

“OUR STRUGGLE”: *ECCLESIA MILITANS* IN EPHESIANS 6:10-20

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At the end of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul employs vivid military imagery in a bid to summarize and apply the themes of the composition.¹ The addressees are invited to outfit themselves with the armor of the divine warrior (6:10-11) as a way of ensuring victory in their struggle against the cosmic powers (6:12). A reprise of the exhortation to dress for battle offers the command in a more detailed way. Readers are to clothe themselves with a soldier's weaponry, donning it in the order in which a soldier might prepare himself for battle (6:13-17). This elaborate military imagery is completed by a call to prayer both for “all the saints” and for Paul (6:18-20).

If judged by the frequency of adoption of the imagery in later Christian writings, this use of military metaphor proved a rhetorical success. The appeal of the “armament passage” is again and again demonstrated in what has become a long and intricate history of interpretation. In modern popular Christian writing, one can trace its continuing appeal. In such literature, the passage is read usually in an individualist manner as a description of the Christian's internal battle against temptation.² Precedents for such a reading abound, beginning with early Christian interpretations, such as those of John Chrysostom and Gnostic appropriations of the passage and continuing through modern commentaries.³ In the commentaries and monographs on Ephesians by Thomas Abbott, Heinrich Schlier, Karl M. Fischer, Leslie Mitton, Markus Barth, G. B. Caird, J. L. Houlden, Adrienne von Speyr, F. F. Bruce, Ernest Best, and Harold W. Hoehner, the emphasis of the passage is either explicitly taken to be on the individual or simply assumed to be so.⁴

¹I assume that Paul is personally involved with the composition of the document.

²A notable exception is Richard J. Foster, *Money, Sex and Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 189-193. Foster, 193, writes: “Paul's military metaphor is a wonderful picture of the company of the committed working in concert, advancing against the powers, conquering in Christ's name.”

³John Chrysostom, *Hom. Eph. 23 & 24*, NPNF 13.163-172; Gnostic sources include *Exeg. Soul* II,6.131 and *Hyp. Arch* II,4.86.

⁴Thomas K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC (New York: Scribners, 1897), 180-190; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an*

Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld asserts that “virtually all commentators . . . speak always of ‘the [individual] Christian’” when treating this passage.⁵

The individualist interpretation has been formulated in a most sophisticated way by J. Paul Sampley.⁶ In tracing what he calls “the movement and design” of Ephesians, Sampley argues that Eph 6:10-20 represents the “ultimate restriction of scope” in the epistle. The author begins the composition with a cosmic, universal reach which encompasses “all things . . . [,] things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10). The first

die Epheser: Ein Kommentar, 5. Auflage (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1965), 288-307; Karl M. Fischer, *Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes*, FRLANT, 111 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 165-171; C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973), 218-230; Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, 1st ed., 2 vols., AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 2:759-808; G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, in the Revised Standard Version*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 91-93; J. L. Houlden, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 337-340; Adrienne von Speyr, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 253-269 (trans. of *Der Epheserbrief*, 2. Auflage [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983]); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 402-413; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 584-611; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 817-866. Here I am reflecting my review and update of the survey of Martin Kitchen, *Ephesians*, New Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1994), 116-119. I have added Mitton, Bruce, Speyr, Best, and Hoehner to Kitchen's list and subtracted J. Armitage Robinson and Rudolf Schnackenburg, both of whom reflect a corporate understanding. Referring to the church as “God's New Man,” Robinson writes that “God's New Man must be clad in the very armour of God.” The intention of the passage is that “the Church may realize and consummate” the triumph of Christ, a triumph that “has to be realised in His Body the Church” (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* [London: Macmillan, 1903], 130-136). Schnackenburg writes: “The metaphor of the battle against evil can certainly be transferred to the moral struggles of the individual Christian, as happened not infrequently in the history of the exegesis of these verses. But the picture here painted still lies primarily in a cosmic perspective of the Church's battle against all the powers of evil, and its original intention should not be blurred” (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Helen Heron [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991], 285).

⁵Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, JSNTSup, 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 152. Yoder Neufeld's own commentary, as would be expected, adopts a corporate perspective (*Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary [Waterloo, ON: Herald, 2002], 290-316). Similarly, Martin Kitchen, 119, can remark: “It is a curious phenomenon of the history of the exegesis of this epistle that apparently all its interpreters have assumed that the image in 6.10-20 is to be interpreted as referring to the individual Christian, perceived as a soldier.” However, Kitchen's comment may deserve revision based on a re-evaluation of the scholars he surveys (see n. 4, above). Moreover, it is possible to develop a corporate understanding of the passage without adopting Kitchen's view that the church is portrayed in it as a single soldier.

