

CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING: A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL,
AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIVINE
WARRIOR THEME IN CHRISTOLOGY

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Introduction

Warfare permeates the pages of the Bible. The blood of conflict and conquest soaks the parchment penned by the apostles and prophets. Yet, what is the purpose of the warfare theme that saturates Scripture? From the earliest stages of historical theology, theologians have recognized the prevalence of warfare as a biblical theme.¹ In contemporary theology, some have focused on the difficult issues of warfare in the Bible such as God's command of Canaanite genocide in the Old Testament.² Others have centered their attention on the implications of the warfare motif in Scripture on issues ranging from military ethics to men's ministry.³ At the same time, a resurgence of interest in spiritual warfare has grown in contemporary literature.⁴ Each of these areas is certainly addressed by the implications of Scripture's warfare worldview. But is

¹It is outside of the scope of this prospectus to address historical treatments of the divine warrior theme in Christology. This analysis will occur in chapter four. Instead, the purpose of the prospectus is to show the contemporary significance of the issue to set the stage for the biblical, historical and theological analysis that follows.

²For more on Canaanite genocide, see Stanley N. Gundry, ed., *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience*, vol. 211, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991).

³On the theme of warfare in men's ministry, see Stu Weber, *Tender Warrior: Every Man's Purpose, Every Woman's Dream, Every Child's Hope* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 2006); John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

⁴Peter T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 16, no. 4 (1992): 356; Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 170.

the cosmic conflict seen in the storyline of Scripture merely limited to addressing military ethics, mystical warfare, or men's ministry? Or is it oriented towards something more Christ-centered and Kingdom-focused?

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, Baptist theologian Russell Moore traces the new evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom of God. Throughout the book, Moore examines the convergence between dispensationalists and covenant theologians on the nature of the kingdom and explores its implications for eschatology, soteriology and ecclesiology. Moore discusses the seminal influence of the work on the kingdom by scholars like George Eldon Ladd and its implications for evangelical cultural and socio-political engagement as seen in Carl F. H. Henry. During his chapter on soteriology, Moore makes a provocative comment about Gregory Boyd's articulation of the warfare worldview of Scripture:

If this appropriation of the Kingdom warfare imagery present in Scripture and the Patristic tradition were magnified across the evangelical spectrum, the implications for the worship, evangelism, spirituality, cultural engagement, and internal structures of the churches could be monumental—and perhaps more significant than Henry and his generation's call for an evangelical renaissance in university education, philosophy, the sciences, and so forth.”⁵

More significant than Henry's contribution? Henry's ideas shaped 20th century evangelical biblical interpretation and socio-political engagement in important ways. Therefore, if Moore's suggestion about the potential significance of additional reflection on kingdom warfare is correct, then it certainly warrants further study. This dissertation seeks to explore the Christ-centered kingdom warfare imagery in biblical and historical theology and reflect on its implications for systematic and practical theology. Thus, it positions itself as an extension of Moore's original project as it seeks to examine this area of further study he identified.

⁵Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 107.

A biblical theology of warfare is most valuable if it is considered in light of Scripture's central theme, the Kingdom, and Scripture's central character, the Christ.⁶ Though efforts to identify a unifying theme in Scripture are contested, it is most coherent to understand its central motif as the kingdom of God.⁷ From the moment of Satan's fall to the inception of the new heavens and the new earth, the kingdom of darkness operates in opposition to this kingdom of light. Therefore, throughout the storyline of Scripture, Kingdom implies warfare. The Kingdom of Christ is advanced through spiritual conflict. Consequently, the Kingdom cannot be understood apart from warfare, and warfare cannot be understood apart from the Kingdom.

