
The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif*

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Extensive study has been done and continues to be done by scholars on the subject of Holy War as a literary theme, institution, and ideology in the OT. Articles and books on Holy War are so numerous that it is hard to remember that the earliest work on Yahweh's role in Israel's warfare dates back only to 1901 and the work of F. Schwally. Much later, G. von Rad brought the biblical theme of Holy War to prominence, and his work in this area continues to have a tremendous influence on present research as well. Today, the study of Holy War in the OT is most closely connected with the work of F. M. Cross and his students, particularly P. D. Miller, Jr. Conservative scholars have also written

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on the theme—usually focusing their attention on the problematic question of the relationship of OT Holy War to Christian ethics.

While the function of Holy War as a literary theme, institution, and ideology has been recognized in OT studies, its extensive use in the NT has not been elucidated; at best it has been only implicitly recognized. This paper demonstrates that the NT utilizes Holy War themes, particularly that of the Divine Warrior, in many places and for many purposes.

The intention of this paper is not to be exhaustive in its survey of the NT use of the Divine Warrior theme. The passages which will be examined have been divided into two categories: eschatological (using this word in a strictly futuristic sense) and noneschatological. Texts belonging to the first category will be discussed under four subheadings, each of the four representing a particular way in which the NT writers utilized the OT Divine Warrior theme: (1) The Day of Yahweh; (2) Jesus Christ as Cloud Rider; (3) Christ the Divine Warrior in Revelation; (4) New Song. Similarly, the non-eschatological texts will be dealt with as they relate to two matters of discussion: (1) Holy War as a conceptual background to Christ's death and resurrection and (2) the Divine Warrior and the Christian struggle.

However, before proceeding to these subjects, it may be helpful to define briefly the essence of Holy War in the OT with particular attention given to the role of the Divine Warrior.

[Deuteronomy 7](#) and [20](#) provide legislation concerning the waging of war by Yahweh's people. These passages and the historical narratives which recount Israel's battles reveal certain information concerning Israel's ideology of Holy War. For example, one

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learns of specific cultic practices which were performed by the army before and after the battle. The warleader normally inquired of Yahweh's will before engaging in combat ([1 Sam 23:1–6](#)); the army was sanctified before battle ([Deut 23:13–15](#)): and praise was offered to Yahweh after combat ([Judges 5](#)).

Nevertheless, the key element of Holy War is that Yahweh the Divine Warrior led Israel into the battle and won the victory for them. That this is the most important facet of Holy War is recognized by Rudolf Smend and others who suggest replacing the name "Holy War" with the term "Yahweh War." The historical narratives confirm this interpretation of the essence of Holy War by emphasizing again and again that the victory is Yahweh's not man's. [Exodus 15](#) extols Yahweh's victory over the Egyptians; the method of the destruction of Jericho, described in [Joshua 6](#), emphasizes that Yahweh accomplished the victory; and Gideon's purposeful reduction of troops demonstrated that it was the power of God and not that of man which defeated the Midianites.

Recognizing that the notion that the activity of Yahweh the Divine Warrior is central to much of the OT, some passages may now be examined which will demonstrate that the same notion is evident in the NT.

I. Eschatological Passages

1. Day of the Lord

The significance of the phrase "Day of Yahweh" ([Isa 13:6, 9](#); [22:5](#); [Joel 1:15](#); [2:1, 11](#); [Amos 5:8–20](#); [Zeph 1:7–8](#);

