

Ephesians 6

b. Children and Parents, 6:1-4

¹*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ²*"Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise--³that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."* ⁴*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Following the exhortations to wives and husbands, Paul now lays out the reciprocal duties of children and parents. This set of instructions in vv. 1-4, like the following set addressed to slaves and masters (vv. 5-9), is considerably shorter in form than the exhortatory material on marriage (5:22-33). Structurally, the opening admonitions addressed to 'children' (6:1) and 'slaves' (6:5) to 'obey' (*hypakouo*), like the exhortation to wives voluntarily to 'submit' (*hypotassomai*) to their husbands (v. 22), are specific examples of the submission within divinely ordered relationships that is called for in the programmatic statement of v. 21, 'Submit to one another in the fear of Christ'. And this submission (which is expressed by the fifth result participle that is dependent on the imperative 'be filled', v. 18) concludes the list of responses that should characterize the Spirit-filled living of those in Christ (vv. 18-21). Christian children and slaves who heed this apostolic exhortation to obey, and wives who voluntarily submit to their husbands (v. 22), show that they are receptive to the Spirit's work of transforming them into the likeness of God and Christ. They demonstrate that they understand the Lord's will (v. 17), and provide concrete examples of a wise and godly lifestyle (v. 15).

In vv. 1-9, as Snodgrass has acutely observed, 'Paul applies his ethic described in 4:25-5:21 to the household relations'.¹ So in v. 1 'right' (*dikaion*) picks up what is 'proper' (5:3), 'fitting' (5:4) and or characterized by 'righteousness' (*dikaiosyne*, 5:9), while at 6:4 Paul's exhortation to fathers not to 'exasperate' (*parorgizo*) their children echoes his earlier concern about 'anger' in 4:26-27, 31. The positive exhortation to bring up children in the training and admonition of the Lord recalls the earlier emphasis on learning the tradition of Christian teaching (4:20, 21). In the instructions addressed to slaves and masters the key term 'good' (*agathos*) appears (6:8), as in the earlier paragraph (4:28, 29), while the notion of a future judgment which has been mentioned with great solemnity at 5:5-6, becomes the motivation for slaves and masters to behave in a right manner (6:8, 9).

The structure of the two paragraphs (6:1-4, 5-9), which has close parallels with Colossians 3:20-4:1, is straightforward. As in the earlier part of the household code the instructions to children and parents (vv. 1-4) are similarly presented. First, there is the address to the subordinate group, here the 'children',² which is then followed by an

¹ Snodgrass, 320.

² Again the nominative case with the definite article (*ta; tevkna*) is used for the vocative: cf. 5:22, 25; 6:4, 5, 9.

imperative ‘obey your parents in the Lord’ (v. 1). The motivation or warrant for this follows, ‘for this is right’ (v. 1b). Paul then cites the Old Testament (Ex. 20:4-6): this provides additional warrant for his injunction (vv. 2-3), and also contains a further exhortation to the children. To this is added two further motivating clauses, ‘that (*hina*) it may go well with you and that you may live long on the earth’. In the appeal to parents, ‘fathers’ are specifically addressed in a brief exhortation, which contains both negative (‘do not make your children angry’) and positive elements (‘but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord’, v. 4).

1. Paul passes from the reciprocal duties of wives and husbands to those of children and parents (vv. 1-4), and then to those of slaves and masters (vv. 5-9). It is obvious from these exhortations that the apostle thought of local congregations as consisting of whole families who came together not only to praise God, but also to hear his word addressed to them. As the household tables were read out children too would learn of their Christian duties as well as those of other family members.

The term ‘children’ (*tekna*) primarily denotes relationship rather than age, and could on occasion include adult sons and daughters, who were expected to honour their parents, especially fathers who could maintain authority in the family even until death. Here the text has in view children who are in the process of learning and growing up (cf. v. 4). Presumably they were old enough to understand their relationship to their Lord and the commitments that followed from it. Although children’s duty to obey their parents was taken for granted in the ancient world, disobedience to parents, according to the apostle, was indicative of Gentile depravity (Rom. 1:30), or a sign of the evil of the last days (2 Tim. 3:2).

Children are here addressed as responsible members of the congregations. They are to ‘obey’ both parents (though the corresponding exhortation in v. 4 is addressed to fathers only), and this is a further example of the submission within divinely ordered relationships that is expected in God’s new society (v. 21). This injunction to children, like that to slaves, is put rather more strongly than the one to wives (note the discussion of *hypotassomai* at vv. 22, 24): the verb is an active imperative of *hypakouo* (‘to obey’) and denotes absolute obedience. In Paul the term (and its cognate noun *hypakoe*) usually had reference to one’s submission to Christ, the gospel and apostolic teaching.³ The obedience of Christian children to their parents is all of a piece with their submission to Christ: the additional motivating phrase, ‘in the Lord’,⁴ is virtually synonymous with ‘as to the Lord’ or ‘as to Christ’ (cf. 5:22; 6:5)⁵ and indicates that their obedience is part of their Christian discipleship. It is not rendered simply because of their parents’ greater authority or status.

³ *uJpakouv* (‘obey’): Rom. 6:17; 10:16; Phil. 2:12; 2 Thes. 1:8; 3:14; cf. Mt. 8:27; Mk. 1:27; 4:41; Heb. 5:9; 11:8. *uJpakohv* (‘obedience’): Rom. 1:5; 5:19; 6:16; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 2 Cor. 10:5, 6.

⁴ Although it has been thought that the phrase *ejn kurivw* (‘in the Lord’) was added by later scribes to conform to Eph. 5:22 and 6:5, or to assimilate to the wording of Col. 3:20, neither of these explanations is convincing. The external evidence for the longer reading is early, widespread and strong (including Π^{46} a A D¹ 33 1739 1881 vg sy co and the majority text). Accordingly, the reading with *ejn kurivw* (‘in the Lord’) is preferred as the original. Note the recent discussions in B. M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 609, T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 153, and Hoehner, 539-540.

⁵ The injunction does not mean that children are to obey only those parents who are ‘in the Lord’, that is, Christian parents. The prepositional phrase is best connected with the verb. Children are to be obedient in the Lord (cf. Col. 3:20).

As with the wife's submission so here also Paul builds his instruction on a carefully laid foundation. In addition to his appeal to Christian commitment ('in the Lord'), the apostle provides several further grounds for Christian children obeying their parents. The first motivation (*gar*) is that such obedience is 'right' (*dikaion*). This expression⁶ has generally been taken to signify that Paul is appealing to a general sense of what was fitting and right (cf. Phil. 4:8; Col. 4:1), to which he then links the Old Testament quotation. According to Graeco-Roman ethics generally obeying one's parents was the right and proper thing to do.⁷ Indeed, most civilizations have regarded the recognition of parental authority as necessary to a stable society. However, it has recently been suggested that Ephesians may be combining, rather than distinguishing, 'what is *right* and what is *demanded by the Law*'.⁸ It may be better, therefore, to understand the clause, 'for this is right', as an introduction to the Old Testament commandment (which follows in vv. 2, 3), rather than as a separate reason for the exhortation to obey one's parents.

2, 3. Paul cites the fifth commandment of the decalogue, 'Honour your father and mother', to support his exhortation that children should obey their parents. He quotes from the LXX of Exodus 20:12⁹ but, after citing these opening words, adds that this is the first commandment in the law that has a promise attached to it.

The prominent position in the decalogue of the command to honour one's parents and the importance given to it elsewhere in the Old Testament¹⁰ show that true obedience to this

⁶ tou'to gavr ejstin divkaion ('For this is right').

⁷ Note the survey of the relevant Graeco-Roman texts in Lincoln, 398-402. The Stoics, for example, believed a son's obedience to parents was self-evident. It was required by reason and part of 'the nature of things'.

⁸ T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 171-174, esp. 171. He argues that: (1) only four verses earlier (Eph. 5:31) a Pentateuchal quotation was introduced into the letter by means of a gavr-construction; (2) the Old Testament itself regularly connects what is divkaio" ('right') with keeping the law (cf. Ps. 37:28-31, 34; Pr. 28:1-12, etc.); and (3) the author of Ephesians is elsewhere at pains to link the ethical continuity between the people of God in the old covenant and that in the new (cf. Eph. 4:25ff.). A similar connection between what is 'right' and the commandment was made by earlier writers: cf. Calvin, 212; Meyer, 313-314; Robinson, 127; and G. Schrenk, *TDNT* 2:188.

⁹ Scholars have differed as to which version of the fifth commandment is quoted, Ex. 20:12 or Dt. 5:16. Eph. 6:2, 3 is closer to the LXX of Ex. 20:12 (even though the Massoretic text of this verse omits the clause, 'that it may go well with you') than it is to Dt. 5:16. Apart from his omission of the final words, 'the good [land] which the Lord your God is giving you', by which he 'universalizes' the promise, Paul makes only minor changes to the text. See the discussions in Lincoln, 396-397; T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 154-55; and Hoehner, 542.

¹⁰ Within the ten commandments, and even within the whole Pentateuch, the command to honour one's parents has pride of place among the 'horizontal' commandments. It 'provides a hinge between the first four commandments to do with God's holiness and the remaining commandments in that the parents to be honoured stand in the place of God and mediate his will to the entire household' (T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 158). Elsewhere in the Old Testament such honouring of parents is mandated, while disobedience to or rebellion against parents is tantamount to disrespect for Yahweh. It is put on a par with treason and idol-worship. See, for example, Ex. 21:15, 17; Lv. 19:3; 20:9; Dt. 21:18-21; 27:16. The importance of the parent-child relationship is so great that this imagery is applied to the relationship between Yahweh and his people (Dt. 1:31; 8:2-5; Pr. 3:11-12).

injunction arises out of and reflects one's relationship with Yahweh. The exhortation to *honour* one's parents is a broad one and is paralleled by the expression to 'fear' (*ya|re|* 'one's mother and father (Lv. 19:3), a verb that is often reserved for the right response to God (Lv. 19:14, 32; Dt. 4:10, etc.). According to the Old Testament, honouring one's parents meant obeying them, while to dishonour them was disobedience. Both parents, not simply fathers, are to be honoured, according to this commandment. For children living at home ('being brought up', Eph. 6:4) this signified obedience to father and mother, while for adult children who had left home it involved not only a respectful attitude but also caring for them in their old age.¹¹ Significantly, in the context of Ephesians children's obedience to parents is part of their Christian commitment 'in the Lord'. It is an example of submission that arises out of a godly *fear* of Christ (5:21), and this submission is a distinguishing mark of those who are filled by God's Spirit (5:18).

But in what sense is Exodus 20:12 the first commandment with a promise? It has been claimed that the second commandment which speaks of not making and worshipping idols (Ex. 20:4-6) includes a promise about God showing mercy to those who love him and keep his commandments. Accordingly, the exhortation to honour one's parents has been taken as the first with a promise in relation to other humans (if not the first absolutely: so Gnika), or that it is 'first' in terms of its importance or difficulty (Schlier). But, strictly speaking, the statement in v. 6 that God shows his mercy to thousands who love him is not a promise attaching to the second commandment but a description of Yahweh's character: on the one hand, he is a jealous God who punishes disobedience (v. 5) and, on the other, he shows mercy to thousands of generations (v. 6). It is appropriate, therefore, to regard Exodus 20:12 as the first commandment with a promise attached to it. If it is objected that it is the only one within the decalogue, then this is because Paul regards the ten words of Exodus 20:1-17 as the beginning of many commandments in the Torah.¹²

The commandment to honour one's parents appears on five other occasions in the New Testament,¹³ but only here in Ephesians 6 is the attached promise also cited. In its original context of Exodus 20, the promise given to obedient children referred to a long and good life in the land (of Israel) which God was giving to his people. Significantly, when Paul 'reapplies' the commandment to his Christian readers, he omits any reference to the land of Israel and 'universalizes' the promise: 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'.¹⁴ Philo too, whose writings provide close parallels to the New Testament household codes, omitted any mention of the land, but he spiritualized the reward and understood 'long life' in terms of immortality.¹⁵ This meaning, however, is not intended

¹¹ This is a concern expressed in both the Old Testament (esp. in Proverbs) and Judaism: T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 159-163, has drawn attention to this in the writings of Philo, Josephus, 4 Macc. and some of the rabbis.

¹² So Lincoln, 404, T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 156, and Hoehner, 543-545 (for a full discussion), following earlier commentators.

¹³ Mt. 15:4; 19:19; Mk. 7:10; 10:19; Lk. 18:20.

¹⁴ By omitting the clause, 'which the Lord your God gives you' (LXX of Ex. 20:12), and universalizing the promise, Paul intends that it should have ongoing force for the readers of his letter. It is not simply to stress the importance of the commandment that the promise has been included (so rightly Lincoln, 405, against Schnackenburg, 261).

¹⁵ Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* 2.262. Philo also spiritualized the expression, that 'it may be well with you', and understood it to refer to 'virtue'.

in Ephesians,¹⁶ and it is better to treat the words as speaking of this present earthly life.¹⁷ Just as in the Old Testament children who honoured or obeyed their parents were blessed with the promise of a full life, so too in the age of the new covenant this general principle holds true for obedient Christian children. That there were exceptions in both testaments¹⁸ does not overthrow this divine promise, any more than our Lord's assurance of answered prayer, 'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you' (Mt. 7:7), is negated by lack of faith, an unwillingness to forgive or the treating of prayer as an experiment. For the Christian son or daughter the promise attached to this commandment, which is transformed as it is taken up into 'the law of Christ',¹⁹ is no longer limited geographically. The obedient son or daughter is assured that it will go well with them and that they will enjoy long life on earth, wherever they may live.

To take this promise simply in a communal sense, indicating that a society where the elderly are cared for by their children is a stable one, is a 'modern reinterpretation', as Lincoln rightly observes. On the other hand, it is both unnecessary and incorrect to assert with Lincoln, that these words could only have been penned by a Jewish Christian follower of Paul since the idea of 'a longer period of the church's existence on earth' was alien to the apostle who expected an imminent parousia.²⁰

4. If Christian children are exhorted to render obedience to their parents, then the latter, especially fathers, are enjoined not to provoke their children to anger. Instead, they are to bring their sons and daughters up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Each group in the family, not just the subordinate ones, has obligations.²¹ While children are to obey both parents (*goneusin*, v. 1), fathers have a special responsibility towards them and are

16 Although some commentators have taken Paul's words to point to the heavenly inheritance of 1:14; 3:6 (e.g. Schlier, 282).

17 The adjective *makrocronio* in the expression *makrocronio ejpi; th' gh'* ('long life on the earth') denotes a 'long time' (BAGD, 488; Louw & Nida, § 67.89), but not one of immortal duration. Furthermore, the apostle could easily have omitted the prepositional phrase *ejpi; th' gh'* ('on the earth'), as he did with the words immediately following, if he had wished to focus on eternal life.

18 Caused during time of war, plagues or disease, while disobedient children on occasion lived well and had a long life.

19 On the important but complex question of the relationship between the Torah and the law of Christ, including his comments on Ephesians 6:2-3, see the important article of D. J. Moo, 'The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View', 319-376.

