Taking up Armour: The challenges of early Christian exegesis of Ephesians*

Jennifer Strawbridge, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Abstract

This article concentrates on a scriptural passage especially favoured by exegetes both ancient and modern: *Ephesians* 6:10–17. With a focus on the early Christian writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius, as well as modern interpreters such as Gustav Aulén, Walter Wink, and Thomas Neufeld, questions about divine and human agency and the identity of spiritual forces of wickedness (*Eph.* 6:12) are engaged. A number of doctrines and ideas emerge from the wide-ranging interpretation and use of this Pauline pericope, including the ideas of the Divine Warrior and *Christus Victor.* Ultimately, the driving question of this article is whether ante-Nicene use of *Ephesians* 6 challenges modern interpretation of this same passage and the conclusion is that indeed, it does.

The Ephesian epistle divides biblical scholars. For some, it is a letter with 'no setting and little obvious purpose',[1] a pseudepigraphal text composed after the death of the Apostle. For others, the Ephesian letter represents the quintessence of Pauline thought as 'one of the most influential documents in the Christian church'.[2]

Within early Christian writings[3] *Ephesians* is the first New Testament book to be called 'Scripture (*scripturis*)', given this designation by the second-century bishop Polycarp.[4] At least five early commentaries on this letter were written—six if we include the later text of Jerome—and portions of three remain extant today.[5] For Origen, *Ephesians* is 'the pinnacle of the Pauline epistles'[6] containing 'solid food'[7] as

opposed to the 'milk' of other letters like *1 Corinthians*.[8] And, unlike the divisions in modern scholarship about this letter's authorship and its purpose, early Christians from Polycarp and Irenaeus to Tertullian and Origen assume Paul penned this letter.[9]

Nevertheless, the focus of this article is not on the purpose or authorship of *Ephesians*. Rather, this article examines questions about why this letter is a favourite amongst scholars both ancient and modern and how one portion of this controversial letter is interpreted by both. More specifically, this article focuses primarily on a passage especially popular amongst early Christian writers—the latter portion of *Ephesians* 6—and the central doctrines and ideas that emerge from its interpretation. *Eph.* 6:10–17 is laden with images and actions, containing the great commands to 'put on the armour of God', to stand firm against the 'fiery darts of the evil one', and to wrestle not against 'flesh and blood' but against 'powers, principalities, authorities, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies'.

If we were to consult a more recent commentary on *Ephesians*, we would find that discussion of armour occupies a significant amount of space. If we look up 'armour of God' in a university library, we find at least forty items with this phrase in the title. If we search for this phrase on Google, we find not only books, articles, blogs and sermons, but also classes on how to acquire this armour. Even Origen apologises for how much space his discussion of this portion of *Ephesians* 6 takes up in his commentary, begging forbearance of his readers, 'in view of the difficulty of the passage itself and of the character of the Ephesians'.[10] To place this statement more clearly in its patristic context, *Eph.* 6:10–17 is one of the top ten Pauline passages used by early Christian writers.[11]

How do we account for this fascination with *Ephesians* 6 and especially its language of armour? To answer this question, this article focuses on two central questions that the phrases of *Eph.* 6:10–17 are used to address, asked both by early Christian writers and by today's exegetes. The first question is: what does Paul mean by evil forces, and more specifically, by the spiritual forces of wickedness that attack the Christian? The second question is: how are Christians to respond to such attack? In other words, what does one do with this armour of God and what place is given for human and divine agency?

How Ephesians 6 is interpreted and adapted into one's theology affects the answers to these questions immensely. Therefore, as we examine these two questions, one overarching question drives this article: does early Christian use of Ephesians 6 challenge modern scholars' use of the same?

A. Spiritual Forces of Wickedness in the Heavenly Places

Forces of evil occupy a central place in many recent discussions of *Ephesians* 6. While some argue that the location of these powers in the 'heavenlies' (*Eph.* 6:12) precludes the interpretation that Paul is describing political, social, or religious structures,[12] most modern interpretation of this passage emphasises some level of demythologization. In Robert Moses' excellent overview of different approaches to powers in recent scholarship, he identifies four distinct approaches to understanding the powers in the writings of Paul. Moses moves from Clinton Arnold, who he places at the 'traditional' extreme which 'takes seriously the "real" existence of a spiritual realm' to Rudolph Bultmann who reinterprets this view, accepting 'the fact that the

early Christian writers believed in the existence of spiritual entities; but … [dismiss] this belief as "mythical".'[13] Moses then examines the writings of Hendrik Berkhof who is clear that 'Paul in particular, attempted to demythologize the prevailing view of the powers … that [they] are personal spiritual beings' and he concludes with Walter Wink, who offers a 'structural interpretation of the powers' but with the caveat that 'ancient writers could not conceive of a spiritual realm … independent of the physical realm.'[14]

These four approaches outlined by Moses help us to grasp how widely varied the spectrum of interpretation of Pauline powers is in contemporary exegesis; however, when we turn our focus from powers in Paul more broadly to powers in *Ephesians* 6, we see a significant shift towards the demythologizing end of Moses' spectrum.[15] Thus, for George Caird, these powers 'stand … for the political, social, economic and religious structures of power … of the old world order which Paul believed to be obsolescent.'[16] Gustav Aulén also concludes that 'in speaking of powers and principalities [Paul] does not envisage superhuman hypostases trotting about in the world, but uses the language to express metaphorically moral realities that would otherwise defy expression.'[17] Wink's exegesis of Ephesians 6 especially depends on demythologizing the powers so that even if spiritual, they still represent 'actual physical, psychic, and social forces at work in us, in society, and in the universe'[18] at the heart of corporate and religious institutions.[19] While Yoder Neufeld recognizes that these interpretations '[expand] the meaning of powers' so that the heavenly take on an 'earthly manifestation',[20] this doesn't preclude him from doing the same. Thus, for Neufeld, these forces include 'human potencies and institutions' while also

recognising that Ephesians 6 'intends to evoke the full range of demonic forces with which the saints have to do battle.'[21]

These understandings of the powers in *Ephesians* 6 set up the exegetical consequence that such powers, physically manifest in the institutions and people around us, need to be fought. The language of *Ephesians* 6 to take up the armour of God and to withstand these forces, therefore, is not commanding a defensive stance but advocating an engagement with and aggression towards these physical forces. This leads rather neatly into the next question of how these powers are to be countered. Within recent scholarship, Christological concerns drive the answer to how Christians respond to such an attack by these forces. More specifically, the history of interpretation of *Ephesians* 6 leads to the ideas of Christ as a Divine Warrior and of *Christus Victor*.