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[Zech 14:1](#), etc.) is a debated subject. S. Mowinckel has argued that the phrase and the concept behind it belong to the ritual of the New Year's Festival. Increasingly, however, scholars are recognizing that Mowinckel's New Year festival of enthronement is based on a faulty analogy with Babylonian texts. The OT does not support such a construction. Early on, G. von Rad argued that the concept of the "Day of Yahweh encompasses a pure event of war." Specifically, he persuasively links the Day of the Lord with early Israelite Holy War tradition. Furthermore, his conclusion holds, even if one does not accept his method of starting the investigation with [Isaiah 13, 24](#), [Ezekiel 7](#), and [Joel 2](#) or agree with the manner in which he restricts his study to phrases which use only the words Day of the Lord. F. M. Cross, while in some respects mediating between S. Mowinckel and G. von Rad, arrives at the same conclusion—that the Day of Yahweh is grounded in Holy War tradition. In any case, as D. Stuart points out in his study of the extrabiblical background of the phrase, there is a clear connection between the *Yom Yahweh* and military language.

In the NT we again run into Day imagery, and it is connected with the consummation and with military terminology just as in its OT precursor. For example, Paul ([1 Thess 5:1–10](#)) writes of the "sudden destruction" (v [3](#)) which will come upon the

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unbeliever on the day of the Lord. Furthermore, the believer is admonished to gird himself in spiritual armor (v 8) in anticipation of that day (see below on the armor of God). Second, Peter ([2 Pet 3:10](#)) speaks of the “Day” in imagery highly reminiscent of Divine Warrior epiphanies, especially those found in OT (proto-) apocalyptic books (cf. [Isa 24:1–13](#); [Zeph 1:18](#)). In addition, in many NT passages the “Day of Yahweh” the Divine Warrior is transformed into the “Day of Christ” the Divine Warrior ([1 Cor 1:8](#); [5:5](#); [2 Cor 1:14](#); [Phil 1:6](#), [10](#); [2:16](#)).

2. Jesus Christ—Cloud Rider

In the OT, the Divine Warrior frequently appears on his cloud war chariot. More specifically, Yahweh is described as riding a storm cloud into battle against his enemies ([Ps 18:9–15](#)):

He spread out the heavens and came down;
dark clouds were under his feet.

He mounted the cherubim and flew;
he soared on the wings of the wind.

He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—
the dark rain clouds of the sky.

Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.

The Lord thundered from heaven;
Elyon gave forth his voice.

He shot his arrows and dispersed them,
great bolts of lightning and confused them.

The channels of the sea were exposed
and the foundations of the earth laid bare

at your rebuke, O Lord,
at the blast of breath from your nostrils.

The psalmist here calls to his Lord for aid, and the Lord responds by doing battle against his enemies and by saving him. Salvation and judgment are the two halves of the same great warring activity of Yahweh.

A second example of Yahweh as the cloud rider comes in [Ps 104:1–4](#), a section replete with Canaanite imagery. In this

connection, it is appropriate to mention the well-known Canaanite background to Yahweh as cloud rider. After all, one of Baal’s main epithets is “rider on the clouds” (rkb 'rpt).

Perhaps not all the references which associate Yahweh with clouds in the OT are to be interpreted as pictures of his war chariot and thus with his divine warring activity, but certainly such references are numerous ([Isa 19:1](#); [Nah 1:2ff](#); [Ps 68:4, 33](#); [Deut 33:26](#); [Jer 4:13ff](#), etc.). However, for the purpose of this paper, which is to connect the OT picture of the cloud chariot with the NT references to Christ's descent on the cloud, I will mention only one more passage, [Dan 7:13](#): "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with (îim) the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence."

In [Dan 7:13](#) we encounter the picture of the "one like a son of man" riding the storm chariot into the presence of the Ancient of Days. Many scholars, however, have attached great significance to the fact that the Hebrew text uses the preposition îim here and that Theodotion translates meta. Montgomery, for instance, pictures the one like the Son of Man as "wafted in the upper atmosphere with the nimbus of a cloud." Further, he and more recently Hartman and di Lella insist on the theological significance of the use of îim rather than îal here. All of them believe that only Yahweh can be a cloud rider, and not believing that there is any messianic significance to [Dan 7:13](#), they feel that the use of *im* denies divinity to the son of man figure.

