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PAUL, MILITARY IMAGERY AND SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE

ABSTRACT

In the past, attention for the social position or standing of the early Jesus followers was overrun by concerns for the theological and religious dimensions of those communities. The role of the Roman Empire and the impact of its military forces on the lives of people have generated even less attention. Paul's use of military images in the context of the Roman Empire underlines the prevalence and influence of the military, and provides an important perspective for understanding first-century social location.

1. INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS DEALING WITH SOCIAL AND IMPERIAL CONTEXTS

Social disadvantage, as experienced in its modern forms, where race and ethnicity as well as gender and access to economic means dominate, is vastly different from related ancient notions. In the first century CE, slave-based, hierarchical or kyriarchal, androcentric and patriarchal, status-based and patronal society with the majority living off subsistence-based economics, the non-elite majority, were – in modern terms – socially disadvantaged: those 90% of the people, whose level of exclusion from life-enhancing situations differed categorically from the elite, lived in the narrow margin between subsistence and starvation (cf. Oakman 1996:138). But notions of social disadvantage have not been clearly identified and since they are easier to define from an emic position, disagreement on the identity of the socially disadvantaged and even the concept is not surprising.

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New Testament and Early Christian studies have addressed the ambiguity surrounding social disadvantage on different levels, often investigating economics. Given the focus, in this instance, on the Pauline letters, the words of Oakes (2012:76) can be echoed: "Economics has long had an involvement with Pauline studies." Some have attempted to explain the frequent positive use of slave-language in the New Testament and the Pauline literature by making a distinction between class and social status in slavery (for example, Martin 1990). Others point to the nature of the ancient economy and its vastly different role and mode of operation, raising concerns about plotting ancient social disadvantage along modern capitalist concerns or, at least, along such frameworks of understanding (Friesen 2004; Oakes 2012; Oakman 1996).[1]

However, studying economics alone is insufficient for plotting social (dis)advantage in Paul's Jesus-follower communities. Perceptions of the social place of the communities and those in them often reflect broader post-Second World War societal concerns[2] more than anything else. The impetus of the devastating conflicts that involved large parts of the world and their resulting movements is understandable, but modern social concerns should not be super-imposed on ancient times.[3] Still, sociological research has ignited sustained inclusion of socio-historical contexts in textual interpretation, and countered a long-standing reluctance to account for the world behind the New Testament texts, beyond source critical interest in possible textual precursors, and form critical attention for formative communities.

Socio-historical studies of texts and their interpretation do more justice to the crucial role of first-century Roman Empire, even where their influence

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1   Avoiding the debate about the socio-economic level of the early followers of Jesus and their communities in the wake of Meeks' (1983) notion that they were socially upwards mobile and Theissen's (1983) work – both representative of the so-called new consensus entertaining the notion of heterogeneous communities of rich and poor – suffice it to refer to Meggitt (1998), in particular, who made poverty central to considering the economic context of the Pauline letters, and whose analysis of the social structure of the Pauline communities was further refined by Friesen (2004). Oakes (2012) and Oakman (1996) also provide valuable assessments of the socio-economic status of first-century communities.

2   Friesen (2004:324-326) disputes the notion that early Jesus-follower com-munities consisted of an economics-based cross-section of society.

3   Accusations of anachronism and even ethnocentrism are nothing new in studies on Biblical texts, but because of the overriding capitalist framework of the modern world, prevalent when it comes to economic matters. Cf., for example, the critique levelled at Meggitt by Martin (2001) and Theissen (2001). Cf. also Oakman (1996:126, 128, 137, 139).

has become indiscriminating and its acceptance was normalised. Yet, the significance of the Empire's impact on people's social location and socio-economic structures and processes cannot be overestimated, given the "embedded economies" (Oakes 2012:77; cf. Oakman 1996:128, 130) of the time. Empire had no serious challenges to its power, and similar to its politics as "government without bureaucracy" (Garnsey & Saller 1987), it did not micro-manage the economy. The imperial prerogative tended towards maintaining stability, especially in the provinces, through some form of equilibrium between elite and majority, the powerful and the marginalised, the haves and the have-nots.[4] Social disadvantage, then, was not strictly a matter of economics, but was also connected to factors such as family, patronage, politics, and indeed the Roman army. The focus, in this instance, is on the latter, considering how military images in the Pauline corpus reflect something of the physical as much as the furtive or ideological presence of the army. The focus is on military imagery as an important factor in the construction of social order, and by implication for perceptions about social disadvantage.[5] First, though, Pauline military imagery requires proper attention for the Roman army.