B. Christ as Divine Warrior

The idea of a Divine Warrior derives from what John Collins calls the 'conventional view' of the messiah which assumes that Jewish people in antiquity were waiting for a great and militant king to defeat the powers of the world.[22] This view looks to references in the writings of Josephus, the War Scroll of Qumran, and other pseudepigraphal writings.[23] While a number of recent scholars have argued against this view,[24] the understanding of the messiah as a warrior persists, supported by images of Christ challenging demons and by the armour-laden language of Ephesians 6. Neufeld, for example, claims a clear trajectory from *Isaiah* 59—with its admonitions to take up armour—to *Ephesians* 6 where the goal is total obliteration of evil.[25] Here, *Ephesians* 6 represents the climax not only of the epistle, but also of the

Divine Warrior motif where putting on the armour of God calls for 'the imitation of God as Divine Warrior.'[26] While Neufeld recognizes that the context of *Ephesians* 6 is different from that of another key passage, *Colossians* 2:15, where triumph has already been achieved; nevertheless, he is clear that 'Ephesians summons the church to take up the role of the Divine Warrior'[27] where even the command to stand firm (*Eph.* 6:13) requires an aggressive tone as 'the stance of victory at the end of the evil day'.[28] Noting that this aggressive view is not as popular amongst early Christian commentators on this Ephesian passage,[29] Neufeld counters that standing firm must be 'more than a defensive stance of faithfulness'[30] for 'defense is precisely not the point' and even faith 'is part of the arsenal of attack'.[31] Thus, those who find the image of a Divine Warrior supported by the words of *Ephesians* 6 are clear that the Christian is called actively to put on the armour of God in order to take an aggressive stance against the forces of wickedness, imitating the ultimate example of the Divine Warrior: Christ.

C. Christ as Victor

If the imitation of Christ as Divine Warrior feels like an extreme interpretation of *Ephesians* 6, Aulén offers a different perspective where it is not the Christian taking up arms to fight the powers but Christ who does the vanquishing. The language of *Christus Victor* and Aulén are almost synonymous in many theological circles. And Aulén is clear that his classic idea[32] is a reaction against what he calls the Latin legalism of Tertullian and Cyprian and a recovery of the soteriology of his preferred early Christian writers: Irenaeus and Origen.[33] This view is based not only on Aulén's understanding of patristic theology but also on the writings attributed to Paul where,

in passages from *Ephesians* 6 and *Colossians* 2, '[Paul] speaks of a great complex of demonic forces … which Christ has to overcome in the great conflict.'[34] *Christus Victor* is therefore an idea based on a divine conflict and victory where Christ fights against the forces of evil 'under which [hu]mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in [Christ] God reconciles the world to himself.'[35] God in Christ is the primary, and perhaps only, actor in this understanding of how forces of evil are countered. With a particular focus on the writings of Irenaeus and *Col.* 2:15, Aulén argues that his classic view of *Christus Victor* was the dominant soteriological understanding held by early Christian writers.[36] This is an essential point to note because *Colossians* 2, on which Aulén focuses, and *Ephesians* 6, which early Christians use to a significant degree, offer very different eschatological emphases.[37] In *Colossians* 2, Christ has already triumphed over the powers and principalities; in *Ephesians* 6, this victory is not yet and the battle continues with the admonition to put on armour and prepare for attack.[38]

What is perhaps most significant for the conclusions of scholars who use Pauline phrases to develop the ideas of Christ as Divine Warrior and Christ as victor is that many of these scholars claim that their exegesis of *Ephesians* 6 can be traced directly to early Christian writers. However, when we look at how early Christians used this Ephesian text, do they reach the same conclusions? What do early Christian writers, including Irenaeus and the Latins who Aulén dismisses, make of questions about the forces of evil and how one is to withstand them? Do early Christians prioritise the already victorious eschatology of *Colossians* 2 as understood by the classic *Christus Victor* idea, or do they prefer the on-going-battle eschatology of *Ephesians* 6?

D. Early Christians and *Ephesians* 6

The good news, as suggested in this article's introduction, is that we have a lot of evidence in early Christian writings to explore these questions since this Ephesian pericope is one of the most frequently used Pauline texts in early Christian writings. Excerpts from *Eph.* 6:10–17 are used more than 450 times by at least forty different authors in works that are primarily exhortatory such as homilies, treatises, and the few extant commentaries.[39] This use makes sense in a cultural context saturated with military language and images, and, at times, overshadowed by the threat of persecution. In this context, the images and exhortations of *Ephesians* 6 provide an obvious reference point to encourage those enduring hardship on both a personal and cosmic level.

Nevertheless, early Christian writers were not fools and realised that interpreting and adapting the language of *Ephesians* 6 into their own arguments was not an easy task; but it was a necessary one. According to Jerome, who is possibly copying Origen's words into his commentary's preface, one must focus on *Ephesians* and especially *Ephesians* 6 in order 'to show why the Apostle has heaped up more obscure ideas and mysteries unknown to the ages in this epistle than in all the others and has taught about the dominion of sacred and hostile powers, what demons are, what they are capable of, what they were previously and how they have been overthrown and destroyed after the advent of Christ.'[40] So, what are these 'hostile powers' according to early Christian writings?

Spiritual Forces of Wickedness in the Heavenly Places

While recent scholarship on forces of evil in *Ephesians* 6 is divided between whether these forces should be demythologized or not, early Christian writers do not make such a clear distinction. Thus, the images of spiritual forces (*Eph.* 6:12) combined with fiery darts of the evil one (*Eph.* 6:16) are used to describe the many kinds of assault—both superhuman and inner-human (but not institutional, interestingly)—that a Christian might face. More specifically, early Christian writers connect spiritual forces of wickedness with temptation, passions, persecution, misuse of Scripture, and martyrdom and the location of the battlefield on which such forces are found—both within and without—depends greatly on context.

Clement of Alexandria, for example, uses excerpts from *Ephesians* 6 to equate spiritual forces of wickedness with passions and the spiritual threats that act within a person and lead to disobedience and sin. This battle is both inner-human and superhuman as the forces remain outside humankind while also threatening to harm the soul.[41] That these forces are spiritual forces is clear when Clement engages the command to 'put on the armour of God' since, as he writes, 'the weapons of our warfare are not physical, but have divine power to destroy strongholds, cast down arguments and every lofty thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God.'[42] The language of *Ephesians* 6, with a little bit of 2*Corinthians*, offers Clement a category—spiritual forces of wickedness—with which he can emphasise the serious spiritual threat passions pose to the soul.

