. C. Hahn, "Anger, ὀργή," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* [=DNTT] (3 vols.; ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1915) 1.110. Further, even if the king in this parable could be interpreted as representing man (rather than God), the incidental comment by Jesus of the king's wrath (ὀργισθη in Matt 22:1; ὀργισθεῖς; in Luke 14:21) is hardly adequate as proof of his sanction of human anger, for elsewhere he uses questionable moral models in his parables as an illustration in a different realm of a good moral virtue (cf. the parable of the workers in the vineyard [Matt 20:1-16]: he is not advocating that every landowner pay the same wage to all-day and part-day workers; and the parable of the talents [Matt 25:14-30]: surely he is not here equating wealth with righteousness [cf. also Luke 16:1-9]. Our point is simply that the parables do not always have a direct, literal application--often, if not usually, they are illustrative of a truth in an entirely different realm).

most would view the king as representative of God.) Consequently, the imperative ὀργίσεσθε, "be angry," in Eph 4:26, *if taken as a command*, becomes the most explicitly positive statement of human anger in the NT.

I. Possible Syntactical Nuances for ὀργίσεσθε in Eph 4:26

That ὀργίσεσθε is a command is by no means a settled issue among the commentators; in fact, some even doubt that it is an imperative. Altogether I have found in the commentaries *seven* different syntactical options--five of which treat the form as imperative, two as indicative:

- (1) Declarative indicative: "You are angry, yet do not sin."
- (2) Interrogative indicative: "Are you angry? Then do not sin."
- (3) Command imperative: "Be angry, and do not sin."
- (4) Permissive imperative: "Be angry (if you must), but do not sin."
- (5) Conditional imperative: "If you are angry, do not sin."
- (6) Concessive imperative: "Although you may get angry, do not sin."
- (7) Prohibitive imperative: "Do not be angry and do not sin."

In order to make this discussion manageable, we need to pare down the field. We will do this in two ways: first, three options will be quickly dismissed since their exegetical bases are tenuous at best; second, three nuances will be grouped as one because in this passage there is very little difference among them.

A. Implausible Options

The two approaches which treat ὀργίσεσθε as an indicative and the one which sees it as a prohibition are implausible on their face. I have seen but one commentator treat the verb here as a declarative indicative. R. O. Yeager argues that "ὀργίσεσθε in our verse can be present middle indicative. Taken with concessive καὶ such a translation makes as good sense [as an imperative] and fits the context well."³ He translates it, "Although you are provoked, do not go on sinning," rendering this not materially different from a concessive imperative.⁴

³ R. O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament* (18 vols.; Gretna: Pelican, 1983) 14.307.

⁴ Yeager apparently is uncomfortable with the concessive imperative view: "There is nothing in the imperative mode itself to imply consent or permission" (*ibid.*), which has probably prompted him to attempt to make his view rest on more solid syntactical ground (since declarative indicatives, unlike concessive imperatives, are common).

There are three primary⁵ difficulties with this view however: (1) ὀργίζεσθε is in the thick of an overtly parenetic section, Eph 4:25-32, being surrounded by ten imperatives and two hortatory subjunctives; though there are three indicatives⁶ here, they all speak of positive realities which God has effected for the believer and as such constitute the basis for the parenesis.⁷ The flow of argument, therefore, is decidedly against an indicative ὀργίζεσθε. (2) To treat the καὶ which joins ὀργίζεσθε to μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε as concessive (or adversative) is doubtful enough between two imperatives (ἀλλὰ or δὲ would be expected), but to consider it as introducing the abrupt shift from indicative to imperative seems especially unnatural.⁸ (3) Finally, the entire clause, ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε, exactly reproduces the LXX rendering of Ps 4:4, where it must be taken as an imperative.⁹ Whether or not the apostle intentionally alluded to this text is not the point here: even if he used it rhetorically, it is a supreme case of *petitio principii* to view the formal correspondence with the Psalm as having no effect on the syntax in the Ephesians passage.¹⁰ This approach, therefore, must be judged highly improbable--at best.

The second view, that ὀργίζεσθε is an interrogative indicative (held by Beza, Meyer, and J. Eadie),¹¹ comes under the same judgment

⁵ A fourth difficulty (though less significant) also presents itself: Yeager's view tends to see Ephesians as written to a specific, identifiable situation (for anger is stated as a present problem in the community), rather than as a circular letter. Attempts to treat Ephesians as addressed to a specific community with a specific set of problems/needs have not been entirely persuasive. See later discussion.

⁶ ἔσμεν in v 2.5; ἐσφραγίσθητε in v 30; and ἐχαρίσατο in v 32.

⁷ If ὀργίζεσθε as a declarative indicative were treated the same way, then anger would be seen as a permanent and positive moral virtue (and one which, incidentally, believers did not possess before salvation).

⁸ Further, we would most naturally expect the concession to come at the beginning of v 26--either implicitly (e.g., instead of ὀργίζεσθε we might expect Paul to have written ὀργιζόμενοι) or explicitly (e.g., καίπερ).

⁹ Although there is doubt over the lexical choice of the LXX translator, he has correctly rendered the syntax of the Hebrew Qal imperative וְיִצְרֹחַ.

¹⁰ H. A. W. Meyer (*Ephesians* in MeyerK, 2.54) argues cogently against the interrogative indicative view on the basis of the quote of Ps 4:4: "Against this we cannot urge--the objection usually taken since the time of Wolf--the καὶ, which often in rapid emotion strikes in with some summons. . . ; but we may urge the fact that Paul reproduces a passage of the LXX (which, it is true, is quite arbitrarily denied by Beza and Koppe) in which ὀργιζ. is imperative, and that such an abrupt and impassioned question and answer would not be in keeping with the whole calm and sober tone of the discourse." Similarly, cf. J. P. Lange, *Ephesians in Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 170; T. K. Abbott (*Ephesians* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897]) 140.