Though there is an emerging evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom, the next step is to develop agreement on the Christocentric nature of kingdom warfare. It is not enough for evangelicals to agree on the prominence and nature of the kingdom. If that is where the consensus concludes, then the term "kingdom" can be infused with a variety of theological meanings. It can be co-opted as an umbrella slogan to describe anything from denominational campaigns to missional strategies to social justice advocacy.⁸ Since kingdom implies warfare,

⁶This dissertation defines the kingdom as the redemptive reign of the divine warrior manifested as God's people in God's place under God's rule, which culminates in the rulership of Christ as warrior king. Graeme Goldsworthy notes, "The entire biblical story, despite its great diversity of forms and foci, is consistent in its emphasis on the reign of God over his people in the environment he creates for them." In Graeme Goldsworthy, "Kingdom of God," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 620. Though Frame resists the notion that there is a central motif in Scripture, he adds helpful thoughts about how central themes perspectively relate to Christ in such a way that they enlighten rather than exclude other concepts. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 192-94.

⁷As Vaughan Roberts adds, "Any unifying theme that is used to help us to see how the Bible fits together must arise out of Scripture itself, rather than being imposed upon it; and it must be broad enough to allow each part to make its own distinct contribution. The theme of the kingdom of God satisfies both requirements." Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-Line of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 20-21. It is outside the scope of this dissertation to make a defense of the kingdom as the central theme of biblical theology. Instead, the impact on a kingdom-oriented understanding of the divine warrior theme will be its focus.

⁸Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 67; Russell D. Moore, "Theology Bleeds: Why Theological Vision Matters for the Great Commission, and Vice-Versa," in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway

developing a consensus on the Christobellic nature of kingdom warfare will sharpen contemporary evangelical discussions of the kingdom.⁹

Yet, examining the relationship between the themes of kingdom warfare and Christology raises a host of challenging questions. What is the nature of this warfare as described in Scripture? How can Christ be both a warrior king and a prince of peace? How can the violent warfare of the Old Testament be reconciled with the non-violent strands of the New Testament? Is the divine warrior theme reflected in the Christology of the church throughout the centuries? What implications does a divine warrior Christology carry for the practice of systematic theology and the mission of the church? This dissertation seeks to address these complicated issues and more as it examines the connection between the divine warrior theme and Christology in Scripture, history and theology.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that the divine warrior theme is a central component of Christology as seen in the Bible's storyline and the church's history, which carries significant implications for contemporary issues in both systematic theology and the mission of the church. To explain this thesis, this section will give a brief description of each aspect of it: 1) the divine warrior theme, 2) Christology, 3) biblical theology, 4) historical theology, 5) systematic theology, and 6) the mission of the church.

The view of God as warrior king is central to the warfare imagery of Scripture. Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid explain, “One important and pervasive metaphor of

(Nashville: B & H, 2010), 104.

⁹The term Christobellic is coined from the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός) and the Latin word for warfare (*bellum*) and emphasizes the Christ-oriented nature of warfare throughout the storyline of Scripture.

relationship is the picture of God as a warrior, commonly referred to in secondary literature as the divine-warrior theme.”¹⁰ Scripture simply displays the pattern of God as divine warrior, in his holiness and justice, battling with his enemies in order to establish his kingdom for his glory. Surrounding nations in the Ancient Near East (ANE) often depicted warfare in ways that are similar to the divine warrior theme described in Scripture.¹¹ Yet, what is fundamentally unique about Scripture is its portrayal of Christ himself as divine warrior, which this dissertation will seek to demonstrate.

This project focuses its attention on the divine warrior theme in Christology.¹² It suggests that the pervasive divine warrior motif seen in Scripture and tradition confirms that a central component of Christology is the portrayal of Christ as warrior king. Specifically, it seeks to show how Scripture demonstrates Christ as a warrior king through its Old Testament messianic expectation as well as his (1) incarnational ministry, (2) victorious substitutionary death and resurrection, and (3) eschatological conquest. By considering the divine warrior theme a central component of Christology, this dissertation asserts that it is featured throughout Scripture and tradition and sheds light on current issues in both the person and work of Christ.¹³

¹⁰ Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 16.