For Tertullian, spiritual forces of wickedness are present in those he deems to be heretic and who tamper with the words of Scripture. He sees the forces of evil described in *Ephesians* 6 in his opponents who pose as potent a threat to faith as the

passions described by Clement. Thus, for Tertullian, Marcion who 'cut the scriptures to suit his argument' and Valentinus who invented 'argument to suit the scriptures' by 'taking away the proper meaning of each particular word' both embody with their actions the 'natures of the spiritual wickednesses with which we wrestle.'[43]

For Origen, the Christian is one who constantly resists spiritual forces of evil which, similar to Clement, assume both an inner-human and superhuman form so that 'the battle of the Christian is twofold'. As he continues,

> for those who are perfect such as Paul and the Ephesians … it was not a battle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness here in this world, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies (*Eph.* 6:12). But for those who are weak and those not yet mature, the battle is still waged against flesh and blood, for they are still assaulted by carnal faults and weaknesses.[44]

While Origen with the help of 1*Corinthians* describes two different kinds of opponents—spiritual forces of wickedness and flesh and blood—all of these forces, both visible and invisible, are tangible for each has the power to exploit the soul.[45] Within this scheme, 'struggles against the temptation of the flesh are more elementary than struggles against demonic temptation'.[46] But these external forces do not result in an external battle with superhuman powers but an internal battle within the body and the soul. For Origen, the ultimate struggle is one in which 'spirit contends against spirit, according to the saying of Paul that our overarching struggle is against principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness of this world (*Eph.* 6:12).'[47]

Yet, Origen also characterises spiritual forces by their ability to wound a person, and he often attaches the language of suffering to the forces of wickedness, describing how they take control like an illness. Connecting the inflammation of leprosy to the fiery darts of evil, Origen concludes that a soul which is not inflamed with faith is infected by sin and other forces of evil.[48] *Ephesians* 6 and its images add a dramatic element to Origen's declaration that those who succumb to the attack of evil forces are spiritually unhealthy. Because the spiritual forces of wickedness—which, for him, range from fornication and greed to boasting and vainglory—are the primary cause of sin and human suffering, they must be resisted. And the only way to resist these evil powers and the wounds caused by them is to be free from passions, protected by the shield of faith, and 'healthy in temperance and the other virtues'.[49]

From this brief sampling, we see that the images of *Ephesians* 6 offer a category of interpretation by which early Christians could discuss the struggles encountered both within and without. And yet, the struggles without are not with institutions and hierarchies but the tangible forces of temptation and sin as well as cosmic spiritual forces that threaten the soul. The forces of evil described in *Ephesians* 6 are rarely demythologised in early Christian writings, although Tertullian could be seen to tread a fine line with his equation of spiritual forces of evil with heretics. Nevertheless, the common thread linking early Christian writers is that forces of evil are real and can cause serious harm to the human soul. And, whether they are superhuman or inner-human, more than anything, they are spiritual.

Challenging the conclusions of those like Wink and Neufeld described above, for the ancients 'the real enemies are not human beings or human institutions but … spiritual

forces (*pneumatika*)'.[50] As Witherington describes the situation, 'though humans can be tempted, deceived, and even used by the dark powers [it] is all too easy to mistake the human vessel of evil for evil itself.'[51] What is clear from early Christian interpretation of the forces of evil in *Ephesians* 6 is that the physical realities of these forces do not call for the separation of the human from the divine, nor do they call for demythologisation which in itself introduces an anachronistic approach. At the same time, early Christian interpretation does not suggest that the battle against the powers remains solely in the divine realm. Rather, the tangibility of these forces and their possible effect on the soul calls for tools to withstand them. And for these tools, early Christians turned to the other significant images in this Ephesian passage. But even this move is not without a challenge: if within the earliest Christian writings the form of these forces varies so widely—from sin and passions to cosmic powers and principalities—are early Christians just as varied in what it means to combat such forces? More specifically, does standing firm mean an offensive stance of attack or a defensive stand of holding one's ground?

Standing Firm against Spiritual Forces of Wickedness

How the forces of evil are to be withstood entails two approaches for early Christians, just as it does for Paul. Rather than single out the armour of God as the only way to counter these forces, early Christians also adopt on the language of wrestling by which Paul describes the struggle not against flesh and blood, but the spiritual forces of wickedness (*Eph.* 6:12). Thus, we note immediately the complication this adds to our question about countering these forces since the images of wrestling and armour are both active and passive, aggressive and defensive, as Christians are commanded to wrestle with the forces and at the same time to withstand them clad in panoply made

up, as we will discuss in a moment, almost entirely of defensive elements. So the question remains: how are these forces defeated and, bearing in mind the ideas of Christ as Divine Warrior and as victor, who does the defeating? Is the agency human or divine?

Wrestling

At first glance, the image of wrestling appears to be straightforward. Wrestling is an individual endeavour, depending entirely on strength and training, and thus according to this image the fight against the forces of evil is the plight of the individual Christian. In a way, this image supports the view of Neufeld that Paul encourages an aggressive stance against evil by a human agent. And yet, from the whirlwind tour of early Christian understanding of forces, we know that early Christian exegesis across writers and writings is rarely straightforward but rather is multi-faceted in its approach.

Tertullian, for example, focuses on the image of a wrestler[52] to describe the struggle with forces of evil. For Tertullian, this struggle is embodied through the approach of both the Christian and the wrestler to food and he compares the discipline of fasting with the discipline of a wrestler. For the wrestler, he writes, ‘bodily ambition is sufficient where strength is necessary … but ours are other strengths and other powers, just as our contests are other; we whose wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of the world, against spiritual malice (*Eph.* 6:12). Against these it is not by flesh and blood, but faith and spirit that enables us to make a firm stand.’[53] The words of *Ephesians* 6 enable Tertullian to contrast the physical demands of a wrestler who prepares for a contest physically with the spiritual

demands of a Christian who prepares for a contest in spirit. Tertullian's exaggerated rhetoric about fasting in this particular treatise is not simply about food but concerns the preparation and discipline that the Christian, like a wrestler, needs in order to overcome the spiritual forces of evil. Thus, even though the Christian wrestles in a 'spiritual war against spiritual enemies in a spiritual campaign and spiritual armour to be fought completely on a spiritual level',[54] the spiritual forces are just as real a wrestling foe as a physical opponent. And, as this example also makes clear, this stance against evil is entirely that of the individual Christian who needs a discipline of faith and Spirit because victory is not assumed. Thus, while divine agency supports human action, human agency is essential to defeat the powers of evil.