20 Lincoln, 405, 406. On the so-called delay of the parousia see . Apparently Paul, along with the other apostles, hoped that the parousia would occur in his lifetime. But he assumed that various events had to happen before the day of the Lord would come (cf. 2 Thes. 2:5). Further, the New Testament idea of the imminency of the parousia had not so much to do with its nearness as that it could occur at any time, and therefore men and women needed to be ready for it. Take up the discussion with Ridderbos, *Paul*, 487-492, cited approvingly by J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 313.

21 The link between the two exhortations is made by the *kaiv* ('and') at the beginning of v. 4 (*kai; oiJ patevre*).

specifically addressed here.²² In contemporary society the Roman *patria potestas*, i.e. the authority of the head of the house, gave the father unlimited power over his children and this law exercised a considerable degree of influence in the Hellenistic culture generally.²³ In Hellenistic Judaism severe punishment could be meted out to disobedient children.²⁴ This is not to suggest, however, that the Roman period evidences no examples of tender love in the home. But for all that, the relationship ‘in the Lord’ (*en kyrio*) was new, and in this household table (cf. Col. 3:21) fathers are told nothing about their power of disposal over their children. Instead, their duties are spelled out.

Negatively, Paul exhorts fathers not to ‘provoke their children to anger’.²⁵ In the earlier paraenesis the apostle had expressed his concern about anger among God’s people (4:26-27, 31), urging his readers to deal with it promptly. If anger is prolonged Satan can use it for his own ends, exploiting the strains that develop within the Christian community. Now specifically within the family, fathers are urged to avoid those attitudes, words and actions which would provoke their children to anger (has the *hymo*n, ‘your’, been inserted to remind fathers that the children belong to them?). Effectively, the apostle is ruling out ‘excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child’s needs and sensibilities’.²⁶ Behind this curbing of a father’s authority is the clear recognition that children, while they are expected to obey their parents in the Lord, are persons in their own right who are not to be manipulated, exploited or crushed.²⁷

The apostle, however, does not stop with his negative instruction to fathers. Instead,²⁸ he complements it by positively urging them to bring up their children ‘in the training and admonition of the Lord’. The verb *ektrephe*, which has already been used at 5:29 in relation to Christ’s nourishing the church, is here employed rather more generally of

22 oiJ patevre" can denote ‘parents’ in general (Heb. 11:23; cf. BAGD, 635), but there is a change of wording in v. 4 (from gonei", ‘parents’ in v. 1), suggesting that oiJ patevre" means ‘fathers’, while there is no mention of mothers after the explicit reference to them in the commandment of v. 2. Further, in the ancient world in both Graeco-Roman and Jewish writings fathers were responsible for the education of their children.

23 G. Schrenk, *TDNT* 5: 950, 951.

24 Philo’s demand for severity on the part of parents has been attributed to this influence: Philo, *Hyp* 7.2; *Spec Leg* 2.32; cf. Josephus, *Ap* 2.206, 217; *Ant* 4.264; note J. E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 114-116.

25 The verb parorgivzw (‘to cause to be provoked, to make angry’; Louw & Nida, § 88.177) occurs only here and at Rom. 10:19 (in relation to God making Israel angry), although the cognate noun parorgismov" (‘anger’) has appeared in the earlier paraenesis of Eph. 4:26. The present prohibition (mh; parorgivzete, ‘do not provoke to anger’) has the force of a general precept. This kind of prohibition makes no comment as whether the action is going on or not (cf. D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 724-725).

26 Lincoln, 406.

27 Stott, 246.

28 Note the strong adversative ajllav (‘but’). Rather than provide the motive, as in Col. 3:21 (‘lest they become discouraged’), Paul sets forth his positive exhortation.

raising or bringing up children to maturity.²⁹ The two nouns ‘training’ (*paideia*) and ‘admonition’ (*nouthesia*) have sometimes been taken as expressing one concept.³⁰ Although often used together the words probably have slightly different nuances here. The *paideia* word group could refer to education or training in a comprehensive sense (Acts 7:22; 22:3; 2 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 2:12), or the more specific nuance of discipline or chastisement (1 Cor. 11:32; 2 Cor. 6:9; Heb. 12:5, 7, 8, 11). Here in Ephesians 6:4 the general sense appears to be in view, with *nouthesia* (1 Cor. 10:11; Tit. 3:10) pointing to ‘the more specific aspect of this training that takes place through verbal admonition or correction’.³¹

This training and admonition which fathers are to give is further described as ‘of the Lord’. The phrase could be understood as a subjective genitive, indicating that behind those who teach and discipline their children stands the Lord himself. Ultimately, the concern of parents is not that their sons and daughters will be obedient simply to their authority, but that through this godly training and admonition their children will come to know and obey the Lord himself. Theologically, this interpretation makes good sense, and it is consistent with the Old Testament reference, ‘the discipline of the Lord’ (*paideia kyriou*, in LXX Pr. 3:11). But if *paideia* is to be understood more broadly, then ‘of the Lord’ is probably a genitive of quality, indicating that the training and instruction is in the sphere of the Lord or has him as its reference point. In other words, it is truly Christian instruction. This interpretation fits with the earlier mention of learning Christ and being taught in him (4:20, 21). Accordingly, learning Christ and being instructed in the truth that is in Jesus occurs not only within the Christian community as a whole, but also and particularly within the family from fathers whose lives are being shaped by this Christ-centred apostolic tradition.

In contrast to the norms of the day Paul wants Christian fathers to be gentle, patient educators of their children, whose chief ‘weapon’ is Christian instruction focussed on loyalty to Christ as Lord. Christian fathers were to be different from those of their surrounding society. Presumably, when these words from the household table were read to them, they had already heard and remembered what Paul had written earlier in the letter, namely, that their fatherhood was derived from the ‘one God and Father of us all’ (3:14-15; 4:6), and that God’s mighty work of reconciliation in his Son had been effected in order to form ‘one multinational, multicultural family of God’. Let them as human fathers, then, ‘care for their families as God the Father cares for his’.³²

c. Slaves and Masters, 6:5-9

⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. ⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you

²⁹ Louw & Nida, § 35.51. Often this is done by ‘providing for physical and psychological needs’.

³⁰ So recently Snodgrass, 322.

³¹ Lincoln, 407, following Gnlika, 298, and Schnackenburg, 263; cf. Hoehner, 552.

³² Stott, 245.

know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

The third pairing in the household code is that of slaves and masters. Paul presents the reciprocal duties of each group. This set of instructions, like that addressed to children and parents (vv. 1-4), is shorter than the exhortatory material on marriage. The opening admonition, addressed to ‘slaves’ to ‘obey’ (v. 5), is a further example of submission within the divinely ordered relationships that is called for in the programmatic statement, ‘Submit to one another in the fear of Christ’ (5:21). And this submission is part of the instruction about wise and Spirit-filled living (cf. 5:15-20), as well as a consequence of being filled by the Spirit (5:18).

The structure of 6:5-9 is similar to the earlier sections of the code, and it has close parallels to Colossians 3:22–4:1. The most variation occurs in the section where the imperative is amplified. The subordinate group, the slaves, is again addressed first (v. 5a). Then follows a fourfold description of the service to be rendered by slaves, each with an ‘as’ phrase: ‘with fear and trembling in sincerity . . . *as* to Christ’ (v. 5b), ‘not serving the eye, *as* pleasing men’ (v. 6a), ‘*as* slaves of Christ, doing the will of God . . .’ (v. 6b), and ‘wholeheartedly, *as* serving the Lord . . .’ (v. 7). The motivation follows in v. 8 (through a reason clause beginning with ‘knowing that . . .’), with its mention that the Lord will judge everyone according to their works. The instruction to masters is much shorter than that to slaves: after the customary address they are admonished to ‘do the same’ to their slaves. This is amplified by the clause ‘abandoning the use of threats’ (v. 9b), and the motivation is again introduced by ‘knowing that’ they share a common master in heaven who shows no favouritism (v. 9b).

In the list of household rules here and in Colossians (3:22-25) the admonitions to slaves are more extensive than those to masters, and they have special encouragements attaching to them. This may reflect the social structure of these churches (in the household tables of 1 Pet. 2:18–3:8 the admonitions to slaves have no correlative instructions to masters). In both Ephesians and Colossians the apostle is making no social comment on a prevailing custom. He is addressing himself to Christian readers. The issue was not that of an acceptance of an institution sanctioned by law and part of the fabric of Graeco-Roman civilization; nor was it a question of how to react to a demand for its abolition. Rather, it concerned the tension between the freedom given in Christ (cf. Col. 3:11) and the ‘slavery’ in which Christian slaves are to continue to serve their earthly masters (cf. 1 Cor. 7:21-24).

Even those commentators who have asserted most forcefully that Paul took over and Christianized material from Hellenism or Hellenistic Judaism in the household tables concede that these injunctions have been newly formulated as specifically Christian instruction.³³

5. As in the two previous sections of the household table the subordinate group is addressed first. What is remarkable here is that Paul directly exhorts slaves in a manner that

³³ So, for example, Dibelius-Greeven, 47, state: ‘The whole section [Col. 3:22-25, relating to slaves]—in contrast to the preceding—has been formed out of original Christian ideas’ (cf. J. E. Crouch, *Origin*, 116-117).

is unprecedented, for in traditional discussions of household management the focus of attention was on how a master should rule his slaves. In the Pauline tables slaves, like wives and children, are treated as ethically responsible persons (cf. Col. 3:22-25). They are as much members of the Christian congregations to which this circular letter was sent as their masters. Furthermore, this section addressed to slaves makes specific what the apostle has already urged of all Christians, namely, that they are to please the Lord, do his will and be submissive (5:10, 17, 21).³⁴

Slaves are exhorted to *obey* their *earthly masters*. There is a deliberate word-play on the Greek *kyrios* ('master, lord') which is usually rendered 'Lord' with reference to Christ (v. 4) or God. The adjective *earthly* is not to be understood negatively or disparagingly; rather, it shows that these masters are lords within an earthly realm,³⁵ within the sphere of human relations, in contrast to the Lord who is in heaven (v. 9). Ultimately, Christian *slaves* belong to the one Lord, Jesus Christ (v. 6), and their obedience to their earthly masters is all of a piece with their serving him (vv. 7, 8).

Yet for all that, their service to these masters is to be wholehearted and genuine. Positively, it is to be 'with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you would obey Christ'. The motif of 'fear' has already appeared in the household table, serving as an envelope to frame the marriage paraenesis in 5:21, 33.³⁶ Here the twofold expression 'with fear and trembling',³⁷ which appears on occasion in the LXX almost as a stereotyped expression, usually refers to the fear of humans in the presence of God and his mighty acts.³⁸ Paul is the only New Testament writer to use this expression (1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Phil. 2:12), and on each of these occasions, consistent with LXX usage, the phrase has to do with an attitude of due reverence and awe in the presence of God, a godly fear of the believer in view of the final day (see also on 5:21, 33). It is not the slavish terror of the unbeliever; nor is it an attitude oriented solely to humans.³⁹ Ephesians 6:5 urges slaves to obey their masters; that obedience should be rendered with reverence and awe in the presence of God

³⁴ Snodgrass, 323.

³⁵ *kata; savrka* means literally '[masters] according to the flesh', and stands in contrast to *ejn oujranoi* ('in heaven', v. 9) which is predicated of that other Master, the Lord Jesus—hence, the rendering 'earthly' (according to Bruce, 293, *kata; savrka* has particular reference to this present world-order).

³⁶ Note also the references to the 'fear' of slaves, 1 Pet. 2:18; of wives, 3:2; and of citizens in relation to the state, Rom. 13:7.

³⁷ *meta; fovbou kai; trov mou* ('with fear and trembling') indicates the manner in which slaves are to obey their masters.

³⁸ So in the Song of Moses (Ex. 15:16) 'terror and dread' will grip the Canaanites as they learn of the Lord's mighty acts on behalf of his people Israel to deliver them out of Egypt and settle them in the land of their inheritance. At Is. 19:16 'fear and trembling' describes the future reaction of the Egyptians to the hand of the Lord raised against them in judgment, while in Ps. 2:11 the appropriate response of the rebellious nations and rulers of the earth to the Lord's decisive action of installing his Son and of warning them of imminent destruction is to serve him 'with fear' and to 'rejoice with trembling'. Gn. 9:2 appears to be an exception for the expression describes the fearful attitude of the animal creation to Noah and his sons. However, even here, the dread is prompted by God's decree and results from his mighty interventions. For further details, see P. T. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 282-284.

³⁹ P. T. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 283-284.

and Christ (note the following phrase, [lit.] ‘as to Christ’, and Col. 3:22)⁴⁰, a godly fear in view of the final day (as the two earlier references indicate).

In the contemporary world masters controlled their slaves through fear, since it was believed that fear produced greater loyalty.⁴¹ The perspective of Christian slaves, however, has changed. They have been delivered from the bondage of human intimidation, and now are ‘enslaved’ to the Lord Jesus Christ. Their service to their masters, then, is to be rendered out of reverence and awe for him. It will also be characterized by integrity and singleness of purpose—what is here called *sincerity of heart*. As the inner centre which determines attitudes and actions, the *heart* is marked by sincerity and purity of motive.⁴² The Christian slave will not be guided by false, ulterior motives but will serve his or her master conscientiously and with sincerity. This kind of inner commitment can only occur as slaves recognize that in serving their masters they are rendering obedience to their heavenly Lord, Christ. The performance of their earthly tasks is related to his rule over their lives. Ultimately, then, the distinction between the sacred and the secular breaks down. Any and every task, however menial, falls within the sphere of his lordship and is done in order to please him. Their work is done ‘as to Christ’, their obedience is rendered ‘as slaves of Christ’ (v. 6), their wholehearted service is performed ‘as to the Lord’ (v. 7), because they know that they will be rewarded ‘by the Lord’ (v. 8) for every good that is done. These instructions provide a specific application of the apostle’s comprehensive exhortation of Colossians 3:17, ‘Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him’.

6. The call for slaves to obey their masters with integrity is further elaborated, first negatively, ‘not with eye-service as menpleasers’, then positively, ‘but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God wholeheartedly’. The term rendered ‘eye-service’, which is not attested before the Pauline writings (cf. Col. 3:22) and may have been coined by the apostle, signified that service performed only to attract attention, and was not for its own sake or to please God or one’s own conscience.⁴³ Those who act in such a way are ‘menpleasers’ who seek to curry favour with their masters rather than please God.⁴⁴ Christian slaves, however, are enjoined not to obey their masters in this fashion.

⁴⁰ To which Caird, 90, appropriately makes reference (against Lincoln, 420).

⁴¹ K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire. A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: University Press, 1987), 113-137. For further bibliographical details, see A. A. Ruprecht, *DPL*, 883; Hoehner, 554; and M. J. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, 000.