¹¹Boyd claims, “For though the biblical authors were divinely inspired, they were nevertheless children of their own culture. We cannot, therefore, adequately understand their views until we have set them against their background or milieu.” Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 74.

¹²For contemporary treatments on the person and work of Christ, see Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998); Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1993); Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996); Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003).

¹³By regarding the divine warrior theme as central to Christology, this dissertation does not suggest that it is the only central dimension. Instead, it is perspectively related to other key aspects so that it does not exclude them but allows for fresh insights from a particular viewpoint. As Frame states, “Christianity has one center (Christ) that can be expounded in many ways.” Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 193.

Biblical theology has blossomed into a hot topic in contemporary theology.¹⁴ A growing number of scholars contend that it is most consistent with the structure of redemptive history to see the kingdom as the central theme of biblical theology.¹⁵ Throughout the storyline of Scripture, the kingdom is advanced through conflict. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture resounds with the echoes of warfare. Because kingdom warfare is such a pervasive motif, a biblical theology approach is essential to understand it adequately. A biblical theology of warfare must understand spiritual conflict in the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of redemptive history.¹⁶ Throughout the storyline of Scripture, both continuity and discontinuity are evident in this theme.¹⁷ The conflict-oriented nature of Scripture is the direct result of a warfare worldview that is not only consistently held by the human authors of the Bible but also decisively maintained by its divine author—the divine warrior himself.¹⁸ As a result, a biblical theology of

¹⁴Carson succinctly defines biblical theology as “the theology of the whole Bible, descriptively and historically considered.” D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 20. Rosner offers a more extended definition, “Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.” Brian S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 10.

¹⁵For treatments that show the centrality of the kingdom in Scripture, see Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*; Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002); Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003); Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

¹⁶These terms come from Richard Lints who reframes the work of Edmund Clowney on the three interpretive horizons of the biblical text, “the immediate context of the book (or passage), the context of the period of revelation in which the book (or passage) falls, and the context of the entirety of revelation. I will be referring to these as the textual horizon, the epochal horizon, and the canonical horizon, respectively.” Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 293. See also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 16.

¹⁷Longman and Reid comment that the results of a biblical theology of warfare “are an illuminating study in the continuity and discontinuity between the different epochs of divine revelation, most notably between the Old and New Testaments.” Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 16-17.

¹⁸Boyd coined the term warfare worldview and defines it as “that perspective on reality which centers on the conviction that the good and evil, fortunate or unfortunate, aspects of life are to be interpreted largely as the

warfare adequately accounts for the conflict-oriented nature of both the content of the biblical data and the perspective of the biblical authors. A biblical theology of warfare displays the warfare worldview of the Bible not only as it relates to the Kingdom of Christ but also as it integrates with the storyline of Scripture.

Historical theology offers a window into how theologians throughout church history have discussed how the divine warrior theme connects with Christology. Since the publication of Gustaf Aulen's *Christus Victor*, scholars have taken an interest in articulations of the divine warrior theme in church history, especially as it relates to the atonement. Historical theology sheds light on two aspects of the current project. First, it assesses whether theologians have actually recognized a relationship between the divine warrior theme and Christology. Second, it discusses how theologians have understood this relationship. Establishing the presence, prominence and purpose of the divine warrior theme in historical Christologies illumines both the biblical data on the topic and the systematic implications of the subject.

This dissertation defines systematic theology as applying the storyline of Scripture to the storyline of life in light of the storyline of history.¹⁹ Embracing a biblical theology of warfare carries profound consequences for evangelicals today. Why? It enables theological reflections to be grounded in the Christ-centered, kingdom-oriented development of redemptive history.

Therefore, the evaluation of the divine warrior theme in biblical and historical theology can yield

result of good and evil, friendly or hostile, spirits warring against each other and against us.” Boyd, *God at War*, 13. This dissertation offers a slightly modified definition of the phrase, a warfare worldview is a framework for interpreting all of life that is rooted in a recognition of the cosmic conflict that rages between the sovereign divine warrior and his rivals.