For Origen, the image of wrestling is essential, but such an image includes both the individual Christian and Christ since the wrestler 'would never be able of himself to overcome an opposing power, except by divine assistance.'[55] As one who is not afraid to exegete Scripture with Scripture, Origen immediately connects the language of wrestling in *Ephesians* 6 with the wrestling scene in *Genesis* 32 between Jacob and the angel. But he notes one important contrast: Origen writes, 'I understand the writer to mean that it was not the same thing for the angel to have wrestled with Jacob and to have wrestled against him. In other words, he is with him in the struggle and assists him in the contest.'[56] Origen then applies this logic to *Ephesians* 6 writing that 'Paul has not said that we are wrestling with principalities or with powers, but against principalities and powers (*Eph.* 6:12).'[57] In this way, *Genesis* 32 clarifies the language of wrestling in *Ephesians* 6 because in *Ephesians* the Christian is wrestling with Christ just as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Thus, while wrestling is an individual endeavour, for Origen the Christian does not stand firm against the forces of evil

alone but can only do so with Christ against these forces. Human and divine agencies are blended in this example. And, illuminating once more the spiritual nature of these forces, Origen concludes that such an action is not 'carried on by the exercise of bodily strength, and the arts of the wrestling school, but spirit contends against spirit … and the rulers of darkness of this world.'[58]

The image of wrestling, therefore, offers one example of how a Christian is to counter the forces of evil. This image focuses on individual preparation, action, and faith as well as the need, at times, for some level of divine assistance. While the image is not of a warrior or of Christ in battle, the active, aggressive, individual elements of wrestling are important to note for they expand more recent understandings of how forces of evil are to be countered. But, wrestling is not the only image early Christians find in *Ephesians* 6 to describe a stance against spiritual forces of evil. For the location of the struggle is not only a sporting ring but also a battlefield. Thus, a second image holds a significant place in early Christian writings about forces of evil: the armour of God.

Armour of God

While wrestling offers two different accounts of the struggle against forces of evil, early Christian use of the armour of God gives us at least four more. This armour is understood by some to be given by God in the heat of battle and by others to be Christ himself who fights for the Christian in a battle already won. Early Christian use of this image contains hints of the Divine Warrior and *Christus Victor* ideas, but these are set alongside other approaches to evil forces.

Clement of Alexandria, for example, uses the image of armour to describe how the Christian is to combat spiritual forces of wickedness: peacefully. He writes, ‘Let us array ourselves in the armour of peace, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, and taking up the shield of faith, and binding the brows with the helmet of salvation; and let us sharpen the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (*Eph*. 6:14–16). So the apostle of peace commands.’[59] Arguing that Christians have been ‘educated not for war but for peace’,[60] Clement ironically combines language of peace with images of armour.[61] Since the battle to eradicate all forces of wickedness continues because full peace is not yet accomplished, Christians are to array themselves with the armour of God and follow the Apostle of peace.[62] Here the Christian, educated for peace but clad in armour, is actively engaged in the struggle against the evil that prevents such peace.

It will not surprise those who know him that Tertullian takes a more aggressive approach to the armour of God, offering two different interpretations of this text. The first is to encourage Christians facing persecution not to run away because Paul ‘commands us to stand steadfast, certainly not to act the opposite part by fleeing.’ As he continues, the Apostle ‘points out weapons too, which persons who intend to run away would not require. And among those he also notes the shield, that you may be able to quench the darts of the evil one, when doubtless you resist him (*Eph.* 6:16).’[63] While the stance of resistance takes a defensive tone, Tertullian gives the Christian an active role in this resistance for why, he asks, would Paul mention armour if it were not to be used? The forces of evil have clearly not yet been defeated with the shield singled out as a necessary item to withstand the on-going attack.

But the shield is not the only element of the panoply that interests Tertullian; he is also attracted to the sword. Just as Origen used Scripture to interpret Scripture, here Tertullian draws on the image of the sword in both *Ephesians* and *Revelation* to describe how evil forces may be defeated. He describes the double-edged sword in *Revelation* 1, 'sharp with wisdom, directed against the devil, arming us against the spiritual hosts of wickedness.' And he continues that if one doesn't like this image from *Revelation*, 'you have Paul, a teacher you share with us, who girds our loins with truth, and with the corselet of righteousness, and shoes our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, not [the gospel] of war, and bids us to take the shield of faith … and to take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (*Eph.* 6:14–17).'[64] While the image of the sword connects these excerpts, the striking element of this connection is not the aggressive implications of the sword, but the passive way that the Christian acquires this sword and the entire panoply of God. It is Paul who does the girding, shodding, and bidding to take up the rest of the armour. The passive way these items are acquired stands in contrast to the active image of wrestling, as well as Tertullian's exhortation not to flee. Both of these require action from the Christian. But here, Tertullian describes a more passive stance by the Christian who is essentially dressed and prepared by Paul rather than by any action of his own. Nevertheless, the image is not entirely passive and human agency is still essential, for even if Christians do not actually dress themselves, the reality is that they are still wearing armour and expected to withstand the forces of evil.

Origen also holds the line between active and passive engagement with the forces of evil. On the one hand, Origen connects the armour of God described in *Ephesians* 6 with prayer, describing the battle against evil forces as 'a prayer battle'.[65] Here,

victory over the forces of evil is obtained 'not by javelins of iron but by the weapons of prayers'[66] which are just as real and effective as physical armour.[67] Defending Christians who refuse to fight for the emperor, Origen writes to Celsus that Christians help even more by 'putting on the armour of God' because with this 'Christians fight through their prayers to God on behalf of those doing battle in a just cause … raising a special army of piety through our petitions to God.'[68] Thus, while the forces engaged are both physical and spiritual, Christians actively fight the greater spiritual battle against evil through prayer.