Actually, the case is not as certain as these scholars maintain. First, while Theodotion translates îim with meta, the Septuagint uses epi which is the preposition used of a charioteer mounting his chariot. Further, the NT, when it quotes [Dan 7:13](#), uses en or epi and meta once ([Rev 1:7](#)), for Aramaic îim. Second, R. B. Y.

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Scott has pointed out that îim interchanges with other prepositions in the book of Daniel, particularly b-. This probably explains the variety of Greek translations. Last, on analogy with other OT passages, some of which are mentioned above, it is better to translate "in" or "on" rather than "with." Nevertheless, "with" as a translation is not incompatible with the cloud riding picture. Is it not as explicit as îal but certainly to say that a charioteer is coming "with" his chariot is not inappropriate.

[Dan 7:13](#) provides a bridge to the NT use of the motif of the Divine War chariot, since it is alluded to in the NT with great frequency. The description of Jesus Christ's return as one taking place on, in, or in accompaniment with (epi [[Matt 24:30](#); [26:64](#)], en [[Luke 21:27](#)], and meta [[Rev 1:7](#)] are all used in quoting [Daniel 7](#)) the cloud is found in the Gospels, Paul's Thessalonian correspondence, and the book of Revelation.

Due to space limitations, we will restrict our remarks to the Gospel references. They come in two places: (1) in the so-called little apocalypses ([Matt 24](#); [Mark 13](#); [Luke 21](#)) and (2) in Jesus' speech before the High Priest.

The former is a quite definite Holy War context. There is a common OT theme that, when the Divine Warrior wars, nature languishes, often on a cosmic level. This motif is found in [Matt 24:29](#) where the author cites [Isa 13:10](#), which is a Divine Warrior passage as well. In an oracle against Babylon, Isaiah describes the tumult which takes place as the Lord gathers his army together to do war against the world. In the context of describing this day a day of God's wrath—the cosmic bodies are said to languish (cf. also [Joel 3:14ff](#)). Back in the Matthew passage, right after the cosmic bodies convulse, the Divine Warrior appears in the

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heavens, on the clouds. The clouds here are not just symbolic of God's presence, but certainly describe the Divine War chariot.

The same is true for the reference to cloud riding invoked in Jesus' response to Caiphias' question if he is the Christ, the Son of God. The high priest is shocked with Christ's answer because among other factors he identifies himself with the divine figure in [Dan 7:13](#) who rides the Divine War chariot.

In conclusion, the NT references to Christ's return on the clouds of heaven are references to his role as the Divine Warrior of the eschaton for the following two reasons: (1) the strong OT background which demonstrates that the vehicular cloud is a war chariot, (2) his return, initiated by his cloud epiphany, is intimately associated with his warring activity, which is most fully outlined in the book of Revelation (next section).

3. Jesus Christ—Divine Warrior in Revelation

The Divine Warrior image is so frequently encountered in Revelation that it is best to focus on one passage and merely allude to others. The clearest use of the Divine Warrior motif in the book of Revelation is without a doubt [Rev 19:11ff](#). The reason why it is the clearest is due to the fact that the book of Revelation concentrates on the second coming by employing different cycles (seals, trumpets, bowls, and so on), each of which recounts the second coming, but with development. By way of example, the seals cycle covers the period from the beginning of the last war up to the second coming and then ends. The bowl visions start a little later, but also end with the appearance of Christ. Further on, the white horse section ([Rev 19:11ff](#)) begins with the appearance of Christ (i.e., begins where the earlier cycles end) and narrates some of the events which result from his appearance. Thus, [Rev 19:11ff](#) (the white horse cycle) yields a fuller picture of Christ's activity during the last battle.

Many may not accept this view of Revelation as a sevenfold recapitulation, but in any case [Rev 19:11ff](#) clearly describes Christ's second coming and does so employing military imagery strongly reminiscent of Divine Warrior passages in the OT.