⁴² *kardiva* is ‘the causative source of a person’s psychological life in its various aspects, but with special emphasis upon thoughts’ (so Louw & Nida, § 26.3), and comes to be rendered ‘heart, inner self, mind.’. *ejn aJplovthti th" kardiva* ‘with singleness of heart’ (BAGD, 86) denotes the innermost part of a person as simple and sincere (cf. 1 Ch. 29:17; Wisd. 1:1; Test. Reub. 4:1; Test. Sim. 4:5; Test. Levi 13:1; 2 Cor. 11:3; Col. 3:22). Cf. Louw & Nida, § 88.44.

⁴³ *ojfqalmodouliva* means ‘eyeservice, to serve in order to call attention to oneself’ (so Louw & Nida, § 35.29; cf. BAGD, 599). Note Theodoret’s comment on Eph. 6:6, 7, cited by E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 160: ‘He calls eyeservice that type of service which does not issue from a sincere heart, but is content in mere external appearance’.

⁴⁴ The only other occurrences of this word (*ajnqrwpavreskoi*) before the New Testament are Ps. 53:5[LXX 52:6]; Pss. Sol. 4:7, 8, 19. Louw & Nida, § 215.98, suggest that the term pertains to ‘causing people to be pleased, with the implication of being in contrast to God or at the sacrifice of

Instead (*alla*), they are to serve in the light of their ultimate allegiance to Christ, recognizing that they are his slaves who do the will of God gladly and wholeheartedly. For the second time in as many verses the christological motivation for their behaviour is to the fore. Twice more their relationship to Jesus' lordship will feature prominently in the apostle's appeal (vv. 7, 8). Those who are servants of their earthly masters are here designated 'slaves of Christ', a privileged designation. The manner in which their household service is rendered is described in terms of 'their doing the will of God from the heart'. The divine will has already been understood in terms of God's gracious saving plan in which it is his intention to sum up all things in Christ (1:5, 9, 11). In the latter half of Ephesians the divine will (5:17; 6:6) turns up in exhortatory contexts where the stress falls upon believers' responsibility to work out that will day by day (see on 5:17). Here God's will is to be performed by 'slaves of Christ' within the everyday life of the household. They are to serve their masters 'wholeheartedly' (lit. 'from the soul', *ek psyche\is*) an expression which is virtually synonymous with 'sincerity of heart' in v. 5. It emphasizes an inner motivation that is unreserved and stands in direct contrast to the 'eyeservice' of those who 'menpleasers'.

7. Paul reiterates several of his earlier points (in vv. 5, 6)⁴⁵ as he urges Christian slaves to obey their masters: they are to do so wholeheartedly and enthusiastically, showing that ultimately they are serving not human lords but their one Lord who is in heaven. The term *eunoia* which appears only here in the New Testament signifies 'zeal, eagerness, wholeheartedness'.⁴⁶ and specifies the manner in which they are to serve. Clearly their enthusiastic service will benefit their masters. But the slaves are reminded of a significant reason or motivation for their conduct:⁴⁷ they are serving the Lord and not mere humans.⁴⁸ As they engage in wholehearted work for their masters, so in that very action they honour and glorify their heavenly Lord.

8. Finally, the apostle's admonition to obedience with its related appeals is grounded in the knowledge that slaves will be rewarded by their heavenly Lord at the final judgment for the good that they do.⁴⁹ Once again in exhortatory material within Ephesians the future perspective, in this case the last day, provides a motivation for appropriate living in the

some principle'. The word may sometimes be rendered as 'those who are just trying to make people like them'.

45 By means of the participial clause *met' eujnoiva* "douleuvonte" ('serving wholeheartedly').

46 Louw & Nida, § 25.72.

47 *wJ* ('as') often appears with a participle to indicate the reason or motivation for something happening; but the New Testament, like classical Greek, in abbreviated expressions will omit the participle when it is clear from the context as to what is meant: e.g. 2 Thes. 2:2; see A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 1140; BDF § 425(4).

48 Note the contrast between *tw' kurivw* ('Lord') and *oujk ajnqrwvpoi* ('not humans').

49 So Lincoln, 422, 425; and Hoehner, 565, who claims that the participle *eijdvte* ('knowing') is causal and is dependent on the main verb *uJpakouvete* ('obey'). The parallel *eijdvte* ('knowing') in v. 9 is similar. Cf. Snodgrass, 324, who speaks of the 'primary motivation for this ethic . . . [being] the final judgment' (emphasis added).

present.⁵⁰ The use of the verb ‘knowing’ (*eidotes*) suggests that the apostle is recalling a pattern of teaching familiar to Christians and to which he can now appeal.

The content (*hoti*) of what they have been taught is that their heavenly Lord will reward them for the good that each one does. No doubt many slaves had performed good deeds that were not noticed by their masters and so not appropriately rewarded by them.⁵¹ As a result, Christian slaves, like others, might have gone out of their way to ensure that any service they performed caught their masters’ attention. But they did not need to respond in this way. Nothing escapes their heavenly Master’s gaze. However they may be treated by their earthly ‘lords’, they still have *a* Lord⁵² who at the end of the day can be trusted to reward⁵³ them. He notices the good deeds of *each and every one* of them—note the stress on ‘each one’ (*hekastos*)—so that none will miss out on being rewarded for *any* good⁵⁴ that has been done. There is no promise here of an immediate reward or manumission from slavery; rather, the assurance that when they, along with all other believers, stand before the judgment seat of Christ, they will be rewarded for the good deeds they have done (2 Cor. 5:10).

Consistent with the rest of the New Testament (indeed the whole Bible), Paul assumes that judgment is according to works (cf. Rom. 2:6). There is clearly a connection between good deeds and reward, although the content of the reward is not spelled out here. In Colossians 3:24, the parallel passage, the reward is identified with the eternal inheritance that has been prepared for believers (cf. Col. 1:5, 12, 27; 3:1-4).⁵⁵ Further, the focus of Colossians 3:24-25 is negative, with the passage functioning as a threat: ‘for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done’. In Ephesians, where the motif of inheritance has figured rather prominently (1:14, 18; 5:5), it is not identified with the reward as in Colossians. On the other hand, the thrust in Ephesians is positive as the apostle seeks to encourage slaves within the Christian household.

50 See above

51 In some contemporary discussions of household management it was recommended that slaves be motivated by various rewards such as food, clothing and other benefits (Xenophon, *Oec.* 13.9-12; see Lincoln, 422). Some masters had even promised slaves their freedom but had not delivered on these promises (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.42).

52 para; kurivou (lit. ‘from a Lord’). In relation to the parallel passage in Col. 3:22, J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1890), 226, claimed that the absence of the definite article in the phrase ajpo; kuriou’ (‘from a Lord’) was remarkable and he tried to catch the significance of this omission as follows: ‘However you may be treated by your earthly masters, you still have *a* Master . . .’

53 The verb komivzomai which can signify ‘to get back, recover’ (Mt. 25:27; Heb. 11:19), frequently means ‘receive, obtain’ (2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:25; Heb. 10:36; 11:13, 39; 1 Pet. 1:9; 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:13). It is the latter meaning which best suits this context, hence the translation ‘receive recompense’ (BAGD, 442-443; Louw & Nida, § 57.126, 136).

54 The expression ti ajgaqovn (‘any good’) is comprehensive. The tou’to (‘this’) refers back to ti ajgaqovn (‘any good’) and is in an emphatic position: it is ‘this’ good that will be noticed and rewarded.

55 In using apparently mercenary terms such as ‘reward’ and ‘punishment’ in Col. 3:24 the apostle is speaking of our relationship with God: reward is here described in terms of an inheritance that relates to life in the presence of God while punishment is deprivation of his fellowship and exclusion from his presence.

Not only slaves but also freedpersons and masters will stand before Christ at the judgment and receive recompense for the deeds they have done. The additional words, ‘whether slave or free’, show that all will be similarly rewarded. Social status at this point is immaterial, none will receive special treatment or favouritism for all are judged by the same criterion—that of works (cf. Rom. 2:6). Whatever right and proper distinctions were maintained between slaves and masters, or any other groupings within the Christian household, in the light of the coming judgment ultimately all are unimportant (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; and 1 Cor. 12:13).

9. Consistent with the pattern in this household table Paul now addresses those in authority, in this case masters, and exhorts them in their responsibilities to their slaves. Once again each group within the household has obligations, not just the subordinate members. Here the connection between the exhortation to slaves and that to masters is explicitly made,⁵⁶ since Paul intends to underscore the reciprocal, though not symmetrical,⁵⁷ relationships between the two groups.

In what is a shocking exhortation to slave-owners in the first century Graeco-Roman world the apostle admonishes masters: *treat your slaves in the same way*. According to a proverbial statement known to Seneca, ‘all slaves are enemies’, while many masters were tyrants and abusive.⁵⁸ In order to deal with their slaves, owners were known to threaten beatings, sexual harassment or selling male slaves away from the households with the result that they would be parted forever from their loved ones.⁵⁹ Paul’s cryptic exhortation is outrageous. It does not mean, however, that masters are to serve their slaves, as Chrysostom thought.⁶⁰ Nor does it refer simply to their doing good, as in v. 8. More likely it points to their attitudes and actions which, like those of slaves, are to be governed by their relationship to their heavenly Lord.⁶¹ An outcome of this will be that masters will abandon the use of threats against⁶² their slaves. This is not to suggest that slaves could not be warned of punishment if they did wrong. Rather, the clause rejects all forms of manipulating,

⁵⁶ First, the concluding words of v. 8, which speak of the Lord rewarding each one who does good, *ei[te dou'lo" ei[te ejleuvqero* (‘whether slave or free’), provide a transition to the advice given to masters in v. 9. Then, as in v. 4, the address to masters is linked by *kaiv* (‘and’, v. 9) to that of slaves. Finally, masters are called to adopt a similar attitude to their slaves: *ta; aujta; poiei'te pro;" aujtouv* (‘do the same things to them’).

⁵⁷ Although masters are urged to ‘do the same to them’, that is, to have a corresponding attitude to that required of slaves, they are not admonished to ‘obey’ (v. 5) or ‘serve’ (v. 7) their slaves.

⁵⁸ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 47.5.

⁵⁹ T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 27.

⁶⁰ Chrysostom thought the exhortation referred to *douleuvonte* (‘serving as slaves’); *Hom.* 22; 6:9 (*MPG* 62:157), cited by Hoehner, 567.

⁶¹ Lincoln, 423, 425.

⁶² The participial clause *ajnievnte" th;n ajpeilhvn* (‘abandoning the use of threats’) amplifies the preceding *ta; aujta; poiei'te pro;" aujtouv* (‘do the same thing to them’). Here the verb *ajfivhmi*, when used with *ajpeilhvn* (‘threat[s]’ Louw & Nida, § 33.291) means to ‘give up, cease, stop’ (*BAGD*, 69; Louw & Nida, § 68.43).

demeaning or terrifying slaves by threats.⁶³ In the immediate context, slaves have already been instructed to show respect, sincerity of heart and goodwill; now masters are urged to treat them in a similar manner.

The warrant for Paul's appeals to masters is twofold, as once again he reminds his readers of a pattern of teaching familiar to them and to which he can appeal.⁶⁴ Masters are motivated to treat their slaves *in the same way* because: (1) both the slaves' Master and their own Master is in heaven, and both groups are accountable to him. Christian slaves have already been exhorted to render service to their earthly masters as to the Lord Jesus. Now the apostle reminds Christian masters that they too are slaves, indeed fellowslaves of the same Lord as their own servants. This Master is the exalted Christ who is in heaven where God dwells,⁶⁵ and both groups are accountable to him. Masters will render an account on the final day to this heavenly Lord for all that they have done, not least as to how they have treated their slaves (cf. Col. 4:1).

(2) The Lord to whom both slaves and masters render an account is completely impartial. At the judgment bar⁶⁶ of God there is no 'partiality'⁶⁷ or 'bias' with him. The higher social status that masters have gives them no advantage whatever. He does not allow himself to be influenced by appearances. No 'special deals' can be made with him. Let masters, then, treat their slaves in the light of the fact that they are fellow servants of this heavenly Lord.

Check Lincoln, 425-428. Question whether what 'is called for here [in the table] does not differ substantially from the practice expected in other appeals in the ancient world for moderation in the master-slave relationship. It is, of course, the motivations for such behavior which give the paraenesis its distinctiveness and which alter the whole dynamic of the relationship' (425).

Lincoln is right about the Christological motivation being pervasive. But only this?

⁶³ Cf. Lincoln, 425.

⁶⁴ The participle *eijdovte* ('knowing') is causal and dependent on the main verb *poiei'te* ('do'); note the similar construction in v. 8. The content of what they had been taught and which should now motivate Christian masters to heed the apostolic appeals is expressed by the two clauses following *eijdovte* *o{ti*: (1) *kai; aujtw'n kai; uJmw'n oJ kuvriov* ktl. ('he who is both their Master and yours . . .'), and (2) *kai; proswpolhmyiva oujk e[stin* ktl. ('there is no favouritism . . .').

⁶⁵ Check out Hall Harris and *New Documents* 3, 32. [cf. Hoehner, 568].

⁶⁶ Although W. Schrage, 'Zur Ethik der neutestamentliche Haustafeln', 9-10, thinks that this does not refer to the future judgment of the coming Lord, the context of v. 8 which speaks of receiving recompense in the future strongly suggests that the judgment of v. 9 is set within the same time frame. In the Old Testament impartiality in judgment is attributed to God; here and in Col. 3:25 this is predicated of Christ as Lord.

⁶⁷ *proswpolhmyiva* ('partiality') while occurring first in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; Jas. 2:1), may already have been in use in Hellenistic Judaism and was formed from the Hebraism meaning 'to raise the face', found frequently in the Old Testament to denote respect of persons: Lv. 19:15; Dt. 1:27; 16:19; cf. E. Lohse, *TDNT* 6, 779-780. The word group signified making 'unjust distinctions between people by treating one person better than another, hence 'to show favoritism, to be partial, partiality'; so Louw & Nida, § 88.238.

The household table of 5:22–6:9 is the expression of submission by believers within divinely ordered relationships (5:21), and which is evidence of their being filled by God's Spirit (v. 18) and walking in wisdom (v. 15). The wise walk is before one's spouse, children, parents, slaves and masters. It can only be achieved in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes believers more and more into the likeness of God and Christ.

Excursus: Slavery in the New Testament Period

(Interact with Lincoln, 415-420.)

By the first century A.D. almost a third of the population of the Roman empire, at least in the large cities, were slaves. A number of factors account for this high proportion of the populace being in slavery. Before the New Testament period many had become enslaved through capture in war or kidnapping by pirates. After the death of the Emperor Augustus (A. D. 14) and by the time of the New Testament, the majority of slaves had been born into slavery. Also, large numbers of people, according to Scott Bartchy, sold themselves into slavery for various reasons, for example, to be integrated better into Roman society, and to gain a more secure existence than one could as a poor, freeborn person. Further, unwanted newborn infants were 'exposed' or thrown away, and, if found alive, were often raised as slaves, while Greek and Roman parents occasionally sold their children into slavery.