2.   THE ROMAN EMPIRE, ITS MILITARY POWER AND THE PEOPLE

Empire manifested variously, politically, economically, socially, religiously and otherwise; assumed different forms in various places, from Rome to the provinces, and from province to province, and existed and functioned through patronal links and alliances with locals. First-century imperial presence was ubiquitous, especially in its military presence. "Die Eroberung des Imperium Romanum erfolgte mit Waffen, und die Präsenz römischer Soldaten blieb das markanteste Zeichen römischer Herrschaft in den Provinzen des Reiches" (Hahn 2006:1; Krentz 2013:347). Empire was poised to use its military prowess ruthlessly when its preferred option

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4   Oakes' (2012:77) descriptions are helpful: *economics* as "the study of the allocation of (scarce) resources"; *economic elite* or the rich as "a wealthy group that controls a larger share of scarce resources than would be expect[ed] in random distribution", and *poverty* as "economically enforced lack of socially perceived necessities".

5   This is not a discussion of the economics of war; scholars in any case lament that "[n]o coherent discussion survives of the financing of the Roman army, let alone of the economics of Roman war" (Rathbone 2007:158). The relation between military and social location also works the other way round. Cline & Graham (2011:5-7) explain: military power relied on economic and ideological support.

of ideological persuasion was exhausted.[6] Considering important and relevant features of the Roman army limits the filling out of military imagery with unrelated referential materials or even sentimentalising such images, and shows the army's impact on society.

2.1 Empire and army

The army was part of Empire, which was primarily a negotiated and relational concept rather than a materialist entity, but with both material and conceptual elements vital. It was a complex constellation of interrelations between powerful and marginalised, characterised by uneven power relations and kept intact by constant social negotiations, aimed at the submission of those on the periphery or in distant settings, by controlling land and resources. Interactions with empire, then, were more complex and hybrid than only support or opposition.[7] Neither monolithic nor simply imposed on passive subalterns, who had equally composite and complex profiles, empire was principally the distillation of sustained interaction between rulers and subjects, imperial forces and indigenous foreigners, with or without intermediaries. Acknowledging such engagements sits well with the cultural turn in Pauline studies,[8] no longer perceiving texts as providing the raw materials for social history, or constructing "ordinary, and marginalized, early Christians" (Harrill 2011:287, referring to Meeks); texts do not render candid social description. So too, essentialist understandings of Empire[9] fail to account for the dynamic and process nature of first-century Empire. In both its conceptualising and its constant fabrication,

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6   Research on ancient warfare has been enriched by textual studies, archaeological discoveries and broader analytical focus, ranging from the individual soldier's experience to attempts to try and understand warfare in relation to social structures. Cf., for example, Sabin *et al.* (2007). For other overviews, cf., for example, the essays in Campbell (1994); Erdkamp (2007); Kennedy (1992:789-798).

7   General descriptions of Empire "as massive concentrations of power which permeate all aspects of life and which cannot be controlled by any one actor alone" (Rieger 2007:4) are a helpful start. Ancient and modern Empire Theory provides further useful categories for theorising the Roman Empire of the first century, for example Hardt & Negri (2000:xv); Cline & Graham (2011).

8   A cultural studies approach "theorizes the discursive ideological strategies in 'texts' themselves," investigating the literary and rhetorical nature of textual sources (Harrill 2011:287).

9   Non-essentialist understandings of Empire do not imply a disavowal of real life, flesh and blood entities (for example, Roth 2003), but point to the illusionary nature of sure categories (essentialism) and certain grounds (objectivity) (cf. Brown 2001:44), *i.e.* to view social phenomena in terms of trans-historical essences, independent of conscious beings, disallowing the notion that society or people determine the categorical structure of reality.