As a matter of fact, one finds a description of Christ the Divine Warrior which on the one hand connects him with Yahweh the Divine Warrior in the OT and, on the other hand, contrasts him and sets him in opposition to the satanic warrior, the unholy warrior of [Revelation 13](#).

Concerning the former, Jesus is described as wearing a robe dipped in blood (cf. [Isa 62:2–3](#) which describes the bloodstained garments of Yahweh the Divine Warrior after waging war against Edom). Second, he is pictured as leading the heavenly army in battle, an image reminiscent of Yahweh Sebaot (the Lord of Hosts) in the OT who led his army in battle against the historical enemies of Israel. He is further described as one with a rod in his mouth ([Isa 11:4b](#), cf. [49:2](#)). The messianic Divine Warrior also rules with an iron rod, an allusion to [Ps 2:9](#); further, he treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty (cf. [Isa 63:3](#) and [Joel 3:13](#)—both divine warrior passages). Last, he is called King of Kings, Lord of Lords ([Deut 9:17](#); [Dan 2:17](#); [Ps 136:2ff](#)).

Second, as mentioned above, Jesus Christ the Divine Warrior is also contrasted with the hellish warrior of [Revelation 13](#), the beast. This becomes clear that moment in which the beast emerges from the sea. The beast is described as “having ten horns and seven heads and on his horns were ten diadems.” These ten diadems may be compared with the many diadems on Christ’s head. Further, right after the mention of his diadems it is stated that “He (Christ) has a name written upon him which no one knows except himself” ([Rev 19:12b](#)), “His name is called the Word of God” (v [13b](#)), and lastly, “On his thigh he has a name written ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’” (v [16b](#)). This

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contrasts with the hellish warrior in [13:1b](#) on whose heads “were blasphemous names.” There may also be a contrast between the beast and Christ in that the former has a number which conceals a name, and the latter has a name which conceals a number. P. W. Skehan argues that the beast has a number 666 which conceals his name and that Christ has a name (King of Kings and Lord of Lords) which when converted to Aramaic and added up results in 777.

Thus in [Rev 19:11ff](#) we have the clearest picture of Jesus Christ as the eschatological Divine Warrior. More can be said. In the OT, the theme of the Divine Warrior is closely connected with other themes. For example, when the Divine Warrior fights, nature languishes, but when victory is achieved, nature is restored with renewed vitality. In the last part of Revelation, this motif can be recognized in the disappearance of earth and sky during the judging activity of the Divine Warrior ([Rev 20:11](#)), which is followed by a description of the new Jerusalem ([21:1](#)). Second, in the OT, the Divine Warrior theme is often connected with God’s kingship and his temple building. In [Rev 20:4–6](#) we get the description of the enthroned Christ which is followed by a unique temple building scene. In [Rev 21:9–27](#) there is a description of the new Jerusalem which is striking by virtue of its lack of a temple. The temple is not needed because all of the new Jerusalem is a temple, since God and the Lamb dwell there ([21:22ff](#)).

As mentioned, [Rev 19:11ff](#) contains the most explicit use of the Divine Warrior motif, but there are others which can briefly be mentioned.

The sixth seal ([Rev 6:12–17](#)) describes the great day of the wrath of the Lamb. Here, nature convulses and writhes on a cosmic level and the military leaders, among others, seek refuge from the Lamb’s mighty warring power.

The seventh trumpet ([11:15–19](#)) brings us up to the point of the beginning of the great battle, but does not describe the battle. It ends with the familiar language of a Divine Warrior theophany (v [19](#)).

Then in [Rev 14:14–20](#) we have the picture of one like a son

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of man descending, seated on a white cloud with a sickle in his hand. There is debate over whether this is an allusion to Christ or to a created angel. In either case the harvest and vintage images go back to [Joel 3:13](#) as metaphors for the ultimate war of the Divine Warrior against the nations.