¹¹ See MeyerK, 2.52 and J. Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 342 for a list of names. The view is no longer popular.

for the same reasons: it would be an uneasy indicative in the midst of imperatives, the allusion to Ps 4:4 shows that an imperative is in Paul's mind, and the use of καὶ in the sense of "then" or "therefore" is not natural here.¹²

The third implausible view is the prohibitive imperative view—i.e., that the negative μὴ governs both ἁμαρτάνετε and ὀργίσεσθε.¹³ This view takes a "180-degree" turn from treating ὀργίσεσθε as a positive injunction. In spite of the theological difficulty caused by the *prima facie* reading of "be angry" as a command, this view is impossible grammatically.

B. Permissive, Conditional, and Concessive Grouped Together

On a popular level especially, the permissive, conditional, and concessive views are all neatly separated. But several writers hold out for the distinction, at least, between permissive and conditional.¹⁴ Thus, J. L. Boyer states that "in Eph 4:26 it is difficult to understand 'Be angry and sin not' as a command or even a permission, especially [sic] in light of the context. . . . It is much easier to take it as a condition. . . ."¹⁵

This distinction is usually made because the imperative can have a permissive or conditional nuance. Grammarians, however, make no

¹² Not only would we normally expect ἄρα or οὖν here, but in Paul's usage especially we are accustomed to seeing explicitly paratactic structure if that is what he meant.

¹³ C. Hodge seems to entertain this view (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* [New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1856] 269) when he writes:

. . . the words of the apostle may mean, do not commit the sin of being angry. To this it is objected, that it makes the negative qualify both verbs, while it belongs really only to the latter. It is not necessary to assume that the apostle uses these words in the precise sense of the original text; for the New Testament writers often give the sense of an Old Testament passage with a modification of the words, or they use the same words with a modification of the sense.

¹⁴ Aquinas embraced the permissive view; more recently, cf. H. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol: 3: *Galatians-Philemon* (3 vols.; rev. E. F. Harrison; Chicago: Moody, 1958) 125 (though he calls it "assumptive"); R. P. Martin, *Ephesians in The Broadman Bible Commentary* (12 vols.; Nashville: Broadman, 1971) 11.161 (though he seems to lump conditional, concessive and permissive ideas together, his translation reflects the permissive idea: "You may be angry. . .if you can't help it. . ."). Others have held the conditional view, considering it as different from the permissive view: cf. C. L. Mitton, *Ephesians* (NCB; ed. M. Black; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1973) 168: "It is quite wrong to take it as a command or even a permission to be angry"; J. Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief* (in HTKNT) 235, asks, "Wird hier der Zorn für gewisse Fälle konzediert?" ("Is the anger allowed here for particular cases?") He answers in the negative because anger in v 31 is prohibited.

¹⁵ J. L. Boyer, "Other Conditional Elements in New Testament Greek," *GTJ* 4 (1983) 185.

distinction between a conditional imperative and a concessive imperative.¹⁶ And semantically, of course, concession is one kind of condition. In this context, since ὀργίζεσθε is followed by a prohibition, any real difference between condition and concession is imperceptible. Consequently, we will treat the conditional view and the concessive view as one and the same.

But what about the difference between permission and condition? Many grammarians make a distinction between these two.¹⁷ But not all do. No less an authority than the grammar by Blass-Debrunner lumps the permissive, concessive and conditional uses together.¹⁸ M. Barth, in his meticulous commentary on Ephesians, does the same: he translates ὀργίζεσθε "if you are angry," labels it a "concessive imperative," then defines what he means by saying that "a factual permission is granted by this imperative" (*italics mine*).¹⁹ It may be significant that, almost universally, those who distinguish the two opt for the conditional nuance, arguing that permission is closer to command. C. L. Mitton is representative: "It is quite wrong to take it as a command or even a permission to be angry. . . here the quotation means: 'If you do get angry. . .'"²⁰

In this context, however, one has difficulty even determining the difference between permission and condition. This is due to the following prohibition, μη ἀμαρτάνετε, which somehow governs the opening imperative. There is very little difference between "be angry, if you

¹⁶ E.g., A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th ed.; Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 948, calls his fifth category of usage "Concession or Condition"; cf. also J. M. Stahl, *Kritisch-Historische Syntax des Griechischen Verbums der Klassischen Zeit* (reprint ed.; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965) 239, 362; W. D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1941) 86; C. Vaughan and V. E. Gideon, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1979) 107; B. L. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sciences, 1973) §729.

¹⁷ See n. 15.

¹⁸ BDF §387. They list three uses: command, request, concession. In discussing John 2:19 they consider λύσατε to be equal to εἰάν καὶ ζύσητε (which they call concessive). And regarding our passage, they argue that it "most probably means 'you may be angry as far as I am concerned (if you can't help it), but do not sin thereby'"-- a rendering which is normally equated with the permissive view. Cf. also H. Schlier (*Der Brief an die Epheser* [Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1963] 224, n. 3) who, though calling the imperative concessive, cites Blass-Debrunner in support.

¹⁹ M. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (AB; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960) 2.513. So also N. Hugede, *L'Épître aux Ephésiens* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1973) 187: "L'imperatif ὀργίζεσθε en soi n'était pas un ordre, mais une concession. . . : si vous vous emportez, ne pechez point" ("The imperative ὀργίζεσθε is not in fact a command, but a concession. . . : "If you are angry, do not sin").

²⁰ Mitton, *Ephesian*, 168.

must, but don't sin" and "if you are angry, don't sin." Nevertheless, the semantic situation found in Eph 4:26 (viz., imperative + καὶ + a second verb) fits the pattern required for a conditional imperative, though it is quite rare for permissive imperatives.²¹ Consequently, we will treat permissive and conditional as one--and, out of deference to conditional advocates, call this approach simply the conditional view.

To sum up: the live options in Eph 4:26 are only two: either ὀργίζεσθε is a command or a condition. We now need to examine several factors which may help us to come down from the fence on one side or the other.