Empire was a *negotiated* concept (Punt 2012a), often represented by its emperor or legions, with military power as an important, defining image.[10]

The Roman army was professional and generally efficient.[11] Made up of recruits rather than conscripts since Augustus – "the reorganization of 30 BC established the basic shape of the Roman army for the next 250 years" (Rankov 2007:36) – most legionaries and all auxiliaries hailed from the Roman provinces and annually swore allegiance to the Emperor.[12] Legionaries either were Roman citizens, or received the status upon enlisting, and auxiliaries upon discharge (Rathbone 2007:163). The Roman army consisted of approximately 25 legions during the early Principate. Each legion had approximately 5,000 men, further divided into ten cohorts, with each having three maniples, and with each maniple finally divided into two centuries. Auxiliary troops included not only infantry forces such as javelin throwers (*velites*), but also cavalry formations, drawn both from the equestrian order and from Rome's allies.[13] The Roman army's order should not be romanticised. Roman soldiers acted with ruthlessness in battle, which included pursuing and killing retreating enemy forces and even the slaughter of residents of captured cities (cf. Hatina 2013:563).[14] The New Testament's vocabulary for violence is varied, but military terms dominate, indicative of the military environment of the day (Desjardins 1997:63-64).[15]

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10   The relationship between emperor and army was not uncomplicated, nor was maintaining control over armies. Suetonius (*Tib*. 25.1) described the emperor's relationship to the army as one of "holding a wolf by the ears". Cf. Erskine (2010:10).

11   "[S]ince the army of the Principate was a volunteer army, service had to be attractive, socially and economically" (Rathbone 2007:164).

12   For a brief account of how the Roman army changed from an annual peasant draft to a professional force, and for Octavian's mass conscriptions of the 30's BCE, which effectively reinstated the triumviral armies as the turning point, cf. Rankov (2007:30-37).

13   A large number of non-combatants accompanied the soldiers on their campaigns (Garnsey & Saller 1983; Marshall 1992:548).

14   The enduring notion that Romanisation was a largely beneficial enterprise is increasingly criticised, and not resolved by acknowledgement of minor collateral damage. Scholarly traditions of Romanisation emphasised the perceived benefits of Roman rule and slighted its brutality and domination of people (cf. Mattingly 2010; Rieger 2007:2).

15   It includes physical human violence, the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and the Christian's life of service to God as spiritual battle. While Collins (2008:225-261) summarises Pauline images, he refers to one single military image (one form of the *agōn* topos) under the heading "Running and fighting", despite a wealth of military images (many of which, ironically, are pointed out in his book).

Notwithstanding the ubiquity of the Empire and soldiers, the impact of the imperial (military) presence in the Pauline letters is often neglected.

In short, soldiers flying high their SPQR banners best manifested the materiality and ideology of the Empire. The legions' purpose was to make war, advance military expansion campaigns, and secure existing territories and borders. The bulk of a soldier's time, however, was taken up by duties performed in the absence of active conflict. Peacetime activities included policing as attested to in Egypt and Palestine, and maintaining general peace and order; protecting key structures, transport and trade routes against resourceful pirates and bandits, as well as other imperial assets such as mines and grain supplies; construction work in the form of building roads, bridges, and forts, and the thankless task of collecting taxes. The link between the army and economics is evident: On the one hand, "the root of the military's function was the preservation of the empire's economic viability and sustainability" (Hatina 2013:561; cf. Campbell 1994:28-45; Goldsworthy 2011:68-107, 119-41). On the other hand, military imagery, invoking violence and war, co-constructed social locations and (dis)advantage.

2.2 Life after the army: History from below

The army's impact on society went beyond military activity and the retirement of soldiers. By the first century CE, legionaries and auxiliaries generally served for 20 and 25 years, respectively, and were regularly settled in the area where they were stationed. Roman colonies often started with veterans as their backbone. Sometimes retired veterans were accommodated in newly created colonies, which served a dual purpose of rewarding former soldiers and having the advantage of loyal men with military experience in a foreign area.

The extent to which the Empire's practice of settling military veterans in key areas, such as Philippi and elsewhere, influenced the metaphorical military language is a consideration not to be ignored. The use of military metaphors was less an indication that war occupied people's minds as that people could not avoid social interaction with structures or agents of Roman military enterprises.[16]

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16 Space does not permit further discussion; suffice it to note that military imagery in philosophers' work, but also on gravestones, in inscriptions, and in other archaeological evidence can shed further light on its appropriation at the time.