Last, the sixth and seventh bowl visions picture the ultimate Holy War. The sixth bowl vision describes the bowl poured out on the Euphrates. Next in the passage occurs a reference to the three frog-like spirits which come out of the mouth of the beast and the false prophets. These are described as they who go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them for the battle on the great day of God *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982).

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Almighty ([16:14](#)). The seventh bowl explicitly describes the Divine Warrior theophany which is accompanied by lightning, thunder, earthquake, and so on. And once again nature convulses and fights for the Divine Warrior.

Thus the book of Revelation employs the Divine Warrior motif quite extensively to describe the warring activity and ultimate victory of the Lamb in the last days.

That the Divine Warrior theme is so fully developed here should not be surprising. After all, Revelation gains much of its imagery from the OT, specifically the apocalyptic books. These apocalyptic texts employed the motif of the Divine Warrior in a new way. Most of the older uses of the motif describe historical battles, but in apocalyptic the theme has been transferred to the future—in other words the Divine Warrior is the one to whom the apocalyptists looked forward with hope that he would intervene in history to judge their enemies, save them and establish himself as king. The book of Revelation, itself apocalyptic and concerned with the consummation, employed the theme in close connection with OT apocalyptic.

4. New Song

In the book of Revelation, there is a lot of singing. Two of these songs are particularly designated new songs (*ōdē kainē*), [Rev 5:9](#) and [14:3](#). I am not concerned to differentiate the two songs which follow these designations from others in the book, but I am interested in demonstrating that, in the light of the awareness of the Divine Warrior motif in the book of Revelation, new song has the particular meaning of victory shout, that is, a song of praise

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in response to, or in anticipation of, the victory of the Divine Warrior. This can be seen of the following grounds: (1) the use of new song (*šir ḥadaš*) in the OT; (2) the nature of the songs in the book of Revelation and (3) the relationship between music and the Divine Warrior motif throughout Scripture.

(1) New Song occurs frequently in two OT books, the Psalms and Isaiah. In both there is a close connection with Holy War ideology and Divine Warrior imagery. A couple of examples include:

(a) [Isa 42:10](#), [13](#)

Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise from the ends of the earth,

you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it,
you islands, and all who live in them....

The Lord will march out like a champion,
like a man of war he will stir up his fury;

with a shout he will raise the battle cry
and will triumph over his enemies.

Here the new song is connected with the Lord's march against and victory over the enemies.

(b) [Ps 149:1](#), [6–9](#)

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Praise the Lord.

Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the saints....

May the praise of God be in their throats
and a double-edged sword in their hands,

to inflict vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

to bind their kings with chains,
their nobles with shackles of iron,

to carry out the judgment written against them.
This is the glory of all his saints.

A similar connection between new song and Holy War can be clearly recognized in [Ps 40:3](#); [96:1](#); [98:1, 3](#) and [144:9](#) .

(2) As mentioned, new song occurs twice in Revelation. The precise force of the newness has been explained in various ways in the past, but the most common explanation of the newness of the songs can be typified by Morris' statement: "The Lamb's saving work has created a new situation and this elicits a new outburst

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of praise. No song meant for another situation quite fits this."

This is true, but the evidence indicates that the new song is new more particularly because of the saving work of Jesus Christ the Divine Warrior who creates all things anew with his warring activity.

In [Rev 5:9ff](#) the new song is a hymn of praise to the Lamb because of his worthiness to open the seals. And, indeed, what do the seals symbolize ultimately, but the waging of Holy War? In addition, the reason why the new song, the victory shout, can be sung before the battle is that the victory was already won on the cross (v [9b](#), c)—a theme we will be returning to in the next section.

(3) More generally and perhaps explaining the newness of the new song is the relationship between music and the Divine Warrior. That relationship is similar to the relationship which bears between nature and the Divine Warrior. During the divine warfare, nature languishes, but after the victory, it is restored with greater vitality. Music too ceases during the warring of the Divine Warrior (the two themes of nature and music are intermixed in [Isa 24:4ff](#)), but with victory, music is renewed ([Psalm 98](#)). In the historical books, women playing music greeted military leaders after a victory ([Exod 15:20ff](#); [Judg 11:34ff](#)).