¹⁹For more on systematic theology as application, see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 81-85.

new insights on contemporary issues in systematic theology.²⁰ Indeed, it contends that the practice of systematic theology is an act of kingdom warfare itself.

The mission of the church is an ongoing extension of the mission of Christ. Therefore, if Christ is a divine warrior, this shapes the militant mission of the church's ministries. The eschatological foundation of the church's mission recognizes that it is a community marked by kingdom-oriented composition, proclamation, and transformation. The organic foundation of the church's mission shows that the spiritual warfare of the church is grounded in its soldiers' union to the warrior king. The functional foundation of the church's mission centers on its adherence to the missional mandate of the Great Commission. Therefore, the militant mission of the church reflects the mission of the warrior king, which carries significant implications for the composition, structure and ministries of the kingdom community.

Background

The interest in spiritual warfare among contemporary evangelicals has fueled a cottage industry in Christian publishing. Yet, it was not the latest Frank Peretti novel that sparked my interest in the subject of this dissertation. Instead, in God's providence, it was a book by an open theist and a passing comment from a Baptist theologian that set the trajectory. As part of the assigned reading for a course in my first semester of Master of Divinity study at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I devoured Greg Boyd's biblical theology of warfare entitled *God*

²⁰For more on how biblical theology relates to systematic theology, see D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 89-104; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 207-14.

at War.²¹ Despite the troubling open theist components of the work, it profoundly impacted me as the first exposure to a description of the warfare worldview of Scripture.

Dr. Russell Moore's previously mentioned comment on the use of kingdom warfare imagery in Boyd's book crystallized my interest in the subject. When I read those words, I wrote in the margin, "this is what I want to do with my life." As I entered the Ph.D. program at SBTS, my seminar papers repeatedly focused on the subject of kingdom warfare. As my studies progressed, this broad focus narrowed to my interest in writing this dissertation on the divine warrior theme and Christology. As my faculty supervisor Dr. Moore and other theologians confirmed the viability of this research topic, it solidified my desire to develop a divine warrior Christology.

To understand the relevance of this dissertation, it is essential to consider contemporary approaches to warfare in Scripture. By providing the context of current discussion, it will confirm that a Christ-centered, Kingdom-oriented approach to the Bible's warfare worldview is a helpful contribution to the literature on the subject. Contemporary approaches to warfare in general and the divine warrior theme in particular coalesce into five categories.

First, historical-critical Old Testament scholars initiated the resurgence of interest in the biblical theme of warfare with an emphasis on the religious and cultic components of "holy war" for the nation of Israel. These theologians based their approach to OT warfare upon the critical methodology developed by Julius Wellhausen.²² Chief among these adherents was Gerhard Von Rad who explains their understanding of OT warfare in this way, "Thus, we can indeed consider holy war as an eminently cultic understanding—that is, prescribed and

²¹Boyd, *God at War*.

²²Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994).

sanctioned by fixed, traditional, sacred rites and observances.”²³ Accordingly, the treatment of warfare in the OT can only be rightly understood through a thorough consideration of the theological agenda of later redactors. Because of the historical-critical methodology, a Christocentric approach to kingdom warfare is virtually absent from this approach.

Second, Old Testament theologians from Harvard University continued the study of Israelite warfare through a history of religions approach that centered on comparisons with the divine military practices of other nations in the Ancient Near East (ANE). This movement was birthed by F. M. Cross and continued by his students.²⁴ Both the actual events of OT warfare and their subsequent recording in Scripture bear evidence of influence from surrounding nations. These OT theologians reduce their treatment of warfare to merely a comparison of parallel realities in the military practices of other ANE cultures. As a result, the history of religions approach circumvents the Christ-centered conflict that characterizes the canon.