The world and lives of ordinary people, and establishing their impact on the course of events in history are no small task.[17] Historiographic orientation willing to look beyond privileged and elitist sources, and devising reliable ways to engage sparse evidence on ordinary members of the Jesus-follower communities gave rise to *people's history* (for example, Oakes 2012:76).[18] Describing "the people" is like the socially disadvantaged problematic: Does the term refer to the poor, the subordinates, or the marginalised? What criteria are appropriate to determine such groups, given that economic, political and cultural categories are construed differently and determined temporally and spatially? Even a *history of popular culture* is confronted by an array of definitions and varied use of "popular" and of "culture" (Burke 2001:10; Sharpe 2001:26-29; cf. Marchal 2008:26-33, 140, n. 86). Amidst the uncertainty, a people's history is characterised by historiographic strategies with concern for the world of ordinary experience and people, and their influence on historical events. History is linked to the identity of those writing or reading it (Sharpe 2001:36), but at times may harbour more sinister aims. In asymmetric power relationships, people construct narratives that challenge the dominant entity's attempt to obliterate the marginalised by dismissing or appropriating their collective history (Dehay 1994:26). A people's history point of view (Sharpe 2001:24-41; cf. Horsley 2005:2), therefore, values the role of memory, without driving the dissimilarity between memory and history too far.[19] While history focuses on the elite, "great men (*sic*)" as shapers of world events, people's history focuses on the non-elite and their historical significance,[20] understanding people in light of their own experiences and reactions (Sharpe 2001:26). Military images in Pauline letters is one indication of how people, from below, perceived and related to (negotiated) Empire, and simultaneously, in this way, signal their social location and standing.

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17   My argument, in this instance, builds on an earlier discussion (Punt 2012b) about the relationship between history and memory, and its value for understanding Paul's use of Israel's Scriptures.

18   Cf. Johnson-Debaufre's (2012:21-23) brief explanation of how, in Pauline studies, the subject of history is changing in the move towards a people's history and de-centering Paul.

19   History and memory are sometimes placed at odds with each other: "History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it" (Nora 1989:9; cf. Keightley 2005:135-136; Olick 2006:6-8); however, memory is the womb of history (Ricoeur 2004). Maybe history has won its victory over memory by usurping it: "Memory has been promoted to the center of history" (Nora 1989:24).

20   History from below shares some characteristics of new history. Cf. Burke (1991:2-6).

3. MILITARY IMAGERY IN PAUL'S LETTERS

Greek and Roman philosophers often used battle or war terminology for human moral efforts. Philosophers, Paul and others shared a world in which armies and warfare contributed to its contours. One prominent motif was ἀγών, deriving from military or athletic contexts, for achieving truth and virtue (Collins 2008:36-38), which Paul used together with related terminology. An explicit term for making war such as στρατεύομαι was used widely in the New Testament, in 1 Peter (1 Pet. 2:11),[21] James (Jas. 4:1) and Paul[22] in a metaphorical sense, portraying the life in Christ as warfare.[23] Paul's "military metaphor[s] [have] a place within the rich and ancient tradition of philosophic discourse" (Collins 2008:171), and illustrate the power of images in Paul, which found their match in the power of imperial images (for example, Zanker 1990).

Given the ubiquity of Empire and its army as its key symbol, the strong presence of military imagery in the Pauline letters – notwithstanding few direct references to military events – is unsurprising.[24] Warlike elements are related to the apocalyptic tenor, but not expanded to the image of Christ (Von Harnack 1905:9; Zerbe 2012:127-129). Paul's letters mirror the New Testament where war is addressed indirectly: in relation to God's kingdom and Jesus' kingship in the Gospels; non-retaliation and love of enemies; Jesus' personal behaviour; the roles of the state and military officials, and the use of force (cf. Marshall 1985:115-116; Swartley 2006:48).[25] Warfare

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21 Cf. Elliott (2000:464-465). 1 Peter appears to stress that, in opposition to the letter's privileging of suffering, the natural impulses toward comfort, self-protection and self-gratification may, in fact, be detrimental to a person's life (Michaels 1988:117).

22 In 1 Cor. 10:3 and Rom. 7:23, Paul used ἀντιστρατεύομαι, to be at war; cf. also in the Deutero-Paulines, 1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 2:4. In 1 Cor. 9:7, Paul used στρατεύω in reference to soldiering as a vocation.