II. *Factors Contributing to the Use of ὀργίζεσθε in Eph 4:26*

There are four major factors which help shape our understanding of the nuance of ὀργίζεσθε in this text: (1) the use Paul makes of Ps 4:4; (2) the context; (3) the general biblical teaching on man's anger; and (4) the specifics of the syntax of the construction. For reasons which should soon become obvious, we will treat the first two in this section and treat the syntax separately. However, as our purpose is to see what contribution Eph 4:26 makes toward the biblical teaching on human anger, and not vice versa, we can only touch on this third category in our examination of the context.

A. *Paul's Use of Ps 4:4*

As we mentioned earlier, Paul quotes verbatim the LXX rendering of Ps 4:4: ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε. There are problems with this translation, however. ὀργίζεσθε renders יִגַּע which though an imperative, might not mean "be angry." The basic significance of the stem, יִגַּע, is simply "tremble, shake,"²² which may involve--in a given context--shaking out of fear, trembling in awe or reverence, or shaking in anger. Though the LXX renders יִגַּע, as "be angry," the Targum as well as Aquila opt for "tremble [in fear/reverence]."²³ The commentaries are divided on the issue,²⁴ though those who affirm the

²¹ But cf. John 19:6 (λάβετε. . . καὶ σταυρώσατε) and Rev 22:11 (ἀδικησάτω . . . καὶ . . . ῥύπανθήτω); yet even here these "permissive" imperatives bear the sense of reluctance or toleration rather than positive permission.

²² A. Bowling in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (ed. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke [Chicago: Moody, 1980] 2.830) states, "The primary meaning of this root is to quake or shake, from which ideas such as shaking in anger, fear, or anticipation are derived." Cf. also BDB, 919; KB, 872.

²³ יִגַּע וְלֹא תִּחַטְּוּ ("tremble [in fear] and you will not sin"); κλονεῖσθε.

²⁴ In defense of "be angry," cf. F. Delitzsch, *Psalms* (vol. 5 in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch [reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

LXX's rendering tend to do so precisely because Paul quoted it. Whether this Psalm is to be connected with the previous one,²⁵ and if so, whether v 4 is addressed to Absalom's men²⁶ or David's companions,²⁷ are questions difficult to answer. My tentative preference is to opt for the meaning "tremble (in awe)," for וַיִּגַּד because (1) the nuance of anger is rare for וַיִּגַּד, and is perhaps never found in the Qal stem;²⁸ and (2) the parallel with the rest of v 4 ("meditate. . . and be still") seems to be a fitting balance with the idea of "tremble (in awe) and do not sin,"²⁹ But even if "be angry" is the meaning of וַיִּגַּד, because of the question mark over who is being addressed as well as the object of the anger, we cannot be dogmatic about the force of the Hebrew imperative.³⁰

All of this, however, is a moot point, Paul does not here use one of his standard introductory formulas;³¹ he is not putting his apostolic stamp of approval on the LXX's rendering. In my judgment, Abbott's dictum is correct: "It is . . . superfluous, as far as the present passage is concerned, to inquire what the meaning of the original is. St. Paul is not arguing from the words, but adopting them as well known, and as expressing the precept he wishes to inculcate."³² His use of the Psalm therefore, rhetorical. Hence, we need to look at the context into which Eph 4:26 is set for further clues on the use of ὀργίζεσθε.

1976]) 114-15; W. Kay, *The Psalms* (London: Rivingtons, 1871) 14; in defense of "tremble (in awe)," cf. C. A. Briggs, *Psalms* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907) 34; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1959) 68-69.

²⁵ So Delitzsch, *Psalms*; differently, Briggs, *Psalms*.

²⁶ So Delitzsch, *Psalms*.

²⁷ So Kay, *Psalms*.

²⁸ "be angry, AV. is sustained by Is. 28²¹ of God's anger and Pr. 29⁹ of man's. But in these cases it is rather the quivering and trembling of passion, which is justifiable; and is regarded by many as Hiph v. BDB" (Briggs, *Psalms*, 34).

²⁹ Not only are the imperatives taken naturally as commands, but "tremble (in awe)" and "meditate" are both God-ward actions. The NEB translation ("However angry your hearts, do not do wrong; though you lie abed resentful, do not break silence") seems a bit forced.

³⁰ Even if addressed to Absalom and his men, the idea may well be "be angry (at your own wrong-doing) and stop sinning." Yet, if these are the addressees, Paul's use of it is decidedly rhetorical, for he is addressing the community of believers. In large measure, the use of וַיִּגַּד just like ὀργίζεσθε, is a problem of syntax (see section III for discussion of both).

³¹ In Ephesians, however, he uses an IF only twice (4:8; 5:14). See J. P. Sampley, "Scripture and Tradition in the Community as Seen in Ephesians 4:25ff," *ST* 2 (1972) 101-9, for an interesting view on Paul's use of the OT in this section.

³² Abbott, 139-40. Cf. also MeyerK, *Ephesians*, 252; Lange, *Ephesians*, 169. This is not to say that the quote has no significance, for the very familiarity of the Psalm (at least to Paul) renders the two indicative views (discussed earlier) as highly unlikely.

B. *The Context of Eph 4:26*

There are at least seven contextual factors, of varying weight, which may be helpful in shaping our understanding of this elusive imperative.

1. *Parenetic Section.* As we have already mentioned, Eph 4:25-32 is a specifically parenetic section in this epistle. On a mechanical level, this might tend to favor the command view, for the other ten imperatives here must all be taken as commands (or prohibitions).³³ At the same time, none of the imperatives--except *ὀργίζεσθε*--fits the structural requirements for a conditional imperative (viz., imperative + *καὶ* + second verb), which might indicate that a conditional imperative was on the apostle's mind.