⁶J. Paul Sampley, “Ephesians,” in *The Deutero-Pauline Letters: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus*, ed. Gerhard Krodel, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 21-23. Sampley's treatment of Ephesians is lightly revised from the first edition of 1978.

two chapters employ a “wide-angle lens. . . . The scope is vast.” Chapters 3 through much of 5 narrow the scope to believers, to the church, while the Household Code of Eph 5:21–6:9 further restricts the focus to the Christian household. Ephesians 6:10-20 represents the “ultimate restriction of scope” in focusing on the individual Christian.⁷ However, to this survey of the “movement” of Ephesians, Sampley appends a note that “the author of Ephesians never resorts to stark or independent individualism,” and points to features of the passage which show that “the community context of the life of faith is constantly in view.” The exhortations are placed in the plural, and prayer is invited “for all the saints” (v. 18).⁸

It is to just such features that a number of recent scholars have pointed in defending and developing a corporate understanding of Eph 6:10-20. These students of Eph 6:10-20 founded their corporate view on the idea that the pericope is both summation and conclusion of the epistle. Yoder Neufeld, for example, calls Eph 6:10-20 “a forceful concluding summation of the burden of the oration as a whole, as well as a final call to action.”⁹ In their view, an individualist reading fails to take seriously this insight.

For some advocates of a corporate reading, the church is to be identified with the divine warrior of Isaiah. On the level of the imagery of the passage, the church becomes a single armed warrior. This view is advocated in studies by Yoder Neufeld and Martin Kitchen.¹⁰

The title of Yoder Neufeld’s 1989 Harvard University dissertation summarizes his position: “God and Saints at War: The Transformation and Democratization of the Divine Warrior in Isaiah 59, Wisdom of Solomon 5, 1 Thessalonians 5, and Ephesians 6.”¹¹ He sees a trajectory for the armament imagery from Isa 59 and Wis 5 through 1 Thess 5 to Eph 6. His method is “to explore what interpretive possibilities suggest themselves when the text is

⁷Lewis R. Donelson seems to follow Sampley: “The cosmic scale on which the letter began is seen again in this marvelous concluding exhortation. The letter opened by rehearsing the cosmic story of the gospel and closes by placing the single Christian into the center of the cosmic battle” (*Colossians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus*, Westminster Bible Companion [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 108).

⁸Sampley, 22-23.

⁹Neufeld, 111.

¹⁰William Klassen adopts a similar perspective, arguing that “here it is not a virtuous person fighting against vices or evils. It is a community clothed in the armor of God and battling, not against people, but against the structures of evil which lie behind them” (“War in the NT,” in *ABD* 6:871).

¹¹Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, “God and Saints at War: The Transformation and Democratization of the Divine Warrior in Isaiah 59, Wisdom of Solomon 5, 1 Thessalonians 5, and Ephesians 6” (Th.D. dissertation, Harvard Divinity School, 1989). Published as Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*.

read as the youngest in a series of attempts to elucidate the meaning of the Isaianic image of the Divine Warrior in armour, with the consciousness of standing in a stream of interpretation."¹²

In Yoder Neufeld's view, Isa 59 and Wis 5 share the same paradigm—YHWH is the divine warrior in the heavens who, outfitted in armor and implements of war, battles foes on earth. This pattern is "democratized" in 1 Thess 5, where it is now the Christian addressees who wear the divine armor and do battle. Development continues in Eph 6 in which, likewise, it is the Christian community that is equipped for battle. However, the battle of Isaiah and Wisdom of Solomon is now inverted. Instead of YHWH doing battle from the heavens with his enemies on earth, the armed Christian community is "directly at war with the peers of God, as it were—the devil and his principalities and powers."¹³

Moreover, the author of Ephesians intends the passage as critical comment on the portrayal of warfare in 1 Cor 15:24, where Christ fights the cosmic enemies of God. The author of Ephesians "replaces Christ the warrior with the saints as corporate warrior. . . . He exploits the implications of Paul's ecclesiology which identifies the church as σώμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ by now moving the church into the battle Christ wages in 1 Corinthians 15." The community is placed "into the armour of God, in imitation directly of God."¹⁴ In Yoder Neufeld's view, then, the armament passage does not portray Christian believers in battle dress, waging war together against the dark powers of the cosmos, so much as it pictures the church as a single warrior.

Though Yoder Neufeld does not make the point, one could argue that the author of Ephesians is following a pattern laid down earlier in the letter of identifying the church with a unitary figure. Just as the church is the "body of Christ," the "one new person" (2:15), the "perfect man" (4:13) and the bride or wife of Christ, so Christians in community are identified with a single warrior.