23 The military terms in 1 Peter's moral instruction, στρατεύονται (2:11) and ὁπλίσασθε (4:1) do not contrast God's creation to the structures of Empire; to the contrary, Jesus followers are encouraged to consider the Empire as a part of God's creation (1 Pet. 2:13).

24 Paul's list of sufferings (2 Cor. 11:16-33) does not indicate run-ins with Roman authorities or soldiers, maybe because of the devolution of power along patronage lines, or because the presence of Empire in Paul's letters is the proverbial fish in the ocean scenario, with the fish not realising or accounting for the most obvious part of its context? If Paul was a tentmaker (cf. Acts 18:3), regular contact with army chiefs for provisioning tents was possible (Bruce 1980:235).

25 For one model of the interrelationship between war and peace in the New Testament, cf. Swartley's (2006:50-52) seven theses.

imagery metaphorically describes the Christian way of life.[26] Military images in Paul's letters underscore the link between violence and war,[27] but also indicate a masculine sense of identity.[28] As Clines (2003:184) notes,

> Paul is no warrior, but he is a traditional male, and he participates in violence in the ways open to him, given the historical and social setting supplied for him in texts by him and about him.

Not only were social relations and kinship embedded in economics (Oakman 1996:128), but, given the gendered ancient society, it meant a continuous interplay between military, economics, and social life in the first century.

3.1 Overt military images

The direct economic impact of the Roman army on society is not discussed in this instance, partly because of the general lack of statistics and partly because the focus is on people's history. Suffice it to mention that, while regular and discharge payments can be estimated (with the provinces probably footing part of the bill), it is almost impossible to appraise peacetime costs and that of equipping the army. Military expenses were possibly the single biggest cost on the fiscus, but did not account for more than half of all expenditure. For the army's influence on society,

> Roman sources variously claim, for their own purposes, that Roman taxation was necessary to pay the armies which brought peace, or that civilians were overtaxed to pay greedy soldiers (Rathbone 2007:175).

The Roman army of the Principate was "an agent of economic development, especially in less developed provinces". Soldiers' needs stimulated agricultural and other production, but being a small part (one per cent or less) of the population, the army's impact should not be exaggerated, although they helped "diffuse a more sophisticated model of economic behaviour" (Rathbone 2007:176).[29] Given this varied social and economic

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26   In the Deutero-Pauline Pastorals, Timothy is exhorted to be "a good soldier of Christ Jesus", "wage the good warfare", not "entangled in civilian pursuits", and living to please "the one who enlisted him" (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3; 2 Tim. 2:4); cf. Clines (2001:185).

27   "The name for strength in action, in traditional male terms, is violence. And the name for the violent action of men in groups is war" (Clines 2003:184).

28   Gender-based appeals accompany the three Pauline passages, in which military language is strongest (1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; cf. Hobbs 1995:249).

29   "Roman soldiers of the Principate belonged to the largest salaried labour force known before the Industrial Revolution. Their lives were highly monetized", in

impact of the army on a daily basis, an abundance of military imagery in the literature of the time is understandable.

3.1.1 Images related to waging war, engaging in battle, acting as soldiers

Paul used images related to military campaigning, as well as weaponry images.[30] In his earliest (extant) letter, he claims that he brought the gospel message to Thessalonica ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι (1 Thes. 2:2). As noted earlier, ἀγών was a familiar Hellenistic *topos*, popular among Cynics and Stoics for the struggle on behalf of truth (Collins 2008:37).[31] Greek-speaking Jews used ἀγών for the struggle against evil (*T.Ash.* 6.2; 4 Ezra 7:127) in 4 Maccabees 9:23-24 to refer to fighting for one's religion, and Philo used it for a life according to the Law (*Husbandry* 113, 119). It is not clear whether the military or athletic environment was the most appropriate referential sphere (for example, Collins 2008). Athletic metaphors such as ἄθλησις (striving, contending) and ἀγών (struggle) were already used by Josephus and, in 4 Maccabees, for military struggle and resistance (cf. Pfitzner 1967:57-72). However, athletic and military aspects of struggle and contest cannot be separated in the Greek and Roman worlds (Zerbe 2012:125, 249-250, n. 8), and the metaphors' grounding status appears to have been the military setting.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, a section heavily laden with war-related notions, Paul used seven references linked to the military domain, expressing what transpires in battle. Shifting his imagery from the agricultural to the military, he describes his struggle as waging war (στρατευόμεθα) with non-human weapons (τὰ ... ὅπλα ... οὐ σαρκικά) capable of destroying strongholds (καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων).[32] According to Paul, he also destroys arguments

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terms of lending and borrowing, contact with trades and crafts people, and travelling (Rathbone 2007:176).