1. The Social Status of Slaves

According to Roman law a slave was a res, that is, a thing or chattel to be owned. Slaves had no right to contract themselves in marriage, to inherit, or to represent themselves in court. They would often be more severely punished than freeborn persons for committing the same crime; however, slaves were protected by law from extreme cruelty by their masters.

Strictly speaking, slaves did not belong to one particular social class in Roman society. This is because their social status depended, to a large extent, on the social status of their owners. While for many slavery meant living at the bottom end of the social spectrum, some were well educated, having been raised and educated at the expense of their masters. A slave was not expected to wear any distinctive clothing, while neither race nor roles performed in society distinguished slaves from freed persons or those who were freeborn.

In Greco-Roman families slaves performed a wide range of functions: they served as cooks or cleaners, tutors, physicians or nurses, and even as managers of the household. In the business world, while some slaves performed menial tasks, other rose to positions of importance as managers of estates and ships, administrators of personnel, and executives with significant decision-making powers. Under Roman and Jewish law slaves could own property (including other slaves), which might then be used for purchasing their legal freedom.

Capable slaves were often given an excellent education at their masters' expense, and as a result some became famous philosophers (so, for example, Epictetus), teachers, administrators and physicians. In fact, it has been suggested that: 'These slaves and former slaves formed the broad 'class' of intellectuals of the 1st century.'

Slaves did not have to wait for their freedom before establishing friendships with their owners or other free persons, and they were not prevented from becoming members of clubs or religious organizations simply because of their legal status.

2. The Freedom or Manumission of Slaves

Unlike slavery in the New World of the 17th-19th centuries, Greco-Roman slavery was not a permanent condition. It was, rather, a temporary phase of life, and slaves in the first century A.D. could usually count on being set free by the age of thirty. On occasion, whole households of slaves were freed, particularly after the death of the owner. Manumission was practised generously, sometimes, however, in order to further the interests of the owner and to keep the system functioning. In many cases, slavery was preferred to freedom because it offered security, and sometimes good positions in a household.

Slaves who owned property, which was under their control, usually sought to increase it, and enable them to purchase their legal freedom at a later date and establish a secure existence as freed persons.

3. The abolition of slavery

The main lines of first century slavery, which had become woven into the legal and economic fabric of Roman society, had been fully developed at least a century earlier. And although there had been major rebellions in the mediterranean area against a range of its injustices, none of these uprisings, which occurred during 140-70 B.C., was motivated by the intention to abolish the institution of slavery, as such. No revolutionary social programs intended to change the legal or economic structures.

Slaves controlled the large-scale production of the empire, in both the cities and the countryside, even if freeborn persons dominated small-scale farming and trading. The household (Greek *oikos*) played a significant role in the economy of the Roman empire, and slaves were central to the proper functioning of these households. In such an economic context it was virtually impossible for anyone to conceive of abolishing slavery as a legal-economic institution. It would have resulted in widespread instability, and failed to benefit those for whom such a drastic step had been taken.

The New Testament and First Century Slavery

No New Testament writer comments on the origins of slavery. Also, no theological support for slavery, or justification for human beings owning other human beings, is presented in the New Testament, even though direct evidence is provided (including the Letter to Philemon), which shows that some early Christians were slaves and others were owners of slaves.

From the 'household table' of Colossians 3:18-4:1 (cf. Eph 6:5-9); 1 Cor 7:21-24; 1 Tim 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet 2:18-21) the apostle makes the following points:

1. Slaves are involved in 'serving Christ' (3:24);
2. Owners have a 'master in heaven' (4:1);
3. God deals impartially with both master and slave;

4. Both are bond-servants of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 7:21-24 Paul mentions, not the wider issue of slavery but, the possibility of the manumission of Christian slaves. Although the exact meaning of Paul's admonition is disputed, with many writers claiming that the apostle is urging Christians to take their freedom, it is more likely that he is exhorting the Christian to live according to 'the new identity in Christ (the 'calling') that has become more fundamental than any social, legal, or religious status'.⁶⁸

The Letter to Philemon does not specifically address the broader question of slavery. Rather, in his carefully chosen words of verses 16 and 17 ('no longer as a slave, but as one who is much more than a slave, as a beloved brother . . . receive his as you would receive me'), Paul is dealing with the issue of brotherly love in the body of Christ. He wants Onesimus to be welcomed back as a Christian brother and treated as he himself would be. There may also be the further thought that Paul does not want Philemon to delay Onesimus's manumission because of his misdeeds (v 18).

Onesimus, as well as Philemon, has been incorporated into the body of Christ, and as a result the relationship of slave to slave owner within the framework of existing structures is to be conducted in light of belonging to the same Lord. The relationship between the two men is deepened so that, in a sense, the terms 'slave' and 'master' are transcended. While Onesimus's earthly freedom may be rightly desired and valued, this is not the significant issue. What finally matters is for Onesimus to have accepted God's call and to follow him (cf. 1 Cor 7:21-24 and Philem 16), whether he is a slave or not. Thus, it has been suggested that the Letter to Philemon is moving in the realm of personal relationships where the institution of slavery could only wilt and die.

Whether this final observation is true or not, those who confronted the slavery in the New World of 17th-19th centuries A. D., grappled not only with New Testament theological principles, but also with an institution that differed from its first century counterpart in a number of important respects. First, Greco-Roman slavery was a temporary phase of life, rather than a permanent condition, and many slaves in the first century A. D. could count on being set free by the age of thirty, if not earlier. Others were able to redeem themselves by paying all their debts. Also, slavery was rarely racially motivated in the period prior to the New Testament. Members of a nation conquered by the Romans in war may have belonged to the same race. But their entry into slavery was because of military conquest, rather than their racial origins. Further, a slave's social status could vary enormously, depending on his master's social position. While many slaves lived in wretched conditions, some did rise to positions of importance. Since slaves wore no distinctive clothing and did not belong to one particular race, it was not possible to distinguish them from freedmen or freeborn persons.

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This is one of the main points of Bartchy's thesis.

F. SPIRITUAL WARFARE, 6:10–20

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

This final section of the exhortatory material of Ephesians, in which the readers are urged to be strong in the Lord and to put on God's mighty armour as they engage in a spiritual warfare with the powers of evil, occupies a highly significant place in the epistle. The paragraph not only concludes the paraenetic material begun in 4:1, but also serves as the climax of the letter as a whole,⁶⁹ bringing it to its conclusion. The paragraph is neither 'an irrelevant appendix' to Ephesians nor 'a parenthetical aside' within it but a crucial element to which the rest of the epistle has been pointing.⁷⁰

Stott, 261-262, re Paul bringing us down to earth.

But here the apostle looks at the Christian's responsibility of living in the world from a broader, i.e. cosmic perspective. The moral issues with which he deals are not simply matters of personal preference, as many within our contemporary and post-modern world contend. On the contrary, they are essential elements in a larger struggle between the forces of good and evil.⁷¹

From 4:1 on the readers have been urged to 'live' worthily of the high calling which they have received from God. Five times in the paraenetic material of chapters 4-6 the key

⁶⁹ So, most recently, Snodgrass, 334-335; T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 181-183; and T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God. The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997), 110-111.

⁷⁰ So Arnold, 103, 105. G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 723, even suggests that in 'this final section of the letter we also most likely are coming to Paul's primary concern for his recipients'. His placing this material 'in the emphatic final position suggests that he has been intentionally building the letter toward this climax right along'.

⁷¹ Cf. S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 248.

verb *peripateo* ('walk, live') has been used to point to the new and distinctive lifestyle the readers are now to adopt (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). The last of these focusses on Spirit-filled Christians *living* wisely in their relationships within the family (5:21–6:9). Now the paraenesis is drawn to a conclusion as Paul sets forth an effective summary, reinforces his earlier exhortations⁷² and challenges his readers to action. Using battle imagery they are called to stand firm in the midst of the spiritual warfare that is already in progress.

At the same time, a number of concerns within the whole letter are brought back to the readers' attention in an emphatic way. The recapitulation of various issues, themes and terminology from the earlier sections of the letter is very impressive, as several recent writers have shown.⁷³ For example, the imperative to be strong in the Lord (6:10) brings to mind God's power, which was manifested in Christ's resurrection and exaltation, and is now available to believers (1:19-20). The imperative regarding divine empowering also has links with believers' strengthening through the Spirit (3:16) and the praise that God's power is at work among them (3:20). Often the connections between motifs in chaps. 1-3 and 6:10-20 highlight the tension between what has already been achieved in Christ, so that believers now experience the life of the 'new age', and this present evil age where the powers are active and in which believers now live. Christ has 'already' triumphed over the powers (1:21; 3:10). But they still exist, and are active in the disobedient (2:2). Through their prince they seek to gain a base of operations against believers (4:27). These evil supernatural forces listed in 6:12 are the principalities and authorities that have been mentioned in 1:21 and 3:10; the sphere in which they function is the heavenly realm (6:12; 3:10), and the present age over which they hold sway is described in terms of darkness (6:12) or evil days (5:16). Christ's triumph over the powers has 'already' occurred (1:21), so believers no longer live in fear of them. The fruits of that victory have 'not yet' been fully realized, so Christians must be aware of the conflict and be equipped with divine power to stand against them.⁷⁴

The realities closely connected with the pieces of armour in 6:14-17 have already featured prominently in the earlier chapters of the epistle. So truth (1:13; 4:15, 21, 24, 25; 5:9), righteousness (4:24; 5:9), peace (1:2; esp. 2:14-18; 4:3; cf. 6:23), the gospel (1:13; 3:6; cf. 2:17; 3:8) or word of God (1:13; 5:26), salvation (1:13; 2:5, 8; 5:23) and faith (1:1, 13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13) are important theological themes which are recapitulated in relation to the weaponry believers are to employ in their spiritual warfare. In addition, the summons to prayer in 6:16-18 picks up terminology already used earlier in the letter: 1:16; 'all the saints' (3:18); the 'mystery' (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32), 'boldness' (3:12) and Paul's imprisonment (3:1; 4:1).⁷⁵

⁷² R. A. Wild, 'The Warrior and the Prisoner: Some Reflections on Ephesians 6:10-20', *CBQ* 46 (1984), 298, observed that the five imperatives in this concluding paragraph, in effect, reiterate the thirty-one imperatives of 4:1–6:9. Cf. S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 247.

⁷³ Note the discussions of Arnold, 103-122; Lincoln, 432-441; and T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 181-183; cf. Snodgrass, 334-336. Moritz, who has drawn attention to a wide range of connections between all six chapters of the letter and 6:10-20, notes the cluster of important theological terms (truth, righteousness, faith, word and Spirit) which link 1:13 with 6:14-17 (where the Old Testament weapon imagery appears). He concludes that 6:10-20 'should be interpreted with the entire epistle in view' (182).

⁷⁴ Note especially the treatment of Lincoln, 438-439 (cf. G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 724).

⁷⁵ Lincoln, 439. Note also T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 182 (and see the discussion below).

Several recent writers have noticed the number of terminological and conceptual links between the paragraph on spiritual warfare and the introductory eulogy and thanksgiving paragraph (with its thanksgiving and intercession) in chap. 1. There is a correspondence between the beginning and end of the letter, between what God has been praised and petitioned for (1:3-14, 16-23) and what is to be preserved by Christians against evil spiritual forces led by the evil one.

(Note my earlier work on thanksgiving and conclusions of Philippians.)

What, then, are we to make of the interconnections between chap. 6:10-20 and the earlier paraenesis (4:1–6:9) together with chaps. 1-6 overall? Rhetorical criticism in recent New Testament studies has identified this highly charged paragraph as the *peroratio*, the final section of a speech that sought to sum up the main themes and to arouse the audience to action.⁷⁶ Whether the New Testament documents fit the technical rhetorical descriptions of the first century world is currently a disputed point among scholars.⁷⁷ However, the purpose of this significant passage, namely, ‘to expand and reinforce, to recapitulate and arouse to action’,⁷⁸ is akin to that of the *peroratio*, whether it is appropriate to classify this paragraph of Paul’s letter in classical rhetorical categories or not. Any good writing sought to conclude with a clinching argument that sought to motivate the readers, and Ephesians does this powerfully.

The paragraph falls into three sections: (a) Vv. 10-13 admonish the readers to be strong in the Lord and to put on the armour of God in their warfare against evil supernatural powers. (b) In vv. 14-17 the imperative, *Stand firm*, is followed by a listing of the pieces of armour to be put on. (c) Finally, vv. 18-20 focus on the need for constant prayer and watchfulness for all believers, and especially for the apostle himself in prison that he might fearlessly proclaim the mystery.

1. Be strong in the Lord and put on God’s armour, 6:10-13

10. Having concluded his instructions to the various groups within the Christian household (5:21–6:9), Paul now addresses *all* his readers and exhorts them to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. This is because they are engaged in an ongoing spiritual battle with the powers of darkness, as the following verses show. The transition from the household table to this concluding section of exhortatory material (6:10-20) is made through *tou loipou* (‘finally’)⁷⁹ which introduces v. 10. This opening exhortation introduces the theme and sets the tone for the rest of the passage.

⁷⁶ So A. T. Lincoln, “‘Stand, Therefore . . .’: Ephesians 6:10-20 as *Peroratio*”, *BiblInt* 3 (1995), 99-114; cf. T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 110-111.

⁷⁷ Nuanced discussion (so reword text) with special reference to Porter’s contributions.

⁷⁸ Snodgrass, 335.

⁷⁹ *tou' loipou* often has temporal force (‘from now on, in the future’; cf. Gal. 6:17), and some opt for this meaning here on the grounds that it is strength for a future conflict that is in view. But the context makes it clear that the battle is taking place now and that divine strength is needed in the present (against T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 109-110, whose arguments for the temporal, ‘henceforth’, are unconvincing). *tou' loipou* is synonymous with the more frequent accusative *to; loipovn* (‘finally’) and indicates that 6:10-20 is the last in a chain of exhortations. Cf. BAGD, 480.

The first imperative ‘be strong’ (*endynamousthe*) is best understood as a passive,⁸⁰ meaning ‘be made strong, be strengthened’.⁸¹ This fits with the corresponding passive in the prayer of 3:16, ‘that you may *be strengthened* with power through his Spirit’, and indicates that believers do not empower themselves. Rather, their strengthening comes from an external source, which the following phrase indicates is *the Lord* Jesus. He is the person with whom believers have been brought into union (cf. 2:21; 4:1, 17; 5:8; 6:1, 21), and thus the sphere in whom they now live their Christian lives and from whom they derive their strength. They no longer fall under the tyranny of the prince of the power of the air (2:2) but have come under Christ’s loving rule and headship. For this reason they can be urged to ‘be strengthened in him’: he supplies all they need in their spiritual warfare.