And yet, this armour for Origen not only represents prayer, but is also equated with Christ.[69] In his *Commentary on Ephesians* Origen writes, 'it is possible to say that Christ is the whole armour of God so that putting on the whole armour of God is the same as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.' Thus, 'when one has put on Christ in all his aspects, one will be sufficient to stand against the forces of evil'.[70] Here, Christ is not an example to follow as with Clement, nor is he one who girds the Christian in armour as Paul does for Tertullian, for Origen, Christ is now the very armour one wears.[71] Therefore, with Christ as the armour of God, even those Origen calls 'babes and sucklings in Christ' can 'defend themselves against … the attacks of spiritual forces of evil.'[72] Here again, divine agency enables human agency but even so, human agency is essential.

Eusebius takes this understanding of armour one step further. For Eusebius, the image of armour in *Ephesians* 6 enables him to concentrate not on the challenges Christians face but on Christ's defeat of the spiritual forces of wickedness which has already taken place. Eusebius is clear that Christ has already 'destroyed the thousands and

tens thousands of enemies that had ruled for so long … rulers and powers, and those too who are called rulers of darkness of this world and spiritual forces of wickedness (*Eph.* 6:12) … and as none were able to resist him, he won salvation for humankind.'[73] For Eusebius, the armour of God is not something acquired by the Christian nor is the armour Christ himself, rather, Christ as soldier and warrior takes the initiative against the spiritual forces and wins salvation by their defeat. Christ is the actor against and victor over evil and within early Christian writings, this is the most passive role the Christian assumes in connection with *Ephesians* 6. Eusebius's focus is not on the actions the Christian must take but the end result: salvation for all by the death and resurrection of Christ. Even martyrs assume a passive role since Christ both girds a martyr with armour and gives them victory over death.[74]

E. *Ephesians* 6: Ancient and Modern

With this overview of early Christian texts, we can begin to grasp the diversity of ways that Ephesian images of wrestling and armour are applied to the struggle with forces of evil. For early Christians the role of Christ is essential, but this role ranges from Christ assisting in the struggle, to serving as the example to follow, to being the armour taken up, to defeating evil once and for all. More significantly for this article, the role of the Christian in each of these scenarios is also essential as Christians are exhorted to take up and to receive armour, to stand firm through their prayer, and also not to flee. While in later writings, the language of Christ as victor with the Christian assuming a more passive role emerges, this is only one of the interpretations found within early Christian writings. This diversity is noteworthy because, as we look back at the models of Divine Warrior and *Christus Victor,* we can see how this variety

presents a challenge to some more recent theological assumptions about *Ephesians* 6 and its use by early Christians.

And this challenge, I would like to argue, is fivefold.

Firstly, early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 challenges the assumption that early Christians understood this pericope as an exhortation only to active, aggressive engagement with evil forces. While Neufeld is clear that 'defense is precisely not the point',[75] early Christians were aware that the particular armour described by Paul is comprised of defensive elements, to be used for close combat and standing firm in formation with others. Even the sword is a defensive weapon as unlike a dart or spear it requires close hand-to-hand combat and is not used in long-range offensive fighting. In *Ephesians*, there are no drones of the Spirit but only defensive armour and weapons.[76] The same is true of the other image early Christians use from *Ephesians* 6 to describe the struggle against evil, that of wrestling. Though more aggressive in tone, wrestling is also a mode of resistance that is a close, hand-to-hand defense rather than an aggressive attack at long range.

It cannot be insignificant that the clearest offensive weapon in this Ephesian passage is not part of the armour of God but is used by the spiritual forces of wickedness: the fiery darts of the evil one (*Eph.* 6:16). In other words, the attackers are not the ones clad in armour but their opponents: the forces of evil. Early Christians pick up on these subtleties and thus, even though their writing is filled with military and athletic images, the language of *Ephesians* 6 is used to encourage Christians to take up armour not to fight, but to stand firm, to resist, and not to flee from attack. Those like

Clement, Tertullian, and Origen recognise that the main verb is to withstand, not to advance and attack, and that such a defensive stance is supported by other verbs in this pericope: resist, pray, put on, watch.[77] Early Christian interpretation, therefore, expands the conclusion of modern scholars about the nature of the encounter with evil forces by emphasising not aggressive attacking but a defensive stance with defensive armour against these forces.[78]

The second challenge to modern conclusions using *Ephesians* 6 is Christological, focusing on the role Christ plays in early Christian writings when compared with that of the Divine Warrior or *Christus Victor*. While Neufeld understands the Divine Warrior in *Ephesians* 6 to be 'intentionally painted in aggressive and confrontative colours'[79] early Christians do not pick up this level of hostility and aggression.[80] Of course, early Christian writers do not deny that Christ will be or is victorious over forces of evil. However, in *Ephesians* 6 the battle continues and the role of Christ within that battle varies. As we have seen, for some early Christian writers Christ is an example to follow as a soldier while for others, Christ is the very armour put on by the Christian. For some Christ assists in the struggle against evil, while for others Christ has already won the victory by his death and resurrection. When early Christian writers refer to *Ephesians* 6, they do not confine themselves to one way of understanding Christ's actions, especially when standing against the powers of evil. So, while some early Christian interpretations support the understanding of the Christian or Christ as Divine Warrior, or Christ as the ultimate victor, other interpretations expand the views of those like Aulén and Neufeld, challenging the singular focus of their conclusions.

The third challenge presented by early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 is the level of human engagement in the struggle against evil. This is the question of the balance between divine and human agency. In the idea of *Christus Victor*, it is difficult to identify an active role for the individual Christian. In the understanding of Christ as a Divine Warrior, the same is true; however, in the understanding of the Christian as Divine Warrior, the Christian does assume an active role, imitating the example of Christ. Nevertheless, the focus of these modern interpretations is one in which Christ does the fighting, Christ claims the victory, and Christ wages the war against the forces of evil. When the Christian is involved in the battle, the stance is primarily one of attack, imitating the Divine Warrior himself. In these modern interpretations, divine agency is absolutely essential.

Within early Christian writings, however, while Christ and divine agency are not overlooked by any means, the focus is predominantly on the individual Christian engaged in the struggle. Thus, we learn about the preparation needed for wrestling, we are told about the faith and righteousness accompanying God's armour, and we find described in great detail a battle where the primary weapon is prayer. Moreover, the images of *Ephesians* 6 give early Christians two approaches in terms of the nature of the encounter with evil. A wrestling contest is a physical encounter requiring physical preparation, and even though early Christians are clear that they mean spiritual wrestling with a spiritual opponent, the image is nevertheless a physical one. Wrestling is an individual encounter with another and thus the image focuses on the endeavour of the Christian in his or her plight against the forces of evil. By contrast, putting on the armour of God and especially the panoply of *Ephesians* 6 suggests taking a defensive stance with defensive armour in a combative setting. The images of

armour, connected with faith, righteousness, truth, and peace, point to a realm beyond the physical. But in both of these images, human agency and action are essential.