The complexity of Yoder Neufeld's thesis may be its undoing. It depends on having Eph 6:10-20 serve as detailed commentary and critique on a number of traditions: first, on the tradition of the divine warrior in Isaiah and Wisdom of Solomon; second, on 1 Thess 5:8 and others of Paul's writings, such as 1 Cor 15:24. In his reappropriation of 1Thess 5:8, Yoder Neufeld believes that the author of Ephesians provides "a critique of fellow tradents

¹²Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 153.

¹³Ibid., 128.

¹⁴Ibid., 124-125.

of the Pauline inheritance.¹⁵ Ephesians 6:10-20 should be read as a rejection of the failure of 2 Thessalonians to democratize the image of 1 Thess 5:8 and instead portray divine intervention as only a future event. It should also be taken as negative comment on the Epistle to the Colossians, in which "there is no cosmic threat. The heavens are empty of hostile powers; the cosmos is safe." Instead of removing any "sense of anxiety," as does Colossians, Ephesians confronts "the believers within the Pauline circle of churches with both their status as co-regents with Christ and with the urgency of the still unfinished task of cosmic struggle and victory."¹⁶

More telling is the fact that Yoder Neufeld's view requires a shift in emphasis at v. 18: "The focus has shifted slightly from the corporate community in armour to the community looking to the needs of its members engaged in battle."¹⁷ The need for such a shift raises the question as to whether Yoder Neufeld's view has been teased out of the context or is determined by the creative use of his method.

A similar corporate understanding is supported by Kitchen in his 1994 contribution to the *New Testament Readings* series: "The whole of the epistle focuses upon the corporate nature of Christian origin, existence and behaviour. It is therefore most likely that the final section of the epistle should end with an emphasis not on the individual, but on the corporate nature of Christian being."¹⁸ Emphasizing the liturgical setting of the epistle and its conclusion, Kitchen argues that "the man seen here in armour is the community of Christians at worship, where, in the sight of God, battle is waged with the forces of evil."¹⁹ In the light of Bruce J. Malina's anthropological insights, Kitchen argues that an individualist perspective would be anachronistic. Instead, the image of the warrior should be interpreted in view of the earlier exhortation to grow into the "perfect man" (4:13). Kitchen concludes:

The various linguistic and theological strands therefore come together in this final section. The powers are defeated, Jew and Gentile are reconciled, and consequently God and the whole of humanity are reconciled; the whole of the human community of the world is therefore recreated, or renewed in the person of Christ, who is the perfect Man that Adam was destined to be. The church, the body of

¹⁵Ibid., 97.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 145.

¹⁸Kitchen, 119.

¹⁹Ibid., 126. Kitchen, 118-119, elaborates: "The liturgical presupposition is of primary importance here; the worshipping community is regarded by the writer of Ephesians as the complete man who stands before God."

Christ, is the living embodiment of that re-creation and thus lives out in its own life, which is the microcosm of the whole creation, the rule of Christ, the reconciliation of all peoples and the new human order.²⁰

However valid the idea of a corporate reading of Eph 6:10-20, it is possible to claim too much.

Andrew Lincoln's application of ancient rhetorical categories to Ephesians points the way to a more adequate corporate understanding. Lincoln's 1990 commentary broke new ground with its interest in the rhetoric of Ephesians. Lincoln proposed that Eph 6:10-20 should be understood as the *peroratio* of the composition, which, while employing new imagery, recapitulates earlier themes.²¹ He elaborated this view in a 1995 article in *Biblical Interpretation*.²² Lincoln argued that Eph 6:10-20 displays the basic elements expected of a *peroratio* by ancient rhetoricians. To follow the outline of Aristotle, it seeks to make the audience well-disposed toward the speaker and ill-disposed toward the opposition. It also magnifies leading facts, excites the required kind of emotion in the hearers (including pity, emulation, pugnacity, and confidence), and refreshes their memories through recapitulation.²³

²⁰Ibid., 127.

²¹Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), xli-xlii, 429-460.

²²Andrew T. Lincoln, "'Stand Therefore . . .': Ephesians 6:10-20 as *Peroratio*," *BibInt* 3 (1995): 99-114.