The call to be ‘strong’ in the midst of a battle has a number of Old Testament precedents, the most notable of which is Joshua who was urged to ‘be strong and of good courage’ (Jos. 1:6, 7, 9; cf. Dt. 31:6, 7, 23). In a critical situation David too ‘found strength *in the Lord*’ (1 Sa. 30:6), while later God says of his people gathered home from exile, ‘I will make them strong *in the Lord*’ (Zc. 10:12).⁸² The latter examples mention explicitly that the external source of this empowering is ‘the Lord’, and in Ephesians this refers to the Lord Jesus.

The source of this strengthening is described more specifically as *in his mighty power*.⁸³ This dynamic phrase⁸⁴ has already been used in relation to God’s all-powerful strength which raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to the place of honour, far above all rule and authority (1:19-20). The apostle prayed that his readers might understand and experience the extraordinary power of God working on their behalf (v. 19). Now he calls upon them to appropriate this might which in the case of Jesus had already proven itself sufficient to overcome powerful, diabolical opposition.

80 Rather than a middle voice as Bruce, 403; S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 359; and T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 112, interpret it. In favour of the passive, see BAGD, 263; Lincoln, 441; and Hoehner, 573, among others. Cf. the same construction in 2 Tim. 2:1, ‘take strength (ejndunamou) from the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus’.

81 The plural imperative ejndunamou'sqe (‘be made strong’) has been taken by T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 111, as addressed to the community corporately. He comments: the ‘whole community is called to be empowered’, adding that this exhortation ‘should not be understood, as it usually is, in individualistic terms’. But Neufeld has presented a false dichotomy. The plural here (as often elsewhere in Ephesians) signifies *common* action: believers *both* individually *and* corporately are to heed the apostolic injunction. As they engage in a deadly spiritual warfare with the powers of evil they are not only to be empowered themselves so as to stand firm; they are also to encourage their fellow believers to do likewise so that *together as one* they will resist the devil.

82 Bruce, 403.

83 The kaiv (‘and’) in the expression kai; ejn tw'/ kravtei th'" ijscuvo" aujtou' (‘and in his mighty power’) is exegetical, explaining what it means to be strengthened in the Lord.

84 It is a genitival construction at 1:19 (the full phrase is kata; th;n ejnevrgeian tou' kravtou" th'" ijscuvo" aujtou', ‘according to the working of *his mighty strength*’) and a prepositional phrase with ejn plus the dative at 6:10. Arnold, 108, following R. A. Wild, ‘The Warrior’, 287, suggests that the author may have been thinking of Is. 40:26 as he penned Eph. 6:10, since the terms kravto" and ijscuvo" are linked in this Old Testament passage, and he is significantly indebted to Isaiah for many of his terms and metaphors, not least with reference to the divine armour (see below).

11. Paul now explains why believers need to be strong in the Lord, and how his mighty power is to be appropriated: they are engaged in a deadly spiritual warfare on the side of God against the devil, and if they are to prevail they must put on God's full armour.

Syntactically,⁸⁵ the imperative, *put on the full armour of God*,⁸⁶ explains how the admonition of v. 10, *Be strong in the Lord*, is to be carried out.⁸⁷ It is only by donning the divine panoply that believers can be properly equipped against the devil's attacks. This exhortation to put on God's armour recalls the earlier instruction about 'putting on the new self', which was *created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness* (4:24). This connection fits the flow of the letter's argument: from 4:25 on in the paraenetic material Paul has elaborated on what is involved in putting off the old humanity. Now, by detailing the armour to be worn, he is developing the idea of putting on the new.⁸⁸ Essentially, then, to 'put on the new self' is the same as donning the armour of God.

The noun *panoplia* ('full armour') referred to 'a complete set of instruments used in defensive or offensive warfare'⁸⁹ which was worn by a heavily armed foot soldier. Although not all the weapons are mentioned in the subsequent verses, the emphasis here is on donning the 'whole armour' in order to be protected fully in this spiritual warfare. Paul is fond of the simpler term *hopla* ('weapons'; Rom. 6:13 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:4). His use of the fuller word *panoplia* ('whole armour') here may be 'explained as a collective for representing the substantial number of arms listed in the context', and as highlighting 'the danger and seriousness of the threat facing the readers and therefore more strongly emphasiz[ing] the importance of total dependence on God's strength'.⁹⁰

The 'armour of God' can be understood as the armour that God supplies,⁹¹ his own armour which he wears, or even the armour that is God himself. The context clearly implies

⁸⁵ Although there is no conjunction linking v. 11 with v. 10, the juxtaposition of the two synonymous verbs, *ejndunamou'sqe* and *ejnduvsasqe*, which mean 'put on', show that the second explicates the first (cf. v. 13). Further, the might of the Lord (v. 10) is parallel with the armour of God (v. 11). So most writers, including Arnold, 109; and T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 118.

⁸⁶ S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 359, helpfully notes that the first exhortation of the paragraph, *Be strong in the Lord* (v. 10), is a present imperative (*ejndunamou'sqe*). Paul then specifies what this entails by a series of aorists: two imperatives, 'put on' (*ejnduvsasqe*) the armour of God (v. 11), and 'take up' (*ajnalavbete*) the armour of God (v. 13), which are followed by four aorist participles: the belt of truth 'fastened' (*perizwsavmenoi*, v. 14), the breastplate of righteousness 'put on' (*ejndusavmenoi*, v. 14), your feet 'fitted' (*uJpodhsavmenoi*) with readiness (v. 15), and 'taking up' (*ajnalabovnte*) the shield of faith', and finally an aorist imperative, 'receive' (*devxasqe*) the helmet of salvation (v. 17).

⁸⁷ The aorist imperative does not of itself suggest urgency, as Hoehner, 575, thinks. See the previous note.

⁸⁸ So Lincoln, 442; cf. Snodgrass, 338.

⁸⁹ Louw & Nida § 6.30, who note that usually the 'emphasis [is] upon defensive armament, including helmet, shield, breastplate'.

⁹⁰ Arnold, 118.

⁹¹ Hoehner, 576, for example, following Gnllka, 305, and others takes the *tou' qeou* ('of God') as a genitive of origin.

the first, namely, that God provides this weaponry for believers. At the same time, in the light of the description of the armour of Yahweh and his Messiah in Isaiah 11:5; 52:7; 57:19, which stands at the centre of Paul's sustained imagery throughout the passage (esp. vv. 14-17), it is important to recognize that the armour given to believers is God's own.⁹² The Isaianic references depict the Lord of hosts as a warrior fighting with his own armour in order to vindicate his people. (See the detailed discussion of the armour in the light of its Old Testament background at vv. 14-17.) Further, some of the weapons believers are to don, namely, truth, righteousness and salvation, suggest that we put on God himself, or at least his characteristics, and this idea is close in meaning to the distinctive exhortation of Ephesians 5:1, 'Be imitators of God'. Accordingly, we can conclude that 'in the end all the armor language is a way to talk about identification with God and his purposes'.⁹³

The goal for which the readers are clothed with the divine armour is so that (*pros*) they 'might be able to stand against the schemes of the devil'. Four times over (vv. 11, 13 [twice] and 14) the apostle uses the language of standing, standing firm or withstanding (various forms of the verb *histe\mi*)⁹⁴ to describe the readers' overall objective in this spiritual warfare.⁹⁵ The first reference to 'standing' involves them resisting or holding their position against the devil's 'insidious wiles' (*methodeia*; see on 4:14) so that they do not surrender to his evil opposition but prevail against it. The term *methodeia* invariably carries a bad sense, and here the plural suggests attacks that are constantly repeated or of incalculable variety. The varied nature of the diabolic attack is brought out again in v. 16, albeit in slightly different language: the 'evil one' launches his 'flaming arrows' against the saints. These differing expressions suggest not only inner temptations to evil but also 'every kind of attack and assault of the "evil one"'.⁹⁶

According to 4:27, Satan tries to gain a foothold and exert his influence over the lives of Christians through uncontrolled anger (v. 26), as well as⁹⁷ falsehood (4:25), stealing (v. 28), unwholesome talk (v. 29), indeed any conduct that is characteristic of the 'old way of life' (v. 22).⁹⁸ Further, the evil one is committed to hindering the progress of the gospel and the fulfilment of the divine plan of summing up all things in Christ (1:10). He will attempt by his 'insidious wiles' to turn believers aside from pursuing the cause of Christ and the achievement of this goal.

⁹² So many recent writers, including T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 118.

⁹³ Snodgrass, 339.

⁹⁴ The NIV renderings are as follows: *sth'nai* ('stand against', v. 11), *ajntisth'nai* ('stand your ground'), *sth'nai* ('stand', v. 13) and *sth'te* ('stand firm', v. 14).

⁹⁵ T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 120: 'The struggle is initially characterized as resistance as strategies and tactics of the devil'.

⁹⁶ Schlier, 297, cited by Arnold, 118.

⁹⁷ Within the flow of the exhortatory context of vv. 25-31 the prohibitions against a range of sins suggest that the devil is able to exploit any of these (not simply anger) to his own advantage. See the exegesis above,

⁹⁸ R. A. Wild, 'The Warrior', 248, makes the point that since chap. 6:10-18 appears as the climax of the paraenesis in Ephesians it is natural to understand it as a reinforcement of the earlier ethical exhortations (cf. S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 247).

Snodgrass' comment is worth quoting in full:

'Mention of the "schemes" of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap'.⁹⁹

The apostle's intention, however, in urging his readers to put on God's armour is that they might prevail against the stratagems and tactics of this enemy. Paul wants to see Christians strong, stable and robust (cf. 4:14-16) so that they remain firm against the devil's wiles. The notion of doing battle with Satan and the powers of darkness 'may seem a frightening prospect', and indeed to take on such formidable foes simply with 'one's own resources would be to court disaster'. Believers would be fatally unprotected and exposed. But this paragraph 'does not foster an attitude of fear. The entire passage is suffused with a spirit of confidence and hope and the reader is left, not with a feeling of despair, but with the sense that Satan can be defeated'.¹⁰⁰

The fundamental reason for this confidence (though not presumption) is that the decisive victory over the powers has already been won by God in Christ (1:19-22; cf. 4:8). Not only has the authority of the powers been broken, but also their final defeat is imminent, and the very existence of the church, comprising Jews and Gentiles reconciled through the death of Christ to God and to one another in the same body, is evidence that the purposes of God are moving triumphantly to their climax (3:10). The powers cannot finally hinder the progress of the gospel and all things will ultimately be subject to Christ. It is because of God's victory in his Son that believers are in the battle at all.¹⁰¹ We are not urged to win the victory; rather, to withstand the devil's insidious wiles and to stand firm, a posture that will involve both defensive and offensive stances (see below). Believers live in the overlap of the ages, between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. Christ is already seated in the heavenly places far above every rule and authority; God has placed all things under his feet (1:21, 22), and we have been raised and made to sit with him (2:5, 6). But Christians need to appropriate what has been won for them, and in the present context this means putting on the armour of God and standing firm in the midst of the battle.

12. Paul explains further why believers need God's mighty armour if they are going to stand firm. It is because (*hoti*) the battle being waged is not against human foes but against evil spiritual powers of great authority (v. 12).¹⁰² The supernatural, powerful and cunning nature of the opposition makes the use of God's armour absolutely necessary.

⁹⁹ Snodgrass, 339.

¹⁰⁰ S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 187; cf. Stott, 266.

¹⁰¹ Lincoln, 442-443.

¹⁰² Rather than function as the central element of vv. 12-20 (as R. A. Wild, 'The Warrior', 286-288, claims), v. 12 informs us of the nature of the enemy (Arnold, 105, 202 n. 8; Lincoln, 431; and Snodgrass, 337), and so explains the exhortation to put on the armour of God in order to stand.

The word used to describe this struggle is *pale*, a term found nowhere else in the Greek Bible, but which was commonly used for the sport of wrestling in the first century.¹⁰³ One might have expected the more regular word *strateia* ('warfare, battle'; 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:18) to appear. But the popularity of wrestling in the games of western Asia Minor may account for the use of *pale* here, and particularly if it was intended to 'heighten the closeness of the struggle with the powers of evil'.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to flesh and blood wrestling with which his readers would have been familiar, the apostle asserts that 'the true struggle of believers is a spiritual power encounter which requires spiritual weaponry'.¹⁰⁵ This athletic term could be transferred to military contexts and stand for any battle or contest,¹⁰⁶ and this seems to be its force here.¹⁰⁷ Further, by speaking of the battle as *our* struggle, Paul identifies with his readers (and, by implication, all Christians) in this spiritual conflict.

In a contrasting statement (*alla*) the apostle declares that this spiritual warfare is not against human opposition (lit. 'blood and flesh'; cf. Heb. 2:14), that is, humanity in its weakness and frailty (Mt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 15:50; Gal. 1:16), but against far more deadly foes that can be resisted only through divine empowering. The apostle's antithesis is not absolute, however, since he does not deny that believers may be tempted or deceived by other human beings, perhaps even by fellow Christians. The readers have already been warned about being misled by deceitful persons who seek to manipulate them through evil trickery (4:14). Furthermore, believers, who need to be careful not to fall into the sins mentioned in 4:25-31, may themselves be the objects of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and the like. From one perspective, then, their spiritual battle is against human adversaries, against 'flesh and blood'. But Paul's cogent point here is that the Christian life as a whole is a profound spiritual warfare of cosmic proportions in which the ultimate opposition to the advance of the gospel and moral integrity springs from evil, supernatural powers under the control of the god of this world (see below).

At v. 11 the 'devil' ('the evil one', v. 16) is the opponent of believers. Here in v. 12, the only place in the Pauline corpus, the enemies against whom Christians must contend in this spiritual warfare are a plurality of powers: *our struggle is . . . against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*.¹⁰⁸ The first two terms, 'rulers and authorities' (*archai kai exousiai*),

¹⁰³ Wrestling was a popular event in the games held in Asia Minor, especially at Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum, as well as in Olympia, Greece. So Arnold, 116, 117, who cites an inscription which honours one 'Alexandros . . . who won the wrestling (pavlh) at the Isthmian games, the common games of Asia at Ephesus . . . and very many other games'; H. Engelmann, D. Knibbe and R. Merkelbach, *Die Inschriften von Ephesos* (Bonn: Rudolph Habelt, 1984), no. 1123 (Arnold's translation). For further references, see Arnold, 117.

¹⁰⁴ C. E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Arnold, 117.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Philo, *De Abr.* 243; 2 Macc. 10:28; 14:18; 15:9.

¹⁰⁷ As Hoehner, 577-578, comments: 'Certainly a wrestler would not need the pieces of armour described in verses 14-17!' For the different, but unlikely, suggestion that the first century referent may be fighting in the arena, see T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 207-212.