Pushing the boundaries even further, the endeavour of a soldier at this time would have been a communal one, especially when making a defensive stand. This means that armour-clad Christians would have to work together in formation for the armour—and especially the shield—to be fully effective. Thus, both of these images of encounter—that of wrestling and that of armour—involve a human element. It is no surprise, therefore, that *Ephesians* 6 is most frequently found in exhortative writings since the nature of these texts allows early Christian writers to engage with the ethical and practical implications of spiritual attack by forces of evil in the lives of Christians. This element of human engagement poses a significant challenge to exegesis of this same passage by later scholars which places all action and victory in the hands of Christ and relegates the individual Christian to the side-lines of the battlefield.

The fourth challenge is less clear at the outset for this challenge is sacramental. While not necessarily evident in the examples engaged in this brief overview, one detail that stands out in early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 is that two liminal moments are particularly targeted by the exhortation to stand firm: those surrounding baptism and times of persecution.[81] Baptism is the focus of many of these texts because early Christians understand baptism as the threshold of faith when a person is especially susceptible to attacks by spiritual forces of evil. This sacramental connection with baptism in particular, is significant not only for understanding early Christian use of

this passage and baptism as the place where divine and human agencies meet but this also informs the context for later interpretation.

For Aulén, the reason that images of demons and forces of evil fell out of favour after the 6th century is because Christians lost their sense of conflict with the world.[82] While this makes sense in terms of the ending of persecution and the political comfort of the church, Aulén's reasoning does not entirely work on two fronts. For early Christians, baptism is both the primary sacrament for entry into the body of Christ and the crucial moment when spiritual forces mount their attack. My suggestion is not that baptism falls out of favour as the way into the body of Christ, but rather draws on the observation by a number of scholars that as the Eucharist assumes greater significance as the way one enters sacramentally into the body, so the focus on spiritual forces also changes.[83] The attack by spiritual forces of evil is not connected as quickly with the Eucharist in early Christian theology as with baptism. Thus, while Aulén's theory makes sense concerning forces of evil losing their significance with the ending of persecution, early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 and its crucial connection between the spiritual forces and baptism adds another element to this shift in Christian theology.

However, Aulén's theory of a trajectory in which forces of evil lose their significance, leading to the end of the classic idea of *Christus Victor,* faces another challenge. That the most active role for the divine agent and the most passive involvement of the individual are found in the later writings of the ante-Nicene period presents almost the opposite trajectory to that described by Aulén. For it appears that as Christians are increasingly involved in literal, military battles, the active role of the Christian in the fight against the spiritual forces of evil decreases and the role of God in the victory

over evil increases. Does this move from active to passive, from human to divine agency accompany increasing active military service by Christians? In other words, did physical armour squeeze out the armour of God? And, does this mean that Aulén is incorrect when he posits that a more politically comfortable church would downplay Christ's action, when the opposite seems to be true?[84]

The final challenge to modern interpretations of *Ephesians* 6 arises from early Christian use of Scripture itself. This challenge is specifically addressed to the conclusions of Aulén. Certainly understanding Christ as the one who is victorious over death and the forces of evil is fundamental for early Christians. Even when the Christian assumes a more active role in the stance against evil, Christ is never depicted as less powerful than the forces of evil. But when early Christians think of these evil forces, the Pauline passage that they turn to time and again is *Eph.* 6:12 and not, as favoured by Aulén, *Col.* 2:15. This is a critical point for as stated earlier in this article, *Colossians* 2 and *Ephesians* 6 have very different eschatological emphases.[85] Thus, passages like *Col.* 2:15 understand Christ as the victor on the cross, while within *Ephesians* 6, the spiritual forces of wickedness 'are still operative'.[86] Even though the conclusions of Eusebius assume that Christ has already won the victory, the dominant use of *Ephesians* 6 in early Christian writings presumes that the attack by forces of evil is on-going and very real.

This on-going nature of battle and victory is missing from Aulén's interpretation. In the words of Colin Gunton, 'there is a victory won, being won, and to be won' which the idea of *Christus Victor* cannot fully embrace.[87] The idea of Christ as *Christus Victor* focuses almost entirely on early Christian use of *Col.* 2:15. But what this study

and a wider survey of early Christian use of Pauline texts reveals is that compared with *Eph.* 6:12, *Col.* 2:15 is scarcely used by early Christians.[88] Outside the works of Origen, it is only referred to five times: twice in anonymous texts, and once each in the writings of Hippolytus, Melito, and Novatian. It does not occur clearly in the writings of Irenaeus, which is especially challenging to the *Christus Victor* idea which focuses not only on *Col.* 2:15 as evidence, but also dedicates a section to the writings of Irenaeus. With excerpts from this portion of *Ephesians* 6 occurring more than 450 times in early Christian writings, does Christian favouritism of this passage and thus a more not-yet than already eschatology pose a challenge to *Christus Victor*?

F. Conclusion

Because Paul does not clearly identify the spiritual forces of wickedness, exegetes both ancient and modern apply this Ephesian passage to their own contexts and situations. For a number of recent scholars, Paul clearly meant social, economic, political, and religious institutions; for early Christian writers, Paul was referring to spiritual temptations, passions, and heretics. Moreover, Paul does not clarify how the armour of God is to be used to counter these forces of evil and as we have seen on this brief tour of Ephesian exegesis, the range of interpretation extends from passive to aggressive behaviour, from individual to divine action, and from on-going battle to assured and already accomplished victory.

Thus, while much remains unclear about Paul's meaning and whether there is one accurate interpretation of this Ephesian text, the breadth of interpretation encountered in early Christian writings enables some clarity regarding the question driving this

article. Yes, early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 does challenge modern scholarship's use of the same.