2. *Community of Faith.* Not only is v 26 in a parenetic section, but it is in one which addresses the relationship of individual believer to individual believer. It begins and ends with two indicatives ("we are [*ἐσμεν*] members of one another" in v 25; "God in Christ has forgiven [*ἔχαρίσατο*] you" in v 32), which speak of the divine initiative toward those who now constitute the believing community. All this is to say that, however we take *ὀργίζεσθε*, it should be seen as anger directed within the church. By extension, perhaps, it can apply to those outside the faith, but I doubt if that is the apostle's primary point. Consequently, those who argue for the command view on the basis of a righteous indignation toward unbelievers have missed the thrust of the apostle here.³⁴ But this cuts both ways: if Paul is not here speaking about judging the world per se, then arguments against the command view which presuppose that he is are equally invalid.³⁵

3. *A Specific Situation in View?* Not to be discounted entirely is the possibility that Paul has in mind a specific situation in 4:25-32. Formally, all the injunctions are directed toward the group except one. *ὁ κλέπτων* (v 28) may well refer to a specific individual. Not only is it singular, but the negative *μηκέτι* ("no longer") indicates that the

³³ This argument is helpful against seeing *ὀργίζεσθε* as an indicative here, but probably not against taking it as a specific type of imperative.

³⁴ So E. K. Simpson (*Ephesians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957]) generalizes the passage so as to include individual nations as well as the world (108-9); cf. also C. R. Erdman, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 102.

³⁵ So Yeager, *New Testament*, 308: "Why should he allow his anger to persist until it has him shouting at the poor defenseless slaves of Satan who cannot help behaving as they do since they are only unregenerated human flesh?" J. L. Boyer, too, seems to hold this view ("A Classification of Imperatives: A Statistical Study," *GTJ* 8 [1987] 39).

stealing was already taking place.³⁶ If this exegesis is valid, then the entire pericope might center on this problem, and the injunction in v 26 would then probably mean "be angry about the fact of such sin in your midst and do something about it"³⁷

However, identifying a specific problem in this epistle is notoriously difficult. It depends not only on taking ὁ κλέπτων as referring to an individual (rather than generically), but on seeing other specific problems addressed in this epistle,³⁸ as well as viewing Ephesians as primarily intended for one church.³⁹ More than "one thief" will be required to overturn the well-worn view of the epistle as some sort of circular letter.⁴⁰

Consequently, this parenthetic section is probably very loosely organized. The rapid-fire imperatives march on asyndetically;⁴¹ these staccato exhortations are typically Pauline.⁴² But even this tends to support the command imperative view, though hardly conclusively.⁴³

³⁶ The substantival participle also implies this.

³⁷ On the assumption that the thief had not yet been identified, the pericope might have the following force:

v 25: each man should be open and honest with his neighbor--and not suspect everyone in the community of stealing--because we are members of each other.

vv 26-27: either "be angry" at the fact of such sin within the community of believers (cf. I Cor 5:1-5) and resolve to do something about it quickly; or, less likely, "if you are angry" stop sinning by allowing your anger to be vented on everyone you suspect.

v 28: rebuke of the thief directly, which fits in well with the command imperative view (at least for Paul; again cf. I Cor 5:1-5).

vv 29-31: rebuke of the congregation: the rest of you have sinned, too. As the thief has robbed you physically, you have robbed yourselves spiritually (note the interchange between χρεῖα in v 28 and v 29)--by suspicious innuendo (v 29) and an escalating vituperation (v 31)--which grieves the Holy Spirit (v 30).

v 32: Because of this one thief in your midst, you have forgotten Christian graces." But, remembering what God in Christ has done for you, forgive one another.

³⁸ But cf. C. Rogers, Jr., who makes a plausible argument for the problem of drunkenness due to the Dionysian cult in 5:18 ("The Dionysian Background of Ephesians 5:18," *BSac* 136 [1979] 249-57); nevertheless, the Dionysian cult was not a problem unique to Ephesus.

³⁹ Even if ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in 1:1 is original, this does not, of course, mean that the letter was not intended to be circular.

⁴⁰ Cf. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1970) 515. Moving even further away from a specific destination/specific occasion view, W. G. Kummel, citing J. N. Sanders, argues that Ephesians may well be "the spiritual testament of Paul to the church" (*Introduction to the New Testament* rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 355 (see his discussion on 352- 55).

Note vv 26, 28, 29, 31.

⁴² Cf. I Thess 5:15-22; Rom 12:9-17.

⁴³ See n. 32.

4. *Eph 5:1*. Barth brings 5:1 ("as beloved children, be imitators of God") into the discussion: "Among the saints who are 'God's imitators' (5:1) such anger cannot be excluded any more than in God himself. . . or in the Messiah (Mark 3:5, etc.)."⁴⁴ This, too, would tend to support the command imperative view⁴⁵ --if all the moral attributes of God are to be copied by the believer. But, at best, this is only an inference.

5. *The Audience*. One factor rarely considered is how the audience would have understood Paul's words. Assuming that it was largely Gentile, it may be significant that, among the Greek philosophers, only the Stoics categorically condemned human anger.⁴⁶ Though the general tenor among the Greeks was a negative assessment, "the moral wrath which protects against evil"⁴⁷ was seen as entirely legitimate in the realm of government and "even necessary for great acts and virtues. . ."⁴⁸

With reference to the Jewish contingency among Paul's addressees, both the OT⁴⁹ and rabbinic literature⁵⁰ considered righteous human indignation to be legitimate.⁵¹ On the other hand, Philo had a difficult time accepting either human wrath or divine wrath as a righteous emotion/ act.⁵² This, of course, is in keeping with his Stoic training.

In other words, few Jews or Gentiles in the first Christian century would flinch at reading ὀργίζεσθε as a command. In the least, since the Stoics and Philo stand apart from the rest of the ancient world, those exegetes who would absolutely prohibit human anger⁵³ might do well to take stock of the company they keep! Nevertheless, what the original audience would think is not conclusive for what an author

⁴⁴ Barth, *Ephesians*, 2.513.

⁴⁵ However, Barth himself sees ὀργίζεσθε as permissive (=conditional).

⁴⁶ H. Kleinknecht "ὀργή," TDNT 5.384-85.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 384.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Cf. Exod 32:19; Judg 9:3; 1 Sam 11:6; 2 Sam 12:5; Neh 5:6. J. Fichtner points out that "Saul's wrath against the Ammonites. . . is attributed to the Spirit of Yahweh (1 S. 11:6)" (*ibid.*, 394), and further that ". . . one can speak esp. of holy and righteous anger when it is a matter of directly championing the cause of Yahweh. . ." (*ibid.*; see references there).