²³Ibid., 108. The identity of the passage as *peroratio* has been both affirmed and disputed. John Muddiman (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, BNTC [London: Continuum, 2001], 282-283); and Hoehner, 817, contend that it is inappropriate to apply the label to the passage. Muddiman argues that Eph 6:10-20 "is not really a summary of what has gone before," while Hoehner believes that "the author of Ephesians gives no obvious hints of links with the whole book." Both find a response in tracing the numerous ways in which Eph 6:10-20 does recapitulate major themes and is linked with the content of the letter. For succinct summaries of such links, see Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 335; Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition*, HTS, 45 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 144-145; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 458-459. A broader dispute has to do with whether or not rhetorical categories are, with propriety, applied to the Pauline Epistles in general and the Epistle to the Ephesians in particular. In line with these criticisms, Snodgrass, 335, followed by O'Brien, 459, understands Eph 6:10-20 to be the summation or conclusion to the document, but questions whether or not it is appropriate to label it as *peroratio*. Elna Mouton, on the other hand, advocates the propriety of applying rhetorical categories to epistles in general and to the Epistle to the Ephesians in particular, though she ignores Eph 6:10-20 ("The Communicative Power of the Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Rhetoric, Scripture, and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, *JSNTSup*, 131 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996], 280-307). Stanley E. Porter offers a carefully reasoned essay in which he argues against the technical application of rhetorical categories to Paul's letters while affirming the value

Lincoln finds an additional parallel to ancient rhetoric reflected in Eph 6:10-20. Following a suggestion in his commentary, Lincoln compares this concluding exhortation of Ephesians to a specific genre of ancient literature, the frequently cited hortatory speeches delivered by generals "before battle, urging their armies to deeds of valor in face of the impending dangers of war."²⁴ The author of Ephesians, in line with the advice of the likes of Cicero and Quintilian with regard to "magnification" in the summation, adopted fresh, military metaphors and "built them into an extended call to battle."²⁵ Like the ancient genre on which it is patterned, this conclusion asserts the need for valor, points out the strengths of the enemy, and "braces its soldiers for a successful outcome of the battle by reminding them of the superior strength, resources and equipment they possess."²⁶

It is important here to augment Lincoln's reflections on ancient battle speeches. These speeches also emphasize heavily the need for soldiers to have confidence in one another, to be unified in their fight for a common cause. An obvious and central purpose of such speeches is to strengthen the *esprit de corps*. To cite an example of one such speech, Dionysius of Halicarnassus relates a speech by "the Roman dictator" when his army was on the point of engaging the enemy. Caesar provides an extended reminder that the gods are his soldiers' allies and then propounds three particular advantages "conducive to victory prepared for us by Fortune." "First," he says, "there is the confidence you have in one another, which is the thing most needed by men who are going to conquer their foes; for you do not need to begin to-day to be firm friends and faithful allies to one another, but your country has long since prepared this boon for you all." The second "advantage" resounds with a similar tone: "Secondly, the struggle, in which your highest interests are at stake, is common to you all alike."²⁷ More

of "functional correlations," a strategy he believes provides "a way forward in the study of Pauline rhetoric." He concludes that "so long as one is aware of the limits of claims made for Pauline rhetoric, rhetorical categories can be profitably used to interpret Paul's letters" ("Paul of Tarsus and His Letters," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.-A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter [Leiden: Brill, 1997, 2001], 533-585. Citations are from pp. 584-585). I assume the validity of a similar line of reasoning for the disputed Pauline epistles. The argument of my essay does not depend on the strict application of the subgenre of *peroratio* to Eph 6:10-20, but does depend on identifying it as the summation of and conclusion to the epistle.

²⁴Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 433.

²⁵Lincoln, "Stand Therefore," 110.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 111.

²⁷*Ant. Rom.* 6.6-7 (Cary, LCL).

significantly, perhaps, the importance of *esprit de corps* is reflected in examples of battlefield speech from the OT.²⁸

In his study of the rhetoric of Eph 6:10-20, Lincoln does not pit a corporate understanding against an individualist one. However, it is clear that his views inform that choice and imply a corporate view. For Lincoln, Eph 6:10-20 recapitulates all the author has been saying about the identity of the church. Reviewing the images applied to the church earlier in the epistle, Lincoln states:

Now in the *peroratio* this concern with the readers' identity and status is expressed under the new imagery of the spiritual battle. The readers are to envisage themselves as the *militia Christi*, as Christian soldiers fitted out in God's full armour and having available to them all the resources of power that God has provided for them.²⁹

Such a view, based on an understanding of both the role of the passage as summation and its genre as mimicking battle exhortations, provides a satisfying basis for a corporate reading.

A corporate reading along these lines invites fresh assessment of the ecclesiology of the letter. Clinton Arnold complains of a "conspicuous neglect" of Eph 6:10-20 in recent attempts to understand the theology of the letter. With regard to the passage, he asks: "What relevance does it [Eph 6:10-20] have for an understanding of the theology of the epistle?"³⁰ Indeed, assuming a corporate understanding, how should the passage figure in tracing the ecclesiology of the epistle?