¹⁰⁸ The series of four prepositional phrases, without conjunctions, is a powerful rhetorical device that gives considerable prominence to those against whom believers are struggling. The phrases may be laid out as follows:

pro;" ta;" ajrcav",	‘against the principalities,
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have already been mentioned (see on 1:21; 3:10) as those over whom Christ rules, both in this age and that to come. The third designation, ‘the world-rulers of this darkness’, does not appear in the LXX or elsewhere in the New Testament. The term ‘world rulers’ (*kosmokratores*) appears in the second century A.D. in astrological and magical traditions, in relation to the planets and their influence in human affairs, and to gods such as Sarapis and Hermes.¹⁰⁹ Arnold, who interprets the expression against a magical background in Ephesus and suggests that it might have referred to deities such as Artemis, has claimed that to speak of evil spirit powers as ‘world rulers’ is akin to Paul’s notion that pagan gods are closely connected with demonic forces (1 Cor. 10:20).¹¹⁰ The qualifying phrase *of this dark world* indicates that these potentates belong to this present evil age of darkness,¹¹¹ a darkness from which believers have been delivered through Christ (5:8, 11; cf. Col. 1:13). The final description, ‘the spiritual hosts of evil’, points not to a separate category of cosmic powers but is a comprehensive term covering all classes of hostile spirits,¹¹² while the additional phrase *in the heavenly realms* indicates their locality. These potentates are not earthly figures but supernatural beings whose essential character is wickedness. Although they are powerful, and are described as *in the heavenly realms*, this ought not to frighten believers: we have been given every spiritual gift in Christ in the heavenly places (1:3), made alive and seated with him in this domain (2:6), so that our struggle is against *subjected* powers. They may rule the realm of darkness and evil but Christians have been transferred out of this realm (5:8, 16; cf. Col. 1:13).

This fourfold description is not intended to indicate that four (or seven if we include those mentioned in 1:21) categories of demonic spirits exist. The different terms point to the same reality, and any attempts to rank them is pure speculation.¹¹³ The relationship of these

pro;" ta;" ejxousiva",	‘against the authorities,
pro;" tou;" kosmokravtora" tou' skovtou" touvtou,	‘against the world rulers of this darkness,
pro;" ta;" pneumatika; th'" ponhriva" ejn toi'" ejpouranivoi".	‘against the spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenly realms’.

- 109 kosmokravtore" (‘world rulers’) describes the sun and other planets in later Mandaean Gnosticism (cf. *Ginza* 99.15-32; 104. 5, 6, etc.). Note Lincoln, 444. On the use of the term in the magical papyri with reference to deities claiming to possess cosmic power, see Arnold, 65-68. ‘World rulers’ refers to evil spirit powers in the second century A.D.: so in the *Testament of Solomon* 18:2 (cf. 8:2), the demons introduce themselves to Solomon as ‘the world rulers of the darkness of this age’ (the author’s language may have been influenced by Ephesians).
- 110 Arnold, 67, 69; note also Lincoln, 444.
- 111 This statement serves to indicate ‘the terrifying power of their influence and comprehensiveness of their plans, and thus to emphasise the seriousness of the situation’; so W. Michaelis, *TDNT* 3, 914.
- 112 While some have suggested that the adjective pneumatikav should be considered as an alternative to to; pneu'ma (‘the Spirit’) and rendered ‘the things relating to the spirit’, that is, spiritual forces or elements (so NASB, NIV, NRSV), it is probably better to regard it as an alternative to ta; pneuvmata (‘the spirits’), and thus designates spiritual armies or hosts (RV, RSV, JB). This fits the present context and meanings of the other three nouns, ajrcaiv (‘rulers’), ejxousivai (‘authorities’) and kosmokravtore" (‘world-rulers’) which indicate specific spiritual beings (cf. Hoehner, 580).
- 113 S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 250. The different combinations of terms in the various lists of the powers (cf. Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21; 6:12) show that Paul, like other New Testament writers, was not interested in speculating about various angelic orders or rankings. The point of Col. 1:16 is that the invisible forces in this world, no matter whatever their station or rank, are no match for Christ. C. E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 39, observes that even if the four terms used in v. 12 imply a hierarchy within the demonic realm, we have no means of

powers to the devil is not specifically spelled out, but the context closely allies them with him: they belong to ‘this darkness’ and are called ‘spiritual forces of evil’. They are under the power of the evil one and form a united front. In fact, v. 12 may be an expansion of the reference to the ‘devil’s schemes’ in v. 11.¹¹⁴ These spiritual authorities are not represented as acting independently of the devil, but as his agents they share with him common objectives and strategies. Certainly, Paul does not present a different strategy for resisting the powers in contrast to how they would resist the devil.¹¹⁵ The assumption is that they have ‘a common nature, objective, and method of attack, which necessitates the believer to depend on the power of God to resist them’.¹¹⁶

The devil and his minions are able to rule the lives of men and women who belong to his ‘tyranny of darkness’ (Col. 1:13)—they are called ‘children of disobedience’ at Eph. 2:2—and the powers exploit culture and social systems in their attempts to wreck the creative and saving work of God. The first-century readers of the letter, and we ourselves, need to understand the spiritual dimension of this struggle, the supernatural, evil nature of the opposition, and the necessity of putting on divine armour for the battle. If we think that the Christian life is simply a matter of human effort or exertion, then we have misread the nature of the campaign, and will not be able to resist the evil one’s fiery darts.

Our exegesis has led to the conclusion that these powers of evil are personal, demonic intelligences. Considerable scholarly attention, however, which has been devoted to determining the identity of the powers in Pauline and general New Testament teaching, has reached different conclusions. Of particular note since the second world war has been that interpretation of the powers which identifies them with structures of thought (tradition, convention, law, authority and religion) and impersonal social forces that determine human existence.¹¹⁷ Although the case for this recent interpretation (or some variation of it) has been strongly and enthusiastically presented, a notable example of which is W. Wink,¹¹⁸ it fails to do justice to the historical context of the New Testament in which belief in the spiritual realm was widespread, it does not adequately account for explicit statements about

discerning the various ranks. Further, these ‘terms appear to come from a large reservoir of terminology used in the first century when people spoke of demonic spirits’, but the terms as such give us no insight into the demonic realm.

114 S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 247; and Snodgrass, 341.

115 ‘Nothing in the context of Ephesians 6:12 suggests that the methods used by the powers to attack believers are any different from those employed by the devil himself’ (S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 247).

116 Arnold, 119.

117 For surveys of the modern discussion and interactions with the hermeneutical issues involved, together with the relevant bibliographies, see P. T. O’Brien, ‘Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church’, in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, ed. D.A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 110-150; Stott, 267-275; Arnold, 42-51; *Powers of Darkness*, 167-193, *DPL*, 723-725; D. G. Reid, *DPL*, 746-752; and most recently, T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 121-124.

118 In his trilogy *Naming the Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), *Unmasking the Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), and *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

these powers in Paul and other New Testament writers, and is seriously flawed both theologically and hermeneutically.¹¹⁹

To reject the identification of the powers with human traditions and sociopolitical structures, however, is not to deny that these supernatural intelligences work through such agencies; after all, the New Testament speaks of the whole world lying in the power of the evil one. Satan and his hosts exist for the purpose of bringing their evil and destructive influences to bear on the world and humanity at every level.¹²⁰ The evil one works through the events of history: including a visit hindered by Satan (1 Thess. 2:18), the circumstances surrounding Job's life (Jb. 1, 2), the casting of believers into prison (Rev. 2:10), the inherent distresses of life (cf. Rom. 8:38), illness which is occasionally due to their demonic activity (Mt. 9:32; 12:22; Lk. 9:42), while Christian teachers and their instruction are the subject of attack and distortion by the principalities and powers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Heresy is assigned to their activity (1 Tim. 4:1; cf. 1 Jn. 4:1), while according to Colossians 2:20-21 the elemental spirits of the universe made use of the legal demands of the false teacher(s) in order to bring Christians into bondage. Social, political, judicial and economic structures can be used by Satan and his evil authorities to serve their malevolent ends. The last and greatest enemy to which humanity is exposed by Satan and his lieutenants is death. Men and women, 'through fear of death are in lifetime bondage to him who has the power over death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). 'Death is, accordingly, the supreme focus of these enemy forces. They smell of death. They revel in it. They spread it'.¹²¹

The apostles' clarion call, then, in Ephesians 6 to believers is to recognize the nature and dimension of the spiritual conflict in which we are engaged, and to appropriate God's armour if we are to resist vigorously the onslaughts of the evil one (cf. Jas. 4:7). Many contemporary Christians seem to be unaware that there is a war in progress, or if they are they consider it is being fought at a purely human level and therefore earthly resources will be entirely adequate for conducting the campaigns. V. 12 warns us that we are engaged in a deadly warfare against the god of this world and his minions, and that our struggle is *not* against flesh and blood, that is, other people, but against spiritual forces of evil headed up by Satan himself. God's own armour has been forged and furnished by him for our use so that we may obey his injunction to stand firm. Only spiritual weapons are of value in this deadly struggle. Hence, the apostle will repeat his urgent call to put on this divine armour.

13. The warrant for putting on the whole armour of God has been given in vv. 11 ('so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes') and 12 (because our battle is against evil spiritual powers of great authority). This warrant now serves as the basis ('therefore') for repeating the imperative of v. 11 in a different form, *put on the full armour of God* (v. 13).¹²² Once again the purpose is that the readers might be able to *stand*. Here in v. 13, two forms of the verb are repeated for emphasis: 'in order that you may be able to

¹¹⁹ See my arguments in 'Principalities and Powers', 110-150, as well as the other interactions mentioned in n. 000

¹²⁰ For fuller details see S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*.

¹²¹ M. Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 90.

¹²² ejnduvsasqe is used in v. 11, while ajnalavbete appears in v. 13. The expression 'the armour of God' (th;n panoplivan tou' qeou') is identical in both verses.

withstand (*antiste'nai*)¹²³ and . . . to stand (*ste'nai*)'. The admonition to acquire divine strengthening is not an end in itself: God's almighty power is required for a specific purpose, namely, that believers, both individually and together as a unity, might stand against the powers of darkness and successfully resist them. The three exhortations of vv. 10, 11 and 13, which are similar in meaning and stress the need for divine empowering, at the same time remind the readers that the devil can be resisted since God has provided all the necessary resources for the battle.

The time when believers are to withstand the devil and his hosts is 'on the evil day'. This phrase occurs nowhere else in Paul, although the parallel expression, 'the present evil age', is mentioned in Galatians 1:4, and the plural 'because the *days* are evil' has already appeared in Ephesians as the reason for believers making the most of every opportunity in the present (5:16). The exact phrase, 'the evil day', turns up in three prophetic passages of the Old Testament (LXX Je. 17:17, 18; Ob. 13; cf. Dn. 12:1)¹²⁴, and has an apocalyptic ring to it with its end-time connotations. In continuity with Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic thought, the apostle distinguished two ages: 'the present age' which is characterized by evil and dominated by rulers or demonic powers which were doomed to pass away (1 Cor. 2:6, 7); and 'the coming age' which is the time of salvation (note the discussion on Eph. 5:16).

Exegetes have understood the phrase, 'the evil day', as: (1) synonymous with the 'evil days' of Ephesians 5:16 and thus referring to the whole of this present age between the two comings of Jesus (Masson, Lindemann); (2) a single day of special tribulation just prior to the parousia when satanic opposition reaches its climax (Meyer, Dibelius, Schlier); (3) pointing to critical times in believers' lives when demonic hostility is at its worst (Hendricksen, Mitton); (4) a combination of the first and second views which understands the present age as the evil day that will climax in a final outbreak of evil in the future (Gnilka, Barth, Schnackenburg, Lincoln);¹²⁵ or (5) a combination of the first and third views, in which the present age refers to the present 'evil days' (5:16), while the singular evil *day* points to specific times of satanic attack that come with extraordinary force and when the temptation to yield is particularly strong (Bruce, Arnold, Hoehner).¹²⁶ On the final view, which we prefer, the apostle is not only speaking of this present time between the two comings of Jesus, but is also alerting believers to the dangers of the devil's schemes on

123 *ajntisth'nai* (from *ajnqvsthmi*) which has the basic idea to 'stand against, oppose, resist' (BAGD, 67; Louw & Nida § 39.18) was used in military contexts in both classical literature and the LXX (see BDB, 426, 764 for references). It occurs within the New Testament in to speak of opposing an idea or message (Lk. 21:15; Acts 6:10; 2 Tim. 4:15), or a person in confrontation (Acts 13:8; Gal. 2:11; 2 Tim. 3:8). The verb is also used of resisting an evil person (Mt. 5:39), the devil (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9) or God and his will (Rom. 9:19; 13:2).

124 Dn. 12:1 speaks of *hJ hJmevra qlivyew* ('the day of tribulation') before a time of deliverance, and this becomes an important theme in apocalyptic Judaism (cf. *Apoc. Abr.* 29:2, 8ff., 13; 30:4; 2 *Baruch* 48:31; *Jub* 23:16-21; *T. Dan* 5:4ff.; note also 1 QM 15:1-2; 16:3; 18:10, 12). For further details see Arnold, 204.

125 Lincoln, 445-446, argues that the two perspectives of the present and future overlap. The readers are already in the evil days, and yet these necessarily climax in a final, evil day when resistance using the armour of God is particularly necessary. Cf. T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 196-197.

126 The definiteness given to the day by the article (*ejn th' hJmevra/ th' ponhra'*) marks it out in some sense as a critical day, a time of peculiar trial or peril (so Hoehner, 586; cf. G. Harder, *TDNT* 6, 554). Note the discussion of the time of the battle in Arnold, 113-115.

critical occasions in this present evil age. There may appear to be times of reprieve for Christians but they must not be lulled into a false sense of security thinking that the battle is over or that it is not especially difficult. They must always be prepared and put on the full armour of God, for the devil will attack when least expected.

Finally, it is crucial that when believers have done everything they stand firm. The Roman centurion, according to Polybius, was to be the kind of person who could be relied upon, when under pressure, to stand fast and not to give way.¹²⁷ The same determination is necessary in the spiritual warfare. When they have done everything (*katergazomai*), that is, made all the necessary preparations for the battle and are fully armed, Christians are to stand firm against the onslaughts of the evil powers. Some have taken the clause to mean ‘having subdued or overcome all, they are to stand firm’: the victory has been accomplished and believers are now able to stand.¹²⁸ But the verb *katergazomai* in all twenty-one of its occurrences in the New Testament means to ‘achieve, accomplish, do’, and this makes good sense here.¹²⁹ The devil and his angels are strong but not omnipotent. After the Christian is strengthened in the Lord by putting on the full armour of God, then he or she is able to stand fast against the evil powers.

2. Stand firm [and put on God’s armour], 6:14-17

14. When believers have made all the necessary preparations for the battle with the appropriate goal in mind, then (*oun*)¹³⁰ they are to ‘stand firm’. This exhortation, which has been mentioned three times before (vv. 11, 13 twice), is repeated but this time it is expressed as an imperative.¹³¹ It is the chief admonition of the passage, and in the light of the battle imagery used throughout points to the stance of a soldier in combat, one who resolutely opposes the enemy. Clearly for Paul the idea of believers standing firm in their Christian lives is vital. It is not only the central admonition of the paragraph; standing firm or steadfast is also prominent elsewhere in the apostle’s letters.¹³²

¹²⁷ Polybius, *History*, 6.24; cited by Bruce, 406.