Third, Christian ethicists have discussed the biblical theme of warfare to develop their views on military ethics. In contemporary literature, this interest exploded in light of the world wars during the first half of the 20th century.²⁵ On the one hand, just war advocates contend that the Bible provides the proper protocol for limited military engagement.²⁶ On the other hand, pacifists propound that the scope of Scripture tempers the violence of the OT in such a way that

²³Gerhard Von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

²⁴Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

²⁵For instance, H. G. Enelow defended the Bible’s restricted approval of military conflict in light of the Great War. See H. G. Enelow, *The War and the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919).

²⁶A recent, thorough treatment of just war theory can be found in J. Daryl Charles and Timothy J. Demy, *War, Peace, and Christianity: Questions and Answers from a Just-War Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). For a compilation of historical approaches to military ethics, see Arthur F. Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

bloodshed in general and military conflict in particular are not viable options for Christians.²⁷

The irony of these ethicists is that the same biblical data on OT warfare can be harnessed to reach diametrically opposed conclusions on military protocol. Particularly in the case of pacifists, a variation of a Christ-centered approach is taken as they leverage the ethics and teaching of Jesus to substantiate their appeal to non-violence.²⁸

Fourth, spiritual warfare advocates focus on the call to spiritual conflict found throughout the New Testament. Contemporary writings on spiritual warfare break down into three categories.²⁹ First, liberal protestants such as Walter Wink have identified the principalities and powers as impersonal, structural forces in society that must be overcome through spiritual and political activism.³⁰ Second, strategic-level spiritual warfare practitioners such as C. Peter Wagner correctly consider the principalities and powers to be personal, spiritual forces of evil but wrongly embrace a powers-centered response focused on defeating territorial spirits.³¹ Third, conservative evangelicals such as Clinton Arnold also describe the principalities and powers as personal, spiritual forces of evil, but in contrast to Wagner, offer a Christ-centered response

²⁷The pacifist approach is most staunchly defended by Mennonites such as Millard Lind. See Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980).

²⁸This Christ-oriented pacifism was clearly seen in Iraq War protests asking, “Who would Jesus bomb?”

²⁹This taxonomy of spiritual warfare approaches is based on Landon Coleman’s dissertation on spiritual warfare and its implications for North American missions strategy. Landon Coleman, “Principalities and Powers: A Historical and Biblical Study with Strategic Application in North American Churches” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

³⁰Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). For a critique of Wink’s mythologization, see Boyd, *God at War*, 274-75. For a precursor to the approach that Wink later popularized, see G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956).

³¹C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Territorial Spirits: Insights into Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Chichester: Sovereign Word, 1992); C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura: Regal, 1996).

focused on his eschatological victory.³² Beyond these approaches among American treatments of spiritual warfare, many theologians from the global south would fit into the group of spiritual warfare advocates described in this fourth category of approaches to warfare.³³ Though Christ plays a role in each one of these approaches to spiritual warfare, it varies from position to position.

Fifth, an evangelical approach to the study of the divine warrior motif in Scripture recently began a limited engagement with warfare issues based on biblical theology in light of the redemptive storyline of the Bible. After exploring issues related to kingdom warfare individually in previous projects, Tremper Longman and Daniel Reid combined to write *God is a Warrior*. In this work, they explore the “important and pervasive metaphor” in Scripture that pictures “God as a warrior, commonly referred to in secondary literature as the divine-warrior theme.”³⁴ Though Boyd’s open theism places him on the fringe of evangelicalism, his work on the warfare worldview of Scripture broadly fits into this fifth category. As will be discussed throughout the dissertation, both Longman and Reid as well as Boyd’s writings root themselves in biblical theology, but fall short of a holistic, Christ-centered, kingdom-focused approach to the warfare worldview of Scripture.

³²Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Historical Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*. While Arnold’s examination of the powers within the first century context of Ephesians is helpful, he seems to over-emphasize issues related to magic and astrology occurring in Ephesus, especially because he fails to account for the circular nature of Ephesians. For example, see Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, 149. Despite this weakness, Arnold is the most helpful resource on the powers in Ephesians in particular and the New Testament in general.