Early Christian use of *Eph.* 6:10-17 expands some of the more narrow conclusions found in later exegesis. It challenges assumptions about aggression and the role of armour. It questions the place of human agency in withstanding the forces of evil. It places Christ in a number of different roles in the battle against evil. It emphasises the context and the significant place of baptism for understanding these forces. Early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 suggests that ante-Nicene eschatology might be less certain of an already won victory. It makes clear that one model of warrior or one idea of victory cannot be singled out to embrace all early Christian thought. And, ultimately, early Christian use of *Ephesians* 6 affirms Origen's conclusion to his commentary on this letter: that his discussion of its final chapter has 'perhaps been longer than the reader might wish, but I beg him to be forbearing in view of the difficulty of the passage itself and of the character of the Ephesians.'[89]

* Portions of this article are drawn from work published as a chapter in *The Pauline Effect, SBR* 5 (Berlin, 2015). I am grateful to colleagues at the 2016 *British Patristics Conference* for their comments and feedback after a form of this article was presented as one of the conference's plenaries.

Footnotes:

[1] John Muddiman, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians,* Black's New Testament Commentaries (London, 2001), 12. To be clear, Muddiman does not follow this line of argument.

[2] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, 2002), 1. See also Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament.* Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York, 1997), 620.

[3] In this article, 'early Christian writings' are pre-Nicene writings. Such a limitation is not to suggest that the Council of Nicaea brings the period of early Christianity to a close; rather, recognizing the surge of Christian texts after this period, 325 AD serves as a necessary, though artificial, end point in this time of momentous change for Christianity in the Roman Empire.

[4] Polycarp, *Epistula ad Philippenses,* 12.1, in *The Apostolic Fathers, Vol I: 1 Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache.* ed. Bart D. Ehrman, LCL 24 (Cambridge, 2003).

[5] Commentaries with portions still extant include those by Origen, Marius Victorinus, and Jerome. Those now missing are the commentaries of Apollinarius, Ambrosiaster, and Didymus. Elaine Pagels argues for the existence of a Valentinian commentary on Ephesians; however, evidence of such a work is, at best, limited (see Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* [Philadelphia, 1992], 115).

See also Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians,* Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York, 2002), 3.

[6] See Francesca Cocchini, *Il Paolo Di Origene: Contributo Alla Storia Della Recezione Delle Epistole Paoline Nel Iii Secolo*, Verba Seniorum 11 (Rome, 1992), 88.

[7] Origen, *Contra Celsum,* 3.20 in *Contre Celse. Livres III et IV: Tome II,* transl. Marcel Borret, *SC* 136 (Paris, 1968).

[8] See also Origen, *Homiliae in Ezechiel,* 7.10 in *Homélies sur Ézéchiel,* transl. Marcel Borret, *SC* 352 (Paris, 1989); *De Principiis,* 3.2.4 in *Origenes Werke,* ed. Paul Koetschau, *et al.*, GCS 22 (Leipzig, 1913).

R.E. Heine, *Commentaries* (2002): 48; and Judith Kovacs, 'Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis in Clement of Alexandria and Origen: The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3.1–3' in Lorenzo Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition: Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27–31 August 2001* (Leuven: 2004), 317–29, 327.

[9] See Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses,* 5.2.3; 1.3.1; 1.8.4–5; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem,* 5.17; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata,* 4.65; *Paedagogus,* 1.18; Origen, *Cels,* 3.20. Because of this, I'll refer to this text as Paul's letter, which recognizes that Ephesians is either written or strongly influenced by the Apostle.

[10] R.E. Heine, *Commentaries* (2002): 260.

[11] See J.R. Strawbridge, *Pauline Effect* (2015): 11 n.38.

[12] See Sook Young Kim, *The Warrior Messiah in Scripture and Intertestamental Writings* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010), 185; H.W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (2002): 276–80; Peter Thomas O'Brien, 'Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church' in

D.A. Carson (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (Exeter, 1984), 110-50, 130.

[13] Robert Ewusie Moses, *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Principalities and Powers in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis, 2014), 36.

[14] *Ibid*. 37.

[15] Moses, interestingly, focuses on *Romans*, 1 and 2 *Corinthians*, *Galatians*, *Colossians*, and 2 *Thessalonians* in his study. He does not, therefore, spend focus much attention on the language of *Ephesians* 6 (more space is given to *Ephesians* 2 and the place of these powers 'in the heavenlies'). Thus, even when looking at the practices Paul commends to believers to counter the powers, 'armour of God' is not mentioned in his book. In this light, this paper expands the conclusions of Moses by looking not simply at the language of powers in *Ephesians* 6, but also at the practice of putting on armour and wrestling that Paul commends his followers to do take up and practice against the forces of evil.

[16] George B. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: 1980), 242.

[17] Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, transl. A.G. Hebert (London, 1931), 67.

[18] Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1984), 62.

[19] Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis, 1992), 6. Arnold pushes back against this reading of *Ephesians* 6 (as do Hoehner and Lindemann), arguing that Wink takes his agenda of demythologization too far. See Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting*, SNT Monograph

Series 63 (Cambridge, 1989), 84; Andraes Lindemann, *Der Epheserbrief,* ZBK 8 (Zurich, 1985), 113.

[20] Thomas R. Neufeld, *'Put on the Armour of God': The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Sheffield, 1997)*,* 121 n.95.

[21] *Ibid.* 122.

[22] See John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York, 1995)*,* 13 and 68.

[23] See Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum,* 2.71-75; 1*QM* 1.10-15; 4*Ezra* 13.4, 9-10; 1*Enoch* 62.2.

[24] See James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1992)*,* xii-xvi; R.A. Horsley, 'Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus', *CBQ* 46 (1984): 471–95, 471.

[25] T.R. Neufeld, *Divine Warrior* (1997): 118. See also S.Y. Kim, *Warrior Messiah* (2010): 187.

[26] T.R. Neufeld, *Divine Warrior* (1997): 105.

[27] *Ibid.* 126.

[28] *Ibid.* 131.

[29] *Ibid.* 140.

[30] *Ibid.* 120–1.

[31] *Ibid.* 139.

[32] Aulén is clear that *Christus Victor* is an idea and not a theory.

[33] G. Aulén, *Christus Victor* (1931): 81.

[34] *Ibid.* 67.

[35] *Ibid*. 4.

[36] *Ibid.* 70.

[37] Jeff M. Brannon, '"The Heavenlies" in Ephesians: A Lexical, Exegetical, and Conceptual Analysis.' University of Edinburgh, 2010, 207; Andrew T. Lincoln, 'A Re-Examination of "the Heavenlies" in Ephesians', *NTS* 19 (1973): 468–83, 475–82. We will expand upon the significance of the different eschatological emphases of these two Pauline texts below.