Thus in Revelation, Jesus' victory—or better stated proleptic victory—results in the singing of a new song.

II. New Testament Holy War in Non-Eschatological Passages

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The above four topics describe the use of the Divine Warrior motif in describing the consummation; it is time now to examine the use of the motif in the rest of the NT. I suggest that the theme is used with two purposes: to describe the death and resurrection of Christ, and to explain the battle which the Christian wages against the “powers and principalities.”

1. Holy War as a Conceptual Background to Christ’s Death and Resurrection

John the Baptist and others apparently expected a Messiah who would come much like the Divine Warrior figure of the

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Consummation. In [Luke 3:15ff](#) John explains to the masses that one is coming after him with a winnowing fork in his hand. However, when Jesus does come and minister, he does not fit into John’s expectations. As a matter of fact, while in prison, John sends two of his disciples to question Jesus. “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ([Luke 7:20](#)). John seemingly has his doubts about Jesus as he sits in jail. Jesus responds to their question by healing and exorcising. Thus Jesus’ first coming was not in the role of the Divine Warrior of the Consummation as John expected. However, Jesus does wage war during his earthly ministry—a war which culminates on the cross.

Jesus’ Holy War is different from the Holy War of Israel. While the latter, at the Lord’s command, directed their warfare against earthly enemies, Jesus struggled with the forces, the powers and principalities, which stand behind sinful mankind (cf. his miracles and healings).

On the prohibitive side, Jesus explicitly cuts off from the church Holy War activity similar to that of the Israelites. At the moment of crisis, when the soldiers arrested him, Peter according to [John 18:11](#) drew his sword and struck the high priest’s servant. Christ’s response is “Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the father has given me?”

Thus on the basis of this and other passages as well, Jesus turns from the role of Divine Warrior directed toward the unbeliever. His command is not to slay but to convert ([Matt 28:16ff](#)).

On the other side, Jesus, by drinking the cup, wages Holy War against the enemy, a war which he wins upon the cross. This is why his death and resurrection are frequently likened to military victory. [Col 2:13ff](#):

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Notice the military language here. He “disarms” the powers and

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principalities and indeed “triumphs” over them. This victory is associated by Paul with Christ’s death on the cross.

His resurrection too proves him to be the conqueror of the powers, authorities and dominions—since by raising him God subjected all things to him ([Eph 1:19](#)ff). Notice the enthronement after the victory, fitting in with the ancient pattern found in the Psalms and ultimately Canaanite mythology. Furthermore, later in the book Paul quotes a well-known Divine Warrior psalm ([68:18](#)) in [4:7ff](#). His ascension is here seen as a military victory.

Thus Jesus' death resulted in the victory over and the capture of the powers behind the world. Yet there is an already/not yet quality about this victory. Jesus has won the victory on the cross, yet now everything is still not subject to him: "In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him" ([Heb 2:8](#)).

Thus, indeed, Jesus won the victory on the cross, but the fulness of that victory will only come at the consummation, only at the time when he comes again on the white war horse, the Divine War chariot to purge the world of evil. Thus the argument connects here with what I have already mentioned concerning Jesus Christ the Divine Warrior in the book of Revelation.

In summary, Jesus Christ is pictured in some verses as waging war with the powers and principalities. His healing and exorcising may be seen as previews of the battle with the demonic hordes. On the cross, Paul tells us that Christ won a victory over the satanic powers. Note the reversal—Christ the Divine Warrior wins the war by being killed, not by killing. Nevertheless, the victory has an already/not yet character to it. As Paul says in [Rom 16:20](#), "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." But the victory is assured. When Christ opens the seals in the book of Revelation, a new song, a victory shout, is able to be sung concerning Christ *before* the actual battle because the outcome is certain. And why is it certain? [Rev 5:9](#):

Because you were slain,
and with your blood, you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.