³³For more on Christianity and spiritual warfare in the global south, see Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98-127; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁴Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 16.

This dissertation seeks to advance the discussion by injecting a Christobellic approach to kingdom warfare grounded in biblical theology into the contemporary debate. Therefore, the approach of this dissertation fits into the fifth category described above.³⁵ Compared to the other contemporary approaches to the subject, there are several distinctive features that differentiate this treatment. First, this dissertation offers an evangelical biblical theology of the divine warrior theme in Christology with a consideration of its implications for systematic and practical theology. There is nothing like this available in the current literature.³⁶ While there are biblical theologies of warfare and discussions of the role of the kingdom in theological formulation, there is not a comprehensive resource available that fuses the two based on a divine warrior Christology. Considering the prominence of the divine warrior theme in the Christ-centered warfare worldview of Scripture, this void needs to be filled.

Second, the divine warrior Christology that this dissertation describes will contribute to contemporary discussions on the nature of spiritual warfare. Much of the current fiction and non-fiction literature on spiritual warfare focuses on the individual's present battle with the principalities and powers. This approach distracts from the Christocentric kingdom warfare that unfolds in redemptive history. Instead, a Christobellic approach to spiritual warfare recognizes that it is Christ-centered, eschatologically-oriented, and community-rooted. It is an encouraging sign that the post-Enlightenment western church has rekindled its interest in spiritual warfare.

³⁵Furthermore, when it comes to the subject of spiritual warfare, this dissertation, with some caveats, most closely aligns with the approach of Clinton Arnold described in the fourth category above. See Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*.

³⁶The closest thing to it is Boyd's *God at War*. He is working on a new book tentatively titled *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* that will be related to this dissertation. However, the primary task of Boyd's new book is to offer a Christocentric approach to the divine warrior theme to clarify the continuity and discontinuity of warfare in the canon. Specifically, how can Canaanite genocide be reconciled with the non-violence of the New Testament? It is my hope that a published or pre-published version of this work will be available for me to interact with prior to the completion of this dissertation.

But the Christ-centered kingdom warfare incorporated into this dissertation can provide a helpful corrective to some of its misguided focus.

Third, this dissertation offers an initial foray into the application of a Christobellic kingdom theology to contemporary issues in systematic theology. There are several examples of kingdom theology grounding treatments of different areas of systematic theology.³⁷ However, it is reasonable to expect that more efforts should emerge if a consensus on the nature of the kingdom has truly developed among evangelicals. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to make a contribution toward that end. Instead of extensively interacting with implications for any one area of systematic theology, it interacts with multiple loci where a Christobellic kingdom theology can specifically help current issues in theological discussions. Overall, this dissertation is warranted because of both the contemporary interest in the biblical themes of kingdom and warfare as well as the helpful implications this dissertation can yield for systematic theology.

Though there has not been much written on the specific topic of Christology and the divine warrior theme, there are certainly adequate resources available to research the subject. This availability has been confirmed in my previous research on the subject for seminar papers. Locally, the James P. Boyce Centennial Library and the Ernest Miller White Library at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary have most of the major primary and secondary material needed to research this topic. Also, the inter-library loan system will allow access to other resources that are not immediately available. My personal library contains many of the key works on the subject as well. With these sources of research material, all the relevant resources will be available for this dissertation.

³⁷Russell D. Moore, "Natural Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 71-117; Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 858-926.

Methodology

The following dissertation is a biblical, historical, and theological analysis of the divine warrior theme in Christology. The methodology of its argument follows the structure used in the recent systematic theology edited by Daniel Akin, *A Theology for the Church*.³⁸ Each chapter in that work follows a four-fold schema. First, it addresses what the Bible teaches about a given topic. Second, it discusses what the church has believed about the issue. Third, it develops theological implications based on how it all fits together. Fourth, it reflects on what it means for the mission of the church. After this brief introduction in chapter one, this dissertation follows the same structure. It discusses Christ the warrior king and biblical theology in chapters two and three, while addressing historical theology in chapter four, systematic theology in chapter five, and practical theology in chapter six.