Because of the prominent role the church plays in Ephesians (the term *ἐκκλησία* is itself used nine times), it is usual for commentaries to summarize the ecclesiology of the letter. It is an interesting exercise to survey these surveys of the theme of the church in Ephesians.³¹ Invariably,

²⁸For example, Deut 20:5-9 commands: "The officials shall continue to address the troops, saying, 'Is anyone afraid or disheartened? He should go back to his house, or he might cause the heart of his comrades to melt like his own'" (v. 8, NRSV). See John K. McVay, "Ephesians 6:10-20 and Battle Exhortations in Jewish Literature," in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley*, ed. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2003), 147-169.

²⁹Lincoln, "'Stand Therefore,'" 104-105.

³⁰Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians*, 2d paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 104-105. Arnold does not consider the military metaphor of Eph 6:10-20 to be one of the major images of the church in Ephesians, and his comments often seem to suggest an individualist reading (ibid., 158-159; 103-112).

³¹Among recent summaries are Bruce, 235-237; Schnackenburg, 321-331; Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Theology of Ephesians," in *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters*, Andrew T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *New Testament Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 132-133; PHEME PERKINS, *Ephesians*, ANTC (Nashville, Abingdon,

they focus on the three "principal metaphors" for the church: the church as body, the church as temple, and the church as bride or wife.³² These metaphors are highlighted, presumably, because they are quite fully developed and because they occur at significant points in the literary structure of the letter. The temple metaphor of Eph 2:19-22 may be cited as an example. It is complex, since a number of submetaphors are invoked, and has been labeled "the most elaborate temple metaphor" in the NT.³³ Someone has said that the author describes "nearly everything about this structure but the shape of the roof!"³⁴ Moreover, it occurs as the culminating metaphor in a series of telescoped ones and provides a fitting climax to Eph 2:11-22. If these two points—full development and occurrence at crucial points in the letter—are true of the three earlier, major metaphors for the church, they are also true of the corporate metaphor of the church as *militia Christi* or *ecclesia militans*.

It may be argued that the term *ἐκκλησία* is absent from Eph 6:10-20 and that this should exclude it as a major ecclesial metaphor. However, the author has already used the term in conjunction with the Christian community's relationship to the powers (3:10), and the author would expect his hearers to recall that striking use in the present context.

A reflection on one brief survey of the ecclesiology of Ephesians suggests the need to add the church as *ecclesia militans* to the principal metaphors for the church. Best, author of the International Critical Commentary on Ephesians, published, in 1993, the brief volume on Ephesians for the JSOT Press series, New Testament Guides, in which he argues that the church is "one of the major, if not *the* major, theological theme of Ephesians."³⁵ Best reviews the "three major images" used to describe the church: the church as Christ's body, as a building or temple, and as the bride or wife of Christ. In reflecting on his summary, he faults the ecclesiology of the letter for a number of lacunae—lack of interest in the non-Christian world, an absence of any sign of harassment of Christians, and a lack of reference to suffering,

1997), 23-27; O'Brien, 25-29; Hoehner, 111-112.

³²My own dissertation highlights just these three commonly identified "major metaphors" ("Ecclesial Metaphor in the Epistle to the Ephesians from the Perspective of a Modern Theory of Metaphor" [Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1995]).

³³C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 91.

³⁴Sampley, 15. Those who understand the "cornerstone" as a coping rather than a foundation stone may wish to disagree with even this limitation.

³⁵Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, NTG (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 65.

something which “lends a triumphalist aspect to the church.”³⁶ Inclusion of Eph 6:10-20 and its military metaphor for the church would have adjusted this list and provided a clearer and more adequate understanding of the nature of the church in the letter.

Since the passage, which is the focus of this essay, is a summation, it seems appropriate to conclude with one: Read as the culmination of both the content and rhetoric of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Eph 6:10-20 is best understood in a corporate rather than an individualist manner. The passage represents a call to arms that is especially interested in the *esprit de corps* of believers. It does not envision Christians (or Paul) as lone warriors battling in splendid isolation, but instead portrays the *ecclesia militans* in which the addressees are to enlist as fellow soldiers against the church’s foes. Read in this way, the passage presents a developed metaphor for the church, the importance of which is highlighted by its climactic position in the letter. When included with other major metaphors for the church in Ephesians, it holds promise of more adequate understandings of a theme that is of central importance for the letter—the nature of the church.

³⁶Ibid., 72.