⁵⁰ See references in Str-B 3.602 (on Eph 4:26).

⁵¹ The OT, however, seems to view it, at times, as a virtue, while the rabbinic material simply allows for it.

⁵² TDNT 5.417.

⁵³ Boyer, "Conditions," though he advocates the conditional view, categorically prohibits anger to men: "it seems impossible to understand this in a good sense. . . . 'righteous indignation' seems never to be approved for men" (39).

meant. Two final (and related) contextual arguments are usually judged as decisive clues to Paul's meaning here.

6. 'Οργή Prohibited in v 31. What is normally perceived to be the strongest argument⁵⁴ against taking ὀργίζεσθε as a command is the prohibition against anger in v 31: Let all bitterness and wrath and anger [ὀργή] and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice."⁵⁵ Formally, it is not just ὀργή that is prohibited--but πᾶσα ὀργή ("all anger").

Vv 26 and 31 clear stand in tension. Just as it would be wrong--by appealing only to 26a--to say that *all* anger is a righteous duty laid on the believer at all times, so too it would be wrong--by appealing exclusively to v 31--to say that all anger is wrong and utterly sinful at all times. Indeed, there are two internal clues which help to resolve the tension created by v 31.

First, as many commentators point out,⁵⁶ this verse apparently gives a progressively climactic and inherently cohesive list of vices; hence, the ὀργή which springs from θυμός (which, in turn, is rooted in πικρία) is to be shunned at all times. As C. Hodge points out, "Verse 31 is not inconsistent with this interpretation [viz., that there is a righteous anger], for there the context shows [that] the apostle speaks of malicious anger--just as 'all hatred' means all malice, and not the hatred of evil."⁵⁷

Second, the very fact that Paul distinguishes between anger and sin in v 26 indicates that there is an anger which is not sinful. Now it might be objected that this is begging the question because it presupposes an injunctive flavor for ὀργίζεσθε. But that is not the case. Even if we assume the conditional view, "if you are angry, then do not sin" at least implies that it is possible to be angry without sinning. As A. Tholuck has aptly remarked, "Spricht Paulus von einem verwerflichen Zorne, wie kann er das Sundigen vom Zornen trennen?"⁵⁸ And once it is recognized that the apostle admits of a non-sinful anger ill

⁵⁴ So Gnilka, *Epheserbrief*, 235.

⁵⁵ RSV translation.

⁵⁶ Eadie, *Ephesians*, 348-49; B. F. Westcott, *St. Pauls Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1906) 74; Barth, *Ephesians*, 2.521.

⁵⁷ Hodge, *Ephesians*, 270.

⁵⁸ "If Paul speaks [only] of a reprehensible anger, how can he distinguish between sinning and being angry?" A. Tholuck, *Philologisch-theologische Auslegung der Bergpredigt Christi nach Matthaus* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1833) 186. The underlying difficulty for the conditional view, in this regard, is that it cannot handle the apodosis, μη ἁμαρτάνετε. To maintain both a conditional ὀργίζεσθε and an absolute prohibition of anger requires a declaration in the apodosis, not a prohibition: "If you are angry, you are sinning."

v 26, then it must be conceded that he does not *absolutely* prohibit anger in v 31. Therefore, "conditionalists" who appeal to v 31 prove too much: they undercut their own view of ὀργίζεσθε in the process.

7. *Eph 4:26b-27*. Finally, conditionalists appeal to vv 26b-27 as an argument against the command view. Boyer asks, ". . . if this is a command to show 'righteous indignation,' why is the warning added to end it before the sun goes down?"⁵⁹ In response, four things can be said.

First, if, as Boyer believes, Paul is condemning all human anger, why would he allow it to last until sundown? Would it not be more to the point for him to have said, "Do not get angry in the first place"? By setting a temporal limit⁶⁰ the apostle lays down a restriction, but not a prohibition.

Second, no one who maintains the "command" view would see ὀργίζεσθε as an unqualified exhortation. Unless it is impossible for a command to have a limited and occasional application, it is difficult to see the validity of Boyer's point. If I am commanded to "weep with those who weep," is this not a limited command? Or if parents are told not to spare the rod for that would spoil the child, does this mean that all discipline must be corporeal--or worse, that the only way they are to relate to their offspring is with a whip in hand? Surely the imperative is flexible enough, in a given context, to make demands which are limited by time and/or occasion.

Third, no one but the Stoics and Philo would deny God the right--even the obligation--to be angry at times. Yet few would say that anger is God's leading attribute. Isa 28:21 speaks of the exercise of God's wrath as his "strange"⁶¹ or "unusual"⁶² work. The point is that a command to be angry--and yet to limit that anger--is in keeping with God's character and may well be, as Barth has noted, a specific application of Eph 5:1: "become imitators of God," Does not the psalmist say, "His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime"?⁶³

Finally, entirely apart from these considerations is the possibility that we have misconstrued the limitation in v 26b, Paul might not be placing a temporal limit on one's anger. When he says "do not let the sun go down on your anger," he does not use the obvious cognate,

⁵⁹ Boyer, "Imperatives," 39.

⁶⁰ Which is more than likely not literal, the point being that one ought not to allow anger to fester so as to become sin. Even righteous anger, then, can degenerate, if not properly guarded.

⁶¹ So NEB.

⁶² So NASB.

⁶³ Ps 30:5 (NASV).