Since this dissertation seeks to take a holistic approach to the subject matter, a wide variety of resources are used to develop its argument. It begins with Scripture in both the original languages and English because the Bible is the authoritative, inspired and inerrant revelation of the divine warrior. It benefits from and regularly interacts with monographs written on the divine warrior theme. It also interacts with contributions made to the field in journal articles, including review articles of the aforementioned works on the divine warrior theme. Throughout its treatment of the biblical material, it incorporates insights from commentaries. The historical theology section researches the presence of the divine warrior theme in Christology through both primary and secondary sources. The systematic theology portion interacts with a wide range of theology texts related to the topic and its implications, especially because it deals with multiple

³⁸Daniel L. Akin, ed., "Preface," in *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), vii-ix.

areas of systematic theology. The practical theology chapter includes resources on the mission of the church both from contemporary ecclesiologies and classic texts on the subject. Because the dissertation addresses a wide variety of topics, it requires a plethora of resources.

Though this dissertation seeks to be comprehensive in scope, several limitations restrict what it will address.³⁹ First, the section on biblical theology is unable to address all relevant texts at a rigorous, exegetical level because its purpose is to develop a survey of Christology and the divine warrior theme throughout redemptive history.⁴⁰ Second, the discussion on historical theology cannot fully evaluate the views on a divine warrior Christology among all theologians, but instead focuses on major theologians at key points in the development of Christian theology.⁴¹ Third, the treatment on systematic theology does not evaluate the implications of a divine warrior Christology on every dimension of systematic theology, but instead centers on major doctrines for which it can make significant contributions. Fourth, the discussion on practical theology cannot offer a full-scale ecclesiology, though it seeks to shed new light on contemporary treatments of the mission of the church. Recognizing the limitations of this project confirms that much research is still to be done in this area of study.

The purpose of this dissertation is to offer a constructive proposal on the connection between Christology and the divine warrior theme. Therefore, it is polemical only secondarily as

³⁹These limitations are primarily the result of space restrictions. The fact that they are not treated in this dissertation does not mean that they are irrelevant to the subject. Instead, it reveals areas where further research can be done on the topic.

⁴⁰To cover the relevant material throughout the canon of Scripture, this dissertation take a synthetic approach to the biblical data. When it is relevant to the argument, it will incorporate an exegetical analysis. For a similar synthetic approach to the biblical material on the divine warrior theme, see Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 17-18. Furthermore, though this dissertation will offer some interaction with intertestamental literature, it cannot offer a full-scale interaction because of its primary focus on the biblical material.

⁴¹Though it will not be able to provide a comprehensive treatment of theological views from the global south, this section will also integrate insights from theologians in those regions when relevant.

the constructive proposal enables it to show its advantages to alternative views both biblically and theologically. The proposed method of research and argument will enable this dissertation to defend its thesis adequately. More specifically, it will seek to show the relationship between the divine warrior theme and Christology by assessing its role in biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology. The following table of contents offers the structure for this dissertation.

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7. CONCLUSION (10 pages)

Chapter one introduces the subject of Christology and the divine warrior theme by positioning it in its contemporary context. It details how this dissertation emerges from the evangelical consensus on the nature of the kingdom. Why? It is essential to understand the Christ-centered nature of kingdom warfare to comprehend the nature of the kingdom properly. It offers the thesis of the dissertation, which contends that a biblical, historical and theological

evaluation of the divine warrior theme in Christology reveals that Christ the warrior king is a central component of Christology. Next, it positions the approach used in this dissertation among the various treatments of warfare in Scripture offered in the contemporary literature. It discusses the biblical, historical and theological methodology used in the dissertation. Finally, it concludes with a chapter-by-chapter summary of material covered in the dissertation.