2. The Divine Warrior and the Christian Struggle

The second area in which the theme of Holy War and Divine Warfare is found is closely connected to the already/not yet

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feature of Christ's victory. Since the enemy is not completely subdued in the present, in the period between resurrection and consummation, the Christian is called upon to wage war. Once again, the warfare is not directed toward human adversaries but toward the evil powers which stand behind evil men. I will mention in this section only one passage, [Eph 6:10–20](#). The Christian, Paul writes, is engaged in a battle, and it is a battle "not directed 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" (v [12](#)). The Christian is said to be fighting in true Holy War fashion. That is, the real power is not found in the human participants but rather in the power of God. After all, the armor is called the "full armor of God." Much of the imagery found here comes from [Isa 59:15](#)ff, where God is displeased with injustice in the world. So in OT Holy War terminology the Isaiah passage states that "his own arm worked salvation for him." Donning a breastplate of righteousness and a helmet of salvation he goes out *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982).

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to “repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes.” Thus, regardless of the question of Paul alluding to Roman armor, the imagery of [Eph 6:10–20](#) is grounded in an OT Divine Warrior passage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to make three points: (1) Divine Warrior imagery is employed in the NT. Thus we should no longer think of it as a distinctly OT concept. While, of course, the warring aspect of the Messiah’s function has been recognized, up until now the connection has not been explicitly made with the OT image of Yahweh as the Divine Warrior.

Furthermore, we can see a progression in the NT use of the theme. In the OT, the Divine Warrior wars mainly against human adversaries. In the non-eschatological NT passages the Divine Warrior leads his army against the powers and principalities. The focus of the warfare shifts to the demonic agency which stands

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behind wicked men. Then, there is a climax in the eschatological passages of the NT—particular Revelation—where the Divine Warrior wars against the demonic powers and their human followers. We are not to think of the present age as a period of time between two periods of Holy War, but as an intensification, a heightening of that warfare. And then a further heightening will take place at the consummation.

(2) There is a second aspect of the relationship between the OT and NT use of the theme of the Divine Warrior. We just recognized that from one perspective there is an intensification in the object of God’s warring rule—people → powers → powers and people. But from a second perspective Kline’s concept of “intrusion” becomes important. Kline points out that under normal circumstances the relationship between Christians and non-Christians is governed by common grace. God in his mercy has allowed the non-Christian to enjoy life and many of its benefits. However, at the time of the consummation, a new relationship will ensue. The non-Christian will be judged by the Lord. Kline understands “intrusion” to be a time in the biblical period where the conditions of the consummation intrude proleptically into the period of Common Grace. Kline employs the concept to help us struggle with some difficult ethical problems in the Scripture, but most relevant here is the fact that he sees the Holy Wars of the Israelites as such an intrusion of consummation conditions into the period of common grace.

(3) The Divine Warrior theme is pervasive. Literally, it is used from Genesis to Revelation. Due to space limitations and the nature of this paper, I was unable to discuss pre-Exodus Divine Warrior imagery, but it is there. The extensiveness of the theme raises the possibility of writing an OT theology with the Divine Warrior motif as primary focus. This is not to say that I believe that the motif is the central concept of the Scriptures or the key to OT and NT theology, but it is a theme which occurs frequently through most of the canon. As P. D. Miller, Jr., puts it:

The conception of God as a warrior played a fundamental role in the religious and military experiences of Israel.... One can only go so far in describing the history of Israel, or its religion, or the theology of the

Old Testament without encountering the wars of Yahweh. In prose and poetry, early and later material alike, the view that Yahweh fought for or against his people stands forth prominently. The centrality of that conviction and its historical, cultic, literary and theological ramifications can hardly be overestimated.

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