ὀργή. Instead, he uses παραοργισμός. This is a rare term which has been found to date only in biblical Greek.⁶⁴ “In the LXX it is used as a rule with an active meaning. . . .”⁶⁵ In fact, we may go so far as to say that the term always has an active meaning except for one variant found in codex Alexandrinus.⁶⁶ It may thus be translated “the cause of provocation,” and always refers⁶⁷ to the external cause by one party (usually Israel) which aroused the wrath of another (usually Yahweh). παραοργισμός is used but once in the NT, in Eph 4:26. Perhaps commentators are too hasty to label it a passive--viz., the feeling of being provoked.⁶⁸ If it bears its normal sense of “that which caused provocation” Paul might well be saying, “Deal with the cause of your anger immediately.” And if that cause is another brother (as would be most natural in this section), the point might well be the same as Matt 18:15: “if your brother sins, go and rebuke him.” V 27 then would have the force of --don't let the devil gain a foothold in the assembly by letting sin go unchecked.⁶⁹ Further, μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε in this view would have the force of “do not sin by doing nothing--act quickly to discipline your brother.” If this reconstruction is correct, then ὀργίζεσθε would have to be taken as a command.⁷⁰

Perhaps we are reading too much into the text in this approach. But suffice it to say here that, whether 26b is a temporal limit on one's anger or whether it is an incitement to carry out church discipline quickly, there is no good reason to object to ὀργίζεσθε as a command. To sum up the contextual arguments: none of the seven points we have made is decisive. At this stage, ὀργίζεσθε could be either a

⁶⁴ As well as in patristic comments on Eph 4:26. My perusal of *Thesaurus Linguae Graece* (via the *Ibycus* computer-generated concordance) turned up no new instances.

⁶⁵ J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 496.

⁶⁶ Cf. 3 Kgdms 15:30; 4 Kgdms 19:3; 23:26; Neh 9:18, 26. The variant reading is found in Jer 21:5. As well, the close cognate, παρόργισμα is also found only with an active meaning (3 Kgdms 16:33; 20[21]:22; 2 Chron 35:19).

⁶⁷ The v.l. excepted.

⁶⁸ For an active sense, cf. H. C. G. Moule, *Studies in Ephesians* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977) 122; Westcott, *Ephesians*, 73.

⁶⁹ See n. 37 for a possible reconstruction of the incident, if any, that the apostle might have had in mind.

⁷⁰ What might give further support for this view is the fact that ὀργίζω, rather than θυμώω, is used. If a distinction can be made between these two--though, admittedly, there is a great deal of overlap--ὀργίζω tends to accent the volition, while θυμώω tends to stress the emotion (though it is probably impossible to extricate emotions entirely from ὀργίζω's connotations). If such a volitional emphasis, is on the apostle's mind (a nuance difficult for English-speaking natives to grasp for anger, be angry), then the link with decisive action, justice, (informal) church discipline is thereby strengthened.

command or a condition, though I am inclined to think that the command view has the edge.

III. *The Syntax in Eph 4:26*

The final factor deals specifically with the syntax of ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε. There are three arguments to consider here, though the first two are of minor importance.

A. *Aspect*

The aspectual forces of the imperative are often treated in relation to present time. Thus, the aorist imperative is usually considered to mean "start to do X," while the present imperative bears the sense, "continue doing X." The aorist prohibition⁷¹ has the force "don't start to do X," while the present prohibition means "stop doing X;"⁷² If this meaning were pressed in Eph 4:26, the idea might be, "keep on being angry, but stop sinning."

But recent studies have shown that this way of viewing the imperatives is quite incorrect,⁷³ for the time element is entirely incidental to the tense used and is to be derived from the context. As K. L. McKay points out, "In the imperative the essential difference between the aorist and the imperfective [i.e., present] is that the former urges an activity as whole action and the latter urges it as ongoing process."⁷⁴ Consequently, this is a moot point for our present passage.

B. *The Connective καὶ*

Several commentators who favor taking ὀργίζεσθε as a command make much of the conjunction joining the two imperatives. Meyer is representative: ". . . the mere καὶ is only logically correct when both imperatives are, thought of in the same sense, not the former as permitting and the latter as enjoining, in which case the combination becomes *exceptive* ('only, however'), which would be expressed by ἀλλὰ, πλὴν, or μόνον . . ."⁷⁵ This is not a very strong argument for

⁷¹ In the NT, all aorist prohibitions in the second person employ the subjunctive rather than the imperative.

⁷² Cf. H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927) 299-303; J. A. Brooks and C. L. Winberry, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979) 116.

⁷³ Cf. K. L. McKay, "Aspect in Imperative Constructions in New Testament Greek," *NovT* 27 (1985) 201-26; Boyer, "Imperatives," 35-54: ,

⁷⁴ McKay, "Aspect," 206-7.

⁷⁵ Meyer, 2.53-54.

the simple reason that καὶ is not here connecting two naked imperatives, but an imperative on the one side with μὴ plus the imperative on the other. The negative disrupts any simple connection and, in fact, probably lends a mildly adversative force to καὶ: "be angry, and yet do not sin." Still, the presence of καὶ cannot be construed as an argument against the command view and, in all probability, leans toward it. Nevertheless, neither of these first two grammatical arguments is very decisive.

C. *The Semantic Situation of Conditional Imperatives*

The final syntactical argument, however, may well be decisive. Those who hold that ὀργίσεσθε is a conditional imperative must reckon with the fact that it is followed by another imperative. This would seem unnatural, as we might expect a future indicative--thus, in John 2:19 we read, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up [λύσατε . . . ἐγερῶ]." In Boyer's exhaustive study on imperatives in the NT, in fact, he states the following:

Probably the strangest and most controversial category of imperatives is that which seems to express some conditional element. Here it is necessary to distinguish two groups. The first is neither strange nor controversial; it includes a large number of instances (about 20) where an imperative is followed by καὶ and a *future indicative* verb [*italics mine*]. . . .

The second group consists of a few passages where condition has been proposed to explain a difficult passage.⁷⁶

Boyer then lists only three passages⁷⁷ which belong to this questionable category. Eph 4:26 gets the greatest amount of coverage--and here Boyer comes out strongly, on contextual and theological grounds, for a conditional ὀργίσεσθε. The point is that one of the leading advocates of the conditional view--and the only one to categorize every imperative in the NT--was unable to find any other conditional imperative which was followed by καὶ and another imperative. Boyer has clearly felt the force of this syntactical argument and has found that his only recourse is to argue on the basis of other factors.