¹²⁸ Meyer, 331-332; Mitton, 223; and most recently T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 128-131.

¹²⁹ BAGD, 421; Louw & Nida, § 42.17. Further, the flow of the argument in the paragraph is that of standing before the foe, not of standing victorious. Secondly, vv. 14-17 are introduced by the inferential conjunction ‘therefore’ (*ou\ n*) which explains that believers stand having put on the various pieces of armour. Finally, the imperative ‘stand’ in v. 14 is unusual if the battle has already been won (note Hoehner, 587-588).

¹³⁰ This is the inference (*ou\ n*) to be drawn.

¹³¹ The three previous occurrences of this key verb have been in purpose clauses: v. 11, *pro;* " to; duvnaſqai uJma" sth'nai ('in order that you may be able to stand'); v. 13, i{na dunhqh'te ajntisth'nai . . . kai; . . . sth'nai ('in order that you may be able to withstand . . . and . . . to stand').

¹³² It turns up frequently as an imperative in paraenetic sections of Paul’s letters, where he exhorts his Christian readers to be steadfast (2 Thes. 2:15), ‘in the faith’ (1 Cor. 6:13), ‘in the Lord’ (Phil. 4:1), in the freedom Christ has won (Gal. 5:1) or ‘in one spirit’ (Phil. 1:27). Note also Rom. 5:2; 11:20; 1 Cor. 10:12; 15:1; 16:13; 2 Cor. 1:24; Col. 4:12; and 1 Thes. 3:8.

Following this brief exhortation the panoply of God, which was announced in v. 11 (cf. v. 13), is described in some detail, each piece of armour being identified with some divine virtue or gift. In discussing these individual weapons Paul illustrates his main point about being equipped with God's full armour. He also shows what it means to have made all the necessary preparations for the battle. The four participles which follow the imperative 'stand', namely, '*having fastened* the belt of truth', '*having put* on the breastplate of righteousness' (v. 14), '*having fitted* your feet' (v. 15) and '*having taken up* the shield of faith' (v. 16), spell out the actions believers need to have taken if they are to stand firm.¹³³ Given the context, these participles could also be taken as having an implied imperatival force.

As the first piece of armour, the readers are urged to fasten 'the belt of truth around your waist'. For a Roman soldier this belt probably refers to the leather apron which hung under the armour and protected the thighs, rather than the sword belt or the protective girdle worn over the armour.¹³⁴ The idea of fastening clothing securely around one's waist signifies preparation for vigorous activity (Lk. 12:35, 37; 17:8), in this case, readiness for battle.¹³⁵ The apostle's language clearly alludes to the LXX of Isaiah 11:5 which declares of the Messiah: 'With righteousness shall he be girded around his waist (*osphys*) and with truth (*ale\theia*) bound around his sides' (vv. 4, 5). Within its Old Testament context the rule of God's Anointed One in the divine kingdom will be characterized by righteousness and truth. The armour which the Messiah wears in battle (cf. Is. 11:4) is now provided for his people as they engage in spiritual warfare. 'Truth', which occupies a prominent place in Ephesians, refers to the truth of God (4:24; 5:9) revealed in the gospel (1:13; 4:15, 21, 24), and which has its outworking in the lives of believers who are members of the new humanity (4:25; 5:9).¹³⁶ Here in Ephesians 6 both aspects of truth belong together.¹³⁷ As believers buckle on this piece of the Messiah's armour, they will be strengthened by God's truth revealed in the gospel and they will display the characteristics of the Anointed One in their attitudes, language and behaviour. In this way they resist the devil giving him no opportunity of gaining an advantage over them (4:27).

Next, Christians need to have put on 'the breastplate of righteousness' if they are to stand firm against the forces of darkness. For the Roman soldier, the breastplate (*thorax*) was 'a piece of armor covering the chest to protect it against blows and arrows'.¹³⁸ Paul's

¹³³ Cf. Lincoln, 431, 447. D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 629, categorizes the participle *perizwsavmenoi* ('having fastened'), and by implication the following three, as participles of means. This participle is often used with 'vague, general, abstract, or metaphorical finite verbs', and indicates how the action of a main verb is accomplished. Cf. Mt. 27:4. The verb comes first and is general in its lexical range.

¹³⁴ A. Oepke, *TDNT* 5, 303, 307.

¹³⁵ So Louw & Nida, § 77.5. The 'loins' can be a metaphor for strength and 'girding oneself' is used in the Old Testament as a symbol of displaying power and courage: Yahweh girds himself with might (Ps. 65:6) and binds up the psalmist with strength for battle (Ps. 18:32, 39).

¹³⁶ T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 134, suggests that the presence of this prominent motif 'truth' in 6:14 functions 'as a recapitulation of a note sounded repeatedly in Ephesians'.

¹³⁷ T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 202, however, thinks that it is the objective 'truth' of the gospel that is in view here.

¹³⁸ Louw & Nida, § 6.39.

language here is drawn from Isaiah 59:17 (cf. Wis. 5:18; at Is. 11:5, righteousness is the Messiah's girdle) where Yahweh puts on 'the breastplate of righteousness' as he comes to deliver his people and to punish the nation's enemies. According to Ephesians 6 believers need to be armed with his own righteousness if they are to be protected against the blows and arrows of their spiritual enemies. Some exegetes understand this righteousness to refer to God's justifying, forensic righteousness which results in a right standing before him (cf. Rom. 3:21-16);¹³⁹ on this view, God's sovereign verdict of acquittal through Christ's death provides the basis for believers standing firm in their spiritual struggle. Many recent commentators, however, in the light of earlier instances of 'righteousness' in Ephesians (4:24; 5:9), regard it as ethical righteousness.¹⁴⁰ If the expression is to be understood in the light of its Old Testament context where righteousness is parallel to salvation,¹⁴¹ then to speak of donning God's own righteousness or appropriating his salvation is in effect to urge the readers once more to put on the 'new man' of 4:24, who is created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.¹⁴² By putting on God's righteousness believers are committed to being imitators of him (5:1) and acting righteously in all their dealings.

15. The Christian also needs to be outfitted with proper footwear in order to be ready for battle. The Roman soldier frequently wore *caliga*, a half-boot, which was not strictly a weapon but part of his equipment that was used especially in long marches.¹⁴³ Paul does not refer directly to believers' footwear here; instead, he employs an unusual expression that speaks of 'having [their] feet fitted'¹⁴⁴ with the readiness of the gospel of peace'.

The language has obviously been borrowed from Isaiah 52:7, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace'—words which, in a shortened form, are applied by the apostle to those sent to preach the Christian gospel (Rom. 10:15). In its original context of Isaiah 52 the picture is painted of a lone messenger, whose beautiful feet are drumming across the mountain tops with all the swiftness of a gazelle (Song 2:17; 8:14), bringing good news to Jerusalem. As he comes within earshot of the city he shouts 'peace', 'good tidings', 'salvation', 'Your God reigns' (essentially the same message of consolation as Is. 40:9-11).

¹³⁹ So Barth, 796-797; A. Oepke, *TDNT* 5, 310; and, most recently, T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 203, who stresses the primacy of 'righteousness' as a gift, though he does acknowledge that there is an ethical dimension as well.

¹⁴⁰ So, for example, Calvin, Meyer, Schnackenburg, Bruce, Lincoln, and Snodgrass. Cf. 1 Thes. 5:8 where the grace of faith and love are the Christian's breastplate.

¹⁴¹ Note the discussion of v. 17 within its Isaianic context: B. G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On eagles' wings* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 229. He understands righteousness to signify God's faithfulness to his covenant promises as shown in his saving acts.

¹⁴² This is, in effect, to put on Christ (Rom. 13:14); see on Eph. 4:24.

¹⁴³ A typical soldier might journey for miles as his army advanced to the battlefield (Xerxes led his armies all the way from Persia in an attempt to conquer Greece! Xenophon, *Anab.* 4.5.14).

¹⁴⁴ *uJpodevomai* has to do with putting on and wearing footwear, such as shoes, boots, or sandals, and comes to mean 'to put on, to tie on, to wear (footwear)'; so Louw & Nida § 49.17. The verb is akin to *uJpodhvmata* ('sandals, shoes') which could be used of military sandals.

Here in Ephesians 6:15 the wording of Isaiah has been adapted to fit the syntactical pattern of the sentence:¹⁴⁵ the readers have been exhorted to ‘stand firm’ (v. 14) and, if they are to be equipped properly with God’s armour, one of the actions they need to have taken (note the other three in vv. 14, 16) is to have their feet fitted with ‘readiness’ (*hetoimasia*). However, the meaning of this metaphorical expression and its significance within the flow of vv. 10-20 are disputed. The following issues need to be addressed:

(1) The *meaning* of the word *hetoimasia*. This term, rendered ‘readiness’ in the NIV, appears nowhere else in the New Testament (although the cognate verb turns up often enough),¹⁴⁶ and it is not used in Isaiah 52:7. It does occur, however, a dozen times in the LXX where it often has connotations of a prepared or solid foundation.¹⁴⁷ Accordingly, some understand it here to signify a ‘firm footing’ or ‘steadfastness’, and connect it with the overall exhortation to ‘stand’.¹⁴⁸ But elsewhere the term does not mean ‘firm footing’, and readiness, preparedness or preparation which is the more usual sense, fits this context.¹⁴⁹ The language is used metaphorically to signify that those who are properly equipped with God’s armour have their feet fitted prepared and ready in their spiritual warfare.

(2) The *function* of the *genitival expression*, ‘of the gospel’. Is the readiness of which the apostle speaks that which is bestowed by the gospel (a genitive of origin or, perhaps, a subjective genitive), or is it a willingness to share and announce the message of peace (an objective genitive) that is in view? Scholars are divided on the question.

(a) In favour of the former, it is claimed that Paul is referring to the readiness or preparation that comes from God’s powerful message of peace (*tou euangeliou* is understood as a genitive of origin), a readiness that enables Christians to heed the repeated injunction to ‘stand firm’. This is usually taken to mean adopting a defensive posture, of holding fast to the position that has already been won, of remaining steadfast against the powers of darkness and resisting temptation.¹⁵⁰ However, this still begs the question as to whether Paul’s language implies that believers are to adopt *only* a defensive stance. Certainly they are to appropriate and preserve the gospel of peace, to withstand each and every temptation in the ethical sphere, and to resist the diverse influences of the evil one. But standing firm can also

¹⁴⁵ In vv. 14-16, the imperative sth'te ('stand') is followed by four aorist participles + a weapon/part of the body + a virtue/gift. In v. 15 this structure is maintained with uJpodhsavmenoi ('having put on') + tou;" povda" ('the feet') + ejn eJtoimasiva/ ('with the readiness, preparation'), although the pattern is expanded by reference to tou' eujaggelivou th" eijrhvnh" ('the gospel of peace'), which is in a genitival relationship to (eJtoimasiva) 'the readiness' and ultimately derives from Isaiah (cf. T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 193).

¹⁴⁶ It appears forty times in the New Testament, but only three of these are in the Pauline corpus: 1 Cor. 2:9; 2 Tim. 2:21; and Phm. 22.

¹⁴⁷ It is used for a stand or base: Ezr. 2:68; 3:3; Zc. 5:11; cf. Robinson, 215.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 203, who takes it as meaning 'firmness'.

¹⁴⁹ LXX Ps. 9:17; Wis. 13:12; *Ep. Arist.* 182; Josephus, Ant. 10.1.2 etc.; Lincoln, 449.

¹⁵⁰ The imagery of footwear, it is claimed, is appropriate to this meaning. The only offensive weapon referred to in the paragraph is 'the sword of the Spirit' (v. 17). But C. E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 157, contends that being furnished with good footwear enabled a soldier to take an offensive position in battle. He might journey for miles as his army advanced to the battlefield and then pursued the enemy.

involve carrying the attack into enemy territory, of plundering Satan's kingdom by announcing the promise of divine rescue to captives in the realm of darkness.¹⁵¹ Consistent with his use of military imagery elsewhere, Paul speaks of the weapons he uses in his warfare as being divinely powerful to demolish strongholds, to overthrow arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:4). This undoubtedly involves carrying the attack into enemy territory, which is clearly to adopt an offensive stance. [Develop the point about the gospel being powerful, even explosive (cf. Phil. 2:16), so that to speak purely in defensive terms is probably reductionist.]

(b) The alternative is to interpret '[the readiness] *of the gospel*' as an objective genitive, and as signifying a willingness to share or announce the gospel of peace. The reasons for adopting this line are as follows: first, the noun *hetoimasia* 'signifies a state of being ready for action—"readiness to, being ready to"', and the phrase is rendered: 'in readiness (to proclaim) the good news of peace'.¹⁵² On this view, *euangelion* is a noun of agency signifying 'to proclaim, or share the gospel [of peace]', a force which it has in more than half of its sixty other occurrences in Paul. Secondly, the context of Isaiah 52:7 favours this interpretation: the messenger whose beautiful feet glide over the mountain tops is ready¹⁵³ to announce good tidings to Zion.¹⁵⁴ Thirdly, the echoes of this Old Testament text earlier in Ephesians, namely at 2:17, draw attention to Christ, the herald of good tidings, who on the basis of his peace-making work on the cross, comes and announces peace to Jews and Gentiles alike. The focus is upon the proclamation of the gospel of peace to those for whom this reconciliation has been won. Finally, the parallel passage (Col. 4:6) stresses the note of the gracious speech of believers to outsiders.

(c) If the words 'of the gospel' are taken as a genitive of origin, then Paul's expression points to a readiness that derives from the good news of peace which has been appropriated by believers. Because this mighty announcement of reconciliation has become powerful in their lives, they will not only resist the evil influences of the powers and withstand temptation, but also carry the attack into enemy territory by sharing and proclaiming this good news with others. If the alternative interpretation is followed, then 'the readiness of the gospel' focusses on the sharing of the gospel of peace by those who have already appropriated it. [The net difference between the two interpretations of the genitive, 'of the gospel', may not be all that great, especially if the dynamic dimension to the gospel is recognized.]

Because all engaged in the spiritual warfare are urged to have their feet fitted with this preparation of the gospel, then what is predicated of the royal messenger in Isaiah 52:7, and the Messiah himself in Ephesians 2:17, is now stated with reference to all believers.

151 Note C. E. Arnold's strong advocacy of the view that Christians are to adopt an offensive position, as well as a defensive one (*Powers of Darkness*, 156-158).

152 Louw & Nida § 77.1; cf. Robinson, 215; Bruce, 408; W. Radl, *EDNT* 2, 68, thinks that the phrase signifies 'readiness [to battle] for the gospel'; Morris, 206, 'The whole expression points to being fully prepared to preach the gospel'; and Arnold, 111; also his *Powers of Darkness*, 157.