[38] See Geurt Hendrik van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity*, WUNT 232 (Tübingen, 2008), 192.

[39] See J.R. Strawbridge, *Pauline Effect* (2015): 58.

[40] See R.E. Heine, *Commentaries* (2002): 33-4.

[41] See Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: "Yetzer Hara" and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2011), 38. See also Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata,* 2.20.109 and 7.3.

[42] Note here that Clement has combined *Eph.* 6:11 with 2*Cor.* 10:3–5. See Clement, *Strom,* 2.20.109.

[43] Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum,* 38-39 in *Traité de la prescription contre les hérétiques,* ed. François Refoulé, *SC* 46 (Paris, 1957).

[44] Origen, *Homiliae in Josue,* 11.4 in *Homélies sur Josué,* transl. Annie Jaubert, *SC* 71 (Paris, 1960).

[45] Origen, *De Principiis,* 3.2.1-2 in *Traité des principes, tome III. Livres III et IV: Introduction, texte critique de la Philocalie et de la version de Rufin, traduction,* ed. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, *SC* 268 (Paris, 1980).

[46] Judith Kovacs, 'Servant of Christ and Steward of the Mysteries of God', in Paul M. Blowers, Angela Russell Christman, David E. Hunter and Robin Darling Young (ed.), *In Dominico Eloquio, in Lordly Eloquence: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honour of*

Robert Louis Wilken (Grand Rapids, 2002), 147–171, 160. See also Origen, *Princ,* 4.3.12.

[47] Origen, *Princ,* 3.2.6 (*SC* 268).

[48] Origen, *Homiliae in Leviticus,* 8.8.1–2 in *Homilies on Leviticus, 1-16,* transl. Gary Wayne Barkley, *FOC* 83 (Washington, D.C, 1990).

[49] Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Matthaei,* 13.4 in *Commentaire sur l'Évangile selon Matthieu, tome I. Livres X et XI,* ed. Robert Girod, *SC* 162 (Paris, 1970).

[50] Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, 2007), 350.

[51] *Ibid.* 350.

[52] More specifically, a cestus player.

[53] Tertullian, *De jeiunio adversus Psychicos,* 17.7-8 in *De spectaculis, De idolatria, Ad nationes, De testimonio animae, Scorpiace, De oration, De baptismo, De ieiunio, De anima, De pudicitia,* ed. A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa, *CSEL* 20 (Vienna, 1890).

[54] Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.20 in *Adversus Marcionem,* ed. E. Evans, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford, 1972).

[55] Origen, *Princ,* 3.2.5 (*SC* 268).

[56] Origen, *Princ,* 3.2.5 (*SC* 268).

[57] Origen, *Princ,* 3.2.5 (*SC* 268).

[58] Origen, *Princ,* 3.2.6 (*SC* 268).

[59] Clement, *Protrepticus,* 2.20.4 in *The Exhortation to the Greeks, The Rich Man's Salvation, To the Newly Baptized,* transl. G.W. Butterworth, LCL 92 (Cambridge, Mass., 1919).

[60] Clement, *Paed.* 1.12 in *Le Pédagogue. Livre I,* ed. Marguerite Harl, *et al*. *SC* 70 (Paris, 1960).

[61] The connections between these images would not have been foreign to Clement's audience, however, for Christians in the Roman Empire would have been surrounded by the ideals of *pax Romana*: a peace achieved only by actively subduing – and at times instructing and converting – all enemies.

[62] See Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, transl. John Bowden (London: 1987).

[63] Tertullian, *De fuga persecutione,* 9.2 in *Disciplinary, Moral, and Ascetical Works,* transl. Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., *FOC* 40 (Washington, D.C., 1959).

[64] Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.14 (Evans).

[65] Origen, *Commentarii in epistula ad Romanos,* 10.15.2 in *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 6–10,* transl. Thomas P. Scheck. *FOC* 104 (Washington, D.C., 2002).

[66] Origen, *Homiliae in Judices,* 9.1 in *Homilies on Judges,* transl. Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro. *FOC* 119 (Washington, D.C., 2009).

[67] See also Origen, *Hom.Jos.* 11.11; 18.11 (*SC* 71).

[68] Origen, *Cels,* 8.73 in *Contra Celsum,* ed. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, 1953).

[69] Cyprian also makes this move in his Epistles. See Cyprian, *Epistulae,* 55.8-9; 60.

[70] Origen, *Commentarii in epistula ad Ephesios,* 3 in R.E. Heine, *Commentaries* (2002). This is language reminiscent of *Romans* 13:14, too.

[71] Origen, *Hom.Jos.* 15.1 (*SC* 71).

[72] Origen, *Commentarii in Canticum canticorum,* 2.3 in *Origen: Song of Songs: Commentaries and Homilies,* transl. R.P. Lawson. *ACW* 26 (Westminster, Md., 1957); See also *PG* 13.

[73] Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica,* 9.7 in *Dimonstrazione evangelica,* ed. P. Carrara (Milan, 2000).

[74] See Eusebius, *De martyribus Palaestinae,* 5 in *History of the Martyrs in Palestine,* ed. William Cureton (London, 1861).

[75] T.R. Neufeld, *Divine Warrior* (1997): 139.

[76] With gratitude to my colleague Nathan Eubank for this image.

[77] See B. Witherington III, *Letters* (2007): 349.

[78] As Hoehner concludes, 'it would be unusual and certainly unnecessary to give details about armor subsequent to a victory. It is natural to describe such equipment for a defensive stand' (H.W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* [2002]: 836).

[79] Thomas R. Neufeld, *'Put on the Armour of God': The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Sheffield, 1997), 155.

[80] This is not to say that the original meaning intended by Paul cannot be aggressive and confrontative, but simply that the way this text is used by the earliest Christian writers and exegetes is not.

[81] See J.R. Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect* (2015): 60–3.

[82] See J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, 2001), 86.

[83] *Ibid.* 86 n.11.

[84] With gratitude to Nathan Eubank for pushing the boundaries and prompting these essential questions.

[85] See J.M. Brannon, 'The Heavenlies' (2010): 207; A.T. Lincoln, 'Re-Examination' (1973): 475–82.

[86] George B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford, 1956), ix.

[87] Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (London, 1988), 82.

[88] See J.R. Strawbridge, *Pauline Effect* (2015): 92.

[89] R.E. Heine, *Commentaries* (2002): 260.