But, to be sure, there are grammarians who argue that a conditional imperative can be followed by another imperative. A. T. Robertson has made perhaps the most cogent statement along these lines:

⁷⁶ Boyer, "Imperatives," 39.

⁷⁷ Strangely, he includes John 2:19 in his dubious list, as well as 2 Cor 12:16 and Eph 4:26.

Sometimes two imperatives are connected by *καὶ* when the first suggests concession. Thus Eph. 4:26, *ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε*. So also *ἐραύνησον καὶ ἴδε* (Jo. 7:52). Cf. *ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε* (Jo. 1:46). This seems simple enough [*italics mine*].⁷⁸

Robertson thus gives two examples (besides Eph 4:26) of a conditional imperative followed by another imperative. But what "seems simple enough" to Robertson does not help the cause of a conditional imperative in Eph 4:26 for three reasons.

First, Robertson's identification of *ἐραύνησον* in John 7:52 and *ἔρχου* in John 1:46 as conditional imperatives is highly debatable, for even Boyer--who would like to find such a tidy semantic parallel to Eph 4:26--is unable to admit that any construction other than imperative + *καὶ* + *future indicative* involves a conditional imperative.⁷⁹

Second, even if we assumed that Robertson's proof-texts were valid, a proper parallel has not been drawn for us. In John 1:46 we read *ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε* ("come and see"). This is Philip's response to Nathanael's challenge, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" If we see *ἔρχου* as a conditional imperative, rather than entreaty, then Philip's response means, "If you come, you will see." In John 7:52, the Pharisees suspect that Nicodemus has become a disciple of Jesus. They ask, "Are you from Galilee, too?" Then they declare, "Search and see [*ἐραύνησον καὶ ἴδε*] that no prophet comes from Galilee." Again, if *ἐραύνησον* is conditional, the Pharisees' retort means, "If you search, you will see." In other words, in both of Robertson's proof-texts the second imperative functions semantically as a future indicative.⁸⁰ If we applied that principle to Eph 4:26 we would get "If you are angry, you *will not sin*!"

Third, there is an additional problem with Robertson's proof-texts. The very fact that there is some doubt concerning the label of

⁷⁸ Robertson, *Grammar*, 949. Cf. also A. Buttmann, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1873) 290.

⁷⁹ Boyer considers *ἐραύνησον καὶ ἴδε* (John 7:52) to be ambiguous semantically, fitting either the "command" or "condition" category; he does not deal with John 1:46.

⁸⁰ It should be noted here that conditionalists who base their view on a supposed conditional imperative in Ps 4:4 must also reckon with the fact that the same semantics are operative in Hebrew. Abbott (*Ephesians*, 140) aptly points out:

The phrase is frequently explained by reference to what is called the Hebrew idiom (which is by no means peculiarly Hebrew) of combining two imperatives, so that the former expresses the condition, the latter the result, as in Amos v. 4, "Seek Me and live." But this would make the words mean, "Be angry, and so ye shall not sin."

As well, in all 17 examples listed in GKC of this idiom, none broke away from the "condition-consequence" idea (§110.2.(a)). Indeed, they noted that "In this case the first imperative contains, as a rule, a condition, while the second declares the consequence which the fulfilment of the condition will involve" (*italics mine*). (See also n. 22.)

conditional imperative for ἔργου and ἐραύνησον is not because others would give them a radically different nuance. The idea of injunction or condition in these two texts is not very far apart at all. But this is not due to a blurring in the distinction between the categories (or, more accurately, nuances) of command and condition—otherwise exegetes would not spill so much ink over Eph 4:26.⁸¹ Rather, it is due to the fact that these conditional imperatives have not lost their natural injunctive force. And it is probable that this is due to their being linked by καὶ with another imperative. We might even paraphrase John 1:46 as "If you come--and I urge you to--you will see" and John 7:52 as "If you search--as well you should--you will see." If this were applied to Eph 4:26, it would mean, "If you are angry--and you should be"!

Perhaps we are being unfair to Robertson, however. After all, he only supplied two proof-texts, implying that there may be others. Because of this possibility it is necessary to examine every imperative + καὶ + imperative construction in the NT. Altogether, there are 187 imperative + καὶ + imperative constructions in the NT.⁸² This certainly seems like a large enough data base from which to draw some fairly firm conclusions. I examined each one to determine whether we can add any more potentially conditional imperatives to Robertson's list. The answer is a qualified yes. In addition to John 1:46 and 7:52, 21 more imperatives can be added to the list⁸³ of potential conditional imperatives. I broke these down into two groups: those which only had a slight chance of deserving the label and those which, in their contexts, looked like good candidates. In the first group belonged 17 imperatives.⁸⁴ For example, Mark 2:9 has "rise and take up your bed and walk." It is just possible that the force is, "If you rise and take up your bed, you will walk." Yet, the whole tenor of the pericope

⁸¹ Cf. also John 2:19 where such a blurring of nuances would wreak exegetical havoc.

⁸² These data were derived from Gramcord. Gramcord is a copyrighted software package which is able to perform grammatical searches in the Greek NT. It is distributed solely by the Gramcord Institute, 2065 Half Day Road, Deerfield, IL 60015. By creating a contextfield of twelve words, 289 imperative + καὶ + imperative constructions were found. We made it this broad in order to pick up every legitimate construction. Gramcord, however, did not discern whether such imperatives belonged in the same clause; as well, it multiplied the examples when more than two imperatives were used (e.g., Mark 2:9 [which reads ἔγειρε καὶ ἄρον . . . καὶ περιπάτει] was listed four times). Consequently, this list of raw data was pared down to 187 legitimate examples.

⁸³ Eph 4:26 being omitted from consideration as that is our target passage.