153 Even though the term *eJtoimasiva* ('readiness') does not appear in the text of Isaiah 52:7, the notion of the messenger's preparedness to announce the good tidings to Zion is obvious. As he comes within earshot of the city he shouts: *peace, good tidings, salvation* and *Your God reigns*.

154 Cf. Robinson, 215; who is followed by Bruce, 408; note also Stott, 280.

(3) The *significance* of ‘the gospel of peace’. The apostle’s description of the footwear with which Christians are to be fitted as ‘the gospel of peace’ is highly expressive, given the Old Testament context of Isaiah 52 and the earlier mention of ‘peace’ in the foundational passage of Ephesians 2:11-22. As the messenger of Isaiah who brings consolation to Jerusalem (cf. Is. 40:9-11) comes within earshot of the city, the first word that he cries out is ‘Peace!’ (52:7).¹⁵⁵ This is followed by the synonymous ‘good tidings’ and ‘salvation’, the content of which is then amplified by: ‘Your God reigns’. Yahweh’s glorious return to Zion (v. 9) which is the ground of his people’s bursting into songs of joy is explained in terms of his acting mightily on behalf of his people (he has ‘comforted his people’, and ‘redeemed Jerusalem’, v. 9), and this, in the light of Isaiah 49:3, leads to blessing for the world (he has bared his arm ‘in the sight of all the nations’, so that ‘all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God’, v. 10).¹⁵⁶ The peace which Yahweh’s messenger brings is finally both vertical and horizontal. This is precisely the focus of Ephesians 2:14-18, where God’s Messiah by his death makes peace: he destroys the alienation between Jew and Gentile, creates in himself one new humanity out of the two, and in this body reconciles them both to God (vv. 15-16). [Write in fully in chap. 2:14-18, and perhaps reduce here. Did Paul know the flow of the Isaianic passage? I think so; develop the point.]

We have already observed that the armour being worn by believers is that of Yahweh or his Messiah. Most of the weapons listed in Ephesians 6 have their counterpart in Yahweh’s armour of Isaiah 59:17 and that of his Messiah in 11:4, 5. An exception to this is the footwear mentioned in Ephesians 6:15. But having one’s feet ‘fitted with the preparation of the gospel of peace’ is more closely linked with the Messiah than has often been thought, especially if the connections between Isaiah 52:7, Ephesians 2:14-18 and 6:15 are clearly recognized. Yahweh’s messenger announces the good news of peace to his people, Jerusalem. According to Ephesians 2:17 which takes up the language of this Old Testament passage, Christ who is the embodiment of peace (v. 14), has made peace through his death and proclaimed it far and wide, to Jew and Gentile alike. Those who have appropriated that peace for themselves [are all ready, gospel proclaimers dance over the mountain tops, like the bearer of good tidings of old, to announce the gospel of peace.] have their feet fitted with this ‘readiness’, a preparedness to announce the gospel of peace. Paradoxically, they are prepared to announce the gospel of peace as they engage in a spiritual warfare!¹⁵⁷

= stand firm in the gospel?

¹⁵⁵ The LXX has *povdeß eujaggelizomevnou ajkoh;n ejrhvnhß* (‘the feet of the one who announces a message of peace’).

¹⁵⁶ Although it is possible, with C. Westermann, to interpret Yahweh’s mighty action as done for Israel (v. 9) in the sight of all the nations (v. 10), it seems preferable to interpret the latter as signifying that the nations will ‘see’ in the sense of participate in Yahweh’s salvation; so J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1993), 420.

¹⁵⁷ Snodgrass, 342, thinks that the ‘readiness’ in view pertains to all of life, not simply to a willingness to share the gospel.

16. In addition to¹⁵⁸ the pieces of armour that believers need to wear,¹⁵⁹ they are to take up the 'shield of faith', for by it¹⁶⁰ they will be fully protected against every kind of assault rained upon them by the evil one. The shield referred to is not the small round one (Gk. *aspis*) which left most of the body unprotected, but the large shield (Gk. *thyreos*)¹⁶¹ carried by Roman soldiers and which covered the whole person. In the Old Testament the shield was used as an image of God's protection of his people (Ge. 15:1; Pss. 5:12; 18:2, 30, 35; 28:7, etc.).¹⁶² He is 'a shield to those who take refuge in him' (Pr. 30:5). Here the shield which believers are to take up is 'the shield of faith'; the genitive is best understood as one of apposition,¹⁶³ meaning that faith itself is the shield. 'Faith' has appeared at key points throughout Ephesians (1:13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13; 6:23), particularly as the means of acquiring divine strength (3:16-17; 1:19). Although it is possible to interpret faith here as God's or Christ's faith[fulness], in the light of the earlier uses it is preferable to understand it of believers laying hold of God's resources, especially his power, in the midst of the evil one's attacks.¹⁶⁴ To take the shield of faith, then, is to appropriate the promises of God on our behalf confident that he will protect us in the midst of the battle. According to 1 Peter 5:8, 9, firm faith, described as 'a flint-like resolution', is called for in resisting the devil.¹⁶⁵

By responding in this way believers 'will be able¹⁶⁶ to extinguish all the burning arrows of the evil one'. The large shield used by Roman soldiers was specially designed to quench dangerous missiles, particularly arrows that were dipped in pitch and lit before being fired. These flaming missiles often inflicted deadly wounds, or caused havoc among soldiers

158 The fourth clause with an aorist participle (*ajnalabovnte*), 'having taken up') is introduced by *ejn pa'sin* which could mean 'in all circumstances' but is best taken as 'besides all these' (cf. NIV). It does not signify 'above all' (AV), as if it were the most important of all weapons.

159 The three participles *perizwsavmenoi* ('fastened', v. 14), *ejndusavmenoi* ('put on', v. 14) and *uJpodhsavmenoi* ('fitted', v. 15) all refer to items of armour fastened to the body or feet of believers. Now they are to have 'taken up' (*ajnalabovnte*) the shield of faith (cf. Hoehner, 597). The fourth clause with an aorist participle is introduced by 'besides all these'.

160 An additional relative clause *ejn w/ dunhvsesqe ktl.* ('by which you are able . . .') explains that this shield enables believers to extinguish the burning arrows of the evil one.

161 This is the *scutum* which measured four feet by two and a half feet and was shaped like a door (cf. *quvra*). It was usually made of wood and covered with canvas and calf skin; it was reinforced with metal at the top and bottom (note Polybius' description, 6. 23. 2-6).

162 In Psalm 35:2 (LXX 34:2) God is called upon as divine warrior to take up weapon and shield (*qureov*) to intervene on behalf of his afflicted one; cf. T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 140.

163 So, most recently Best, 601, and Hoehner, 597.

164 So most recent commentators. T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery*, 204, however, thinks the reference is to both Christ's faithfulness and the human response of faith.

165 Bruce, 408, citing Selwyn. Cf 1 QH 2.25-26, 29.

166 The future *dunhvsesqe* ('you will be able') is a logical future, indicating the result of taking up the shield, and is not indicate that the conflict itself lies in the future (against T. Y. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 110).

unless the shields had been soaked with water and were able to quench them.¹⁶⁷ Here the burning arrows¹⁶⁸ depict, in highly metaphorical language, every kind of attack launched by the devil and his hosts against the people of God. They are as wide-ranging as the ‘insidious wiles’ (v. 11) that promote them, and include not only every kind of temptation to ungodly behaviour (cf. 4:26, 27), as well as doubt and despair, but also external assaults, such as persecution or false teaching.¹⁶⁹ Paul’s expression conveys the sense of extreme danger. The forces of ‘the evil one’¹⁷⁰ are incredibly powerful, and left to our own devices we would certainly fail. But these flaming arrows cannot harm those whose trust and confidence are ‘in the Lord and in his mighty power’ (v. 10). They are able to resist and overcome these satanic attacks.

17. T

¹⁶⁷ Note Livy’s graphic account of how these arrows caused panic and tempted soldiers to throw down their burning shields, thus making them vulnerable to the spears of their enemies (*Hist.* 21.8).

¹⁶⁸ *bevloß*, which appears only here in the New Testament, signifies ‘a missile, including arrows (propelled by a bow) or darts (hurled by hand)’; so Louw & Nida § 6.36.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 188. Meyer, 337-338, rightly notes that the expression ‘flaming arrows’ ‘present[s] in strong colours the *hostile and destructive* character of the Satanic assaults’ (original emphasis).

¹⁷⁰ The genitive *tou' ponhrou* (‘of the evil one’) may be possessive (‘the evil one’s flaming arrows’) or a genitive of source (‘the flaming arrows from the evil one’). This title for the devil (cf. v. 11) appears nowhere else in the Pauline corpus (though cf. 2 Thes. 3:3), but it does occur in Mt. 13:19; Jn. 17:15; 1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 5:18, 19.

[But what precisely is involved in heeding this exhortation to stand firm? In resisting the powers are believers to take simply a defensive stance, as many suppose, or will it involve them in both defensive and offensive postures? For example, are believers being urged to take more 'offensive' action such as proclaiming the gospel to humanity held in bondage by the devil (cf. 2:1-3)? In order to answer these questions, three factors need to be taken into account: first, the insights that can be gained from the list of weapons believers are to put on. Are these all defensive pieces of armour, or a mixture of defensive and offensive weapons? Secondly, the immediate context and flow of the argument within 6:10-20. And, thirdly, the fact that the paraenesis of chapters 4-6 is drawn to a conclusion in this paragraph and the earlier exhortations are reinforced.]

[Within the wider context, Ephesians 4 suggests that the spiritual warfare takes place within the moral sphere, that is, within the hearts and lives of believers. The devil is able to exploit to his own advantage uncontrolled anger (vv. 26, 27), as well as other vices in the passage, lying, stealing, bitterness, malice and unwholesome talk (vv. 25-31). In fact, any temptation to behave in a manner characteristic of the 'old person' (v. 22) is the occasion of a spiritual battle. Believers are to withstand each and every temptation in the ethical sphere so that the influence of the evil one may be resisted. The ethical objective is to 'develop a pattern of life which is appropriate to one who has become a child of God (5:2)'. Arnold, 120.]

Arnold, 109. The delineation of the armor is given by the author as an elaboration of the divine strength upon which the readers are to depend. We gain a deeper appreciation of the author's conception of the nature of the divine strength by considering his explication of the armor of God.

6:10

Meyer [1880], 288.

Robinson, 122.

Barth [1974], 583.

Caird [1976], 78.

Mitton [1976], 188.

Caragounis [1977], 76.

Stott, 252.

Br. & N. [1982], 133.

Bruce [1984], 400.

Patzia [1984], 246.

Arnold [1989], 103.

The call to acquire divine strengthening for the purpose of engaging the spirit-forces of evil is not an irrelevant appendix to the epistle. It is a crucial part of the paraenesis to which the rest of the epistle has been pointing. The ‘struggle’ is not merely mentioned as a parenthetical aside. It is taken up by the author and elaborated on in ten verses integrally connected with the foregoing paraenesis of the epistle (4:1–6:9).

(105) [the passage] is the conclusion to the paraenesis of 4:1–6:20.

Schnackenburg [1991], 26.

C. E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*,

A. T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993),

E. Best [1993], 55.

Turner [1994], 1242.

Fee [1994], 723.

Given the nature of ancient rhetoric, in coming to this final section of the letter we also most likely are coming to Paul’s primary concern for his recipients. That is, Paul’s placing this material in the emphatic final position suggests that he has been intentionally building the letter toward this climax right along. The ‘powers’ have been an opening concern from the opening words of the *berakah* in 1:3, where the blessings associated with the Spirit belong to God’s people ‘in the heavenlies’, in the habitation of the ‘powers’. The

reasons for his recipients' being able to experience such blessings 'in the heavenlies' are then spelled out in a variety of ways throughout.

(724) But having assured them of the reality of Christ's victory over the powers, of their being seated together with him in that triumph, and of their inclusion as Gentiles along with the Jews in the new, reconciled people of God as evidence to the powers of Christ's triumph, Paul concludes the letter on this note of realism. As with their redemption in Christ, which, evidenced by the Spirit's presence, is 'already' but 'not yet', so too with Christ's triumph over the powers. It is 'already', so they no longer live in fear of them; but it is also 'not yet', so they themselves must both be aware that the conflict goes on and be equipped by Christ and the Spirit to stand against them.

Morris [1994], 104.

BDF.

BAGD, 202.

Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 357.

Idioms, 38.

K. L. McKay, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek. An Aspectual Approach* (New York: Lang, 1994), 148.

S. H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil. A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker/Leicester: Apollos, 1995).

(187) Ephesians 6:10-20 consists of a powerful call to believers to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to their calling. It assumes that living as a Christian will inevitably involve conflict and that the ultimate enemy to contend with is the devil himself. To face such a formidable foe with only one's own resources would be to court disaster, but the believer fortunately has access to armor that is more than sufficient to guarantee victory. Even though the idea of doing battle with Satan and his hordes may seem a frightening prospect, Ephesians 6:10-20 does not foster an attitude of fear. The entire passage is suffused with a spirit of confidence and hope and the reader is left, not with a feeling of despair, but with the sense that Satan can be defeated. Victory cannot be won without effort, but it can be won. Paul uses the military imagery of Isaiah 59:17 to suggest that believers can equip themselves with the armor of the Divine Warrior in order to do battle with Satan. They are assured that, if properly attired, they will be able to hold their existing positions on the battlefield or perhaps even take new ground.

(247). Paul does not specify how the powers attack believers, but there is good reason to think that he conceived of the attack as being primarily in the religio-ethical sphere. Paul does not distinguish between the strategies of the powers and those of the devil, and temptation to sin is certainly one of the ways the devil attacks believers (cf. Eph. 4:26-27). Furthermore, Ephesians 6:10-18 appears as the climax of a lengthy section of exhortations, and it is natural to see it as a reinforcement of these exhortations (following R. A. Wild, 248).

(248) In Ephesians 6:10-18 P. places moral issues in a cosmic perspective. They are not minor matters of personal preference but vital components of a much larger struggle between the forces of good and evil.

That believers are to struggle against the powers is found in the New Testament only in Ephesians 6. Elsewhere, Christians are urged to resist the devil, but nowhere else are they told to resist the powers. Yet there is a pronounced emphasis upon the struggle in Ephesians 6, as the readers are told repeatedly to stand their ground (see vv. 13-14 esp.). [Arnold, 142, suggests that Paul may have stressed the idea of spiritual warfare in Eph. because his readers believed that they were the objects of intense demonic hostility.] Paul obviously did not believe that the involvement of supernatural forces in moral struggles lessened one's responsibility for decisions and actions.

Together with the focus on struggle in Ephesians 6:10-18 is a pervasive sense of confidence. Although the enemy is portrayed as powerful and devious, the passage does not evoke a response of fear or defeatism. Clearly, the cal to stand firm is not to be understood as an idle wish; it expresses the expectation that victory is attainable, that believers can prevail over the powers which assail them.

T. Moritz, *A Profound Mystery. The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

K. Snodgrass, *Ephesians. The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

R. P. Martin, *DPL*, 419-423.

D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*,