Chapter two surveys the divine warrior theme in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament by tracing the theme of Christ as warrior king. In the garden of Eden, the expectation of a messianic warrior is set as God promises to raise up a seed of the woman who will crush the serpent. Throughout the patriarchs, God narrows his covenantal focus on the lineage from which the messiah would come. In the nation of Israel, God preserves the messianic seed by fighting for Israel in its faithful obedience and fighting against Israel in its sinful rebellion. Particularly significant to the expectation of the messiah as warrior king are the twin themes of the Exodus and the Davidic monarchy. The prophets repeatedly emphasize that the coming messiah will be a divine warrior who will usher in the kingdom of God. Then, a brief discussion will consider the interplay between the warfare-oriented messianic expectation of the OT and the divine warrior theme in surrounding Ancient Near Eastern cultures. After tracing the biblical data through the OT, this chapter will then synthesize it into several prominent themes that embody the anticipation of a warrior king in the messianic expectation of the Old Testament.

Chapter three discusses the way the New Testament demonstrates how the messianic expectation of the Old Testament is realized in the person, work and eschatological fulfillment of Christ the warrior king. To begin with, it examines the continuity and discontinuity of the messiah as warrior king in the two testaments. The Gospel accounts document the inauguration of the kingdom in the warfare of Christ through his deeds, discourse, and death. The epistles

portray Christ as a warrior king particularly focusing on both the warfare nature of the atonement and the church's union with the divine warrior in salvation. The Revelation reveals the culmination of kingdom warfare in the eschatological victory of Christ over all his enemies as he ushers in a new creation kingdom. The chapter concludes with a summary of NT themes related to Christology and the divine warrior motif.

Chapter four documents the treatment of Christology and the divine warrior theme in historical theology. Prominent theologians have handled this motif throughout the various epochs of church history. Specifically, it traces the theme through the patristic, medieval, reformation, post-reformation, and contemporary time periods. It not only documents the topic when it is present but also assesses variations among the different approaches to the subject throughout historical theology. It culminates with a reflection on common themes or trajectories that emerge from an evaluation of the historical data.

Chapter five contends that the divine warrior theme in Christology carries significant implications for systematic theology. In discussions of the atonement, it clarifies the relationship between the penal substitution and *Christus Victor* models. Seeing Christ as warrior king impacts the Christ-centered and kingdom-oriented nature of soteriology in its cosmic and personal dimensions. It also clarifies the nature of God's providence as Christocentric and Christotelic as God brings about his ultimate purposes through kingdom warfare. The divine warrior theme in Christology shapes the study of pneumatology as it identifies the Spirit as the spoils of Christ's victory poured out upon his people. Finally, recognizing Christ as warrior king provides insights into discussion of eschatology, both in its inaugurated and consummated dimensions. While this chapter cannot address the implications of a divine warrior Christology for every area of

systematic theology, it demonstrates how this crucial component of Christology provides helpful implications for contentious areas of contemporary theology.

Chapter six discusses how a divine warrior Christology impacts the mission of the church. The mission of Christ the warrior king fundamentally shapes the church's mission. The church is the eschatological community of the warrior kingdom, which shapes its composition, proclamation and transformation. The church is composed of citizens of the kingdom who are united to the warrior king through faith. The church proclaims the gospel of the warrior king through its preaching, ordinances, and outreach. The church is transformed in its pursuit of practical ministry and personal holiness by embodying the ethics of the warrior king. A divine warrior Christology shapes not only the mission of the church on a theological level but the praxis of the church on a practical level.

Chapter seven offers a conclusion to the dissertation that summarizes the arguments established in the preceding chapters. It demonstrates that a biblical, historical and theological evaluation of Christ as warrior king confirms that it is a central component of Christology yielding beneficial insights to contemporary theological issues. It also suggests areas for further study related to the topic of a divine warrior Christology.

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