⁸⁴ Cf. Matt 9:5; 11:29; 15:10; Mark 2:9; 5:19; 7:14; 9:50; Luke 5:4, 23; 24:39; John 4:35; 5:8; 20:27; 1 Cor 11:28; 15:34; Gal 5:1; Eph 5:14.

seemed to render this unlikely.⁸⁵ In Luke 24:39 Jesus, in his resurrected body, says "Touch me and see. . ."; the force could possibly be "If you touch me, you will see." But again, the tone of the passage seems to be against this.⁸⁶

In the second group--the likely candidates--belonged, besides John 1:46 and 7:52, only two other texts. In Luke 7:7 we read of the centurion's request that Jesus heal his servant: "Say the word and let my servant be healed." Many scribes changed ἰαθήτω ("let him be healed") to ἰαθήσεται ("he will be healed"),⁸⁷ indicating that the second imperative is virtually the equivalent of a future indicative. "If you say the word, he will be healed," is not an inappropriate rendering, therefore.⁸⁸ John 11:34 reproduces the verbiage of 1:46 ("come and see") and consequently may well imply a conditional nuance. Significantly, of all 21 potential example, only two were as convincing as Robertson's two alleged proof-texts. Thus, out of 187 imperative + καὶ + imperative constructions in the NT, four *probably*--or, at least, quite possibly--involve conditional imperatives. Yet each of these four could be construed as conditional imperatives precisely because the trailing imperative functioned as a *future indicative*--a semantic situation which finds no parallel in Eph 4:26.

However, among the 17 mildly possible conditional imperatives, I found a different phenomenon. In four passages,⁸⁹ assuming that the first imperative was conditional, the second still, most naturally, bore its injunctive force, thus paralleling Eph 4:26. However, there were two major problems with all these examples: first, they were exceedingly doubtful as legitimate candidates for conditional imperatives; and second, the conditional imperative nuance still carried with it the full force of a command. Two examples should suffice. In Mark 5:19 Jesus told the formerly demon-possessed man, "Go home and tell them what the Lord has done for you." If we read ὑπαγε conditionally

⁸⁵ σοὶ λέγω in v 11 sounds like it introduces a command; the man's immediate response suggests that he viewed it as a command; and the fact that Jesus stresses his own authority (v 19) would best fit a command imperative. See also Matt 9:5; Luke 5:2.3; and John 5:8 for the same expression.

⁸⁶ The parallel in v 39a and the apparent eagerness of Jesus to get his disciples to believe in him are decidedly on the side of seeing entreaty/command here.

⁸⁷ In fact, only p75 B L 1241 cop^{sa,bo} are listed in UBSGNT³ in support of the imperative. A quick check of *The New Testament in Greek: The Gospel According to St. Luke*, Part One: Chapters 1-12 (IGNTP; Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) revealed no more MSS.

⁸⁸ Cf. also the v.I. in Gal 6:2 (ἀναπληρώσατε) where the UBSGNT³(=NA²⁶) text has the future indicative.

⁸⁹ Matt 15:10; Mark 5:19; 7:14; Luke 5:4.

we--would have, "If you go home, tell them. . ." Though a command would thereby be preserved in the apodosis, only with great ingenuity could we construe ὑπαγε as a mere option.⁹⁰ Luke 5:4 suffers the same judgment, for Jesus' command to Peter to "Put out into deep waters and lower the nets" can hardly, without torture, be rendered, "If you put out into deep waters, lower the nets." The context must virtually be suffocated to get this idea out of the verse.⁹¹

It must be readily admitted that these examples are very difficult to swallow. They are included in this discussion to show that only by great mental gymnastics is one able to show legitimate parallels to a conditional ὀργίζεσθε in Eph 4:26.

To sum up the major syntactical argument we can make the following three points:

(1) All the *positively* identified conditional imperatives in the NT are followed by καὶ + future indicative.

(2) All four of the *probable* conditional imperatives in imperative + καὶ + imperative constructions require the second imperative to function semantically as a future indicative (i.e., stating the consequence/fulfillment of the implied condition).

(3) All of the 21 *potentially* conditional imperatives in imperative + καὶ + imperative constructions retained their injunctive force.

These three syntactical facts I consider to be decisive against a conditional ὀργίζεσθε because the semantic situation of conditional imperatives is so radically different from what we see in Eph 4:26.⁹² (In light of this, we might well consider the distinct possibility that what the phenomena of the NT display is hardly unique to itself: the semantic pattern of conditional imperatives found in the NT might just be an aspect of universal grammar as well.) Furthermore, the normal expediency of appealing to the use of Ps 4:4, the context, or the general biblical teaching on human anger as that which must override any notion of command in ὀργίζεσθε is inconclusive at best, and, as we have hopefully shown, more than likely supports the command view. Eph 4:26, then, can be taken at face value: "Be angry and do not sin."

⁹⁰ Jesus had just prohibited him from coming with him. This alternative, then, is not "if you go home rather than coming with me" because the latter was already forbidden.

⁹¹ In particular, Peter's response in v 5 indicates that he would have been unwilling to do this except that Jesus commanded him.

⁹² If one wishes to debate whether this verse or that belongs in the category where I have placed it, such would not invalidate these three points. We could just as easily drop the numbers and say, . . . All of the potentially conditional imperatives. . . ," etc.

IV. Conclusion and Application

In Eph 4:26 Paul is placing a moral obligation on believers to be angry as the occasion requires. As his injunction is in a parenetic section dealing with how believers are to interact with each other--rather than with the world--he probably has in mind a righteous indignation which culminates in church discipline, though not necessarily in a formal way. Since this righteous indignation is a part of our response to imitate God, it must be an "enlightened wrath, the wrath *whitened* by grace."⁹³ As God himself does not dwell in anger, neither should we. As anger is the dark side of God--his strange work--so too wrath must never characterize the believer. However, if we fail to obey this injunction, not only will the enemy continue to make well-ploughed inroads into our churches, but we ourselves will, by suppressing our holy indignation, be but "a maimed sample of humanity."⁹⁴

⁹³ M. B. Lang; "Isaiah 1.18 and Ephesians IV.25-29," *ExpTim* 8 (1896-97) 405.

⁹⁴ Simpson, *Ephesians*, 108.

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Dallas, TX 75246
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