30 Comprehensive analyses of military imagery in the Pauline corpus can be found elsewhere, cf., for example, Hobbs (1995:248-62); Krentz (2003:344-83); Von Harnack (1905). For an extensive list of fifteen categories of military related terminology, cf. Zerbe (2012:125, 250-252, n. 11-25).

31 Collins (2008:37-38) reminds one that ancient authors often used ἀγών; for example, Plato to refer to the struggle to live an ethical life, and the Stoics to the discipline required for a virtuous life. Both of them exhorted athletes to prepare them for the ἀγών, and used athletic diligence as motivation for an ethical life (for example, Epictetus *Discourses* 2.18.27-28; Seneca *Epistle* 109.6).

32 Generally keen to suggest a Hebrew Bible provenance for Pauline metaphors, Collins (2008:169) is doubtful that Prov. 21:22 is an appropriate intertext in this instance, due to the density of military imagery and Paul's infrequent recourse to Proverbs elsewhere.

(λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες)[33] and every proud obstacle (πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον), in the interest of obeying Christ, takes every thought captive (αἰχμαλωτίζοντες), while ready to punish (ἐν ἑτοίμῳ ἔχοντες ἐκδικῆσαι) disobedience.[34]

The imagery is indicative of an awareness of Roman military strategy and of these images' metaphorical usefulness among ancient authors (cf. Collins 2008:169-171; Gerber 2005:105-113; Malherbe 2003:143-173).[35] However, when Paul describes the process of waging war with four participles dependent upon στρατευόμεθα, namely καθαιροῦντες (tearing down), αἰχμαλωτίζοντες (taking captive), ἐπαιρόμενον (destroying) and ἔχοντες (being ready), and using terms rare in the New Testament, such as ὀχύρωμα (stronghold) and ὕψωμα (elevated rampart),[36] the ubiquity of Empire and an awareness of the army's methods are clear. Military imagery reflected and bolstered a first-century consciousness informed by a prevailing threat of military power or action, suggesting that it was not a once-off use of such imagery due to the opposition in Corinth (contra Malherbe 1983:166). Malherbe did not consider further implications:

> He announces that, once he has crushed the opposition, he will take as prisoners the thoughts of the Corinthians in order to assure their submission to Christ. *His phrasing implies a military preparedness to punish* (10:5-6) (Malherbe 1983:145; emphasis added).

Relying on military images to assert his authority in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (Glancy 2004:135) – maybe recalling Corinth's demise in 146 BCE at the hands of the Romans (Gerber 2005:112) – as well as in his other letters, attests to the significance of the images for Paul.

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33 Collins (2008:172) mentions that, in the extant Greek literature of the time, καθαίρεσις is always used for the demolition of fortified structures, and never used metaphorically.

34 It is feasible to also include τολμῆσαι in 2 Cor. 10:2, as it often expresses "to dare" or "to have courage". τολμάω is used of military commanders' battlefield courage; cf. Plutarch, *Saying of Spartans* 213C (cf. Collins 2008:169, n. 67; Harrill 2006:29).

35 Malherbe explains how Antisthenes "applied the image of a city fortified against a siege to the wise man's rational faculties with which he fortifies himself", and how

> he applied the image of a soldier's personal armour to the garb of Odysseus the proto-Cynic, who through his versatility and self-humiliation adapted himself to circumstances in order to gain the good of his associates and save them (Malherbe 1983:165).

36 ὀχύρωμα is a *hapax legomenon* and ὕψωμα is used only in this instance and in Rom. 8:39.

Some military imagery was even connected to divine agency. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul used the notion of triumphal entry of a victorious army (θριαμβεύω) in the aftermath of a military campaign. God is portrayed as a victorious military commander leading a procession of the faithful, until 2 Corinthians 2:14b-16 switches to olfactory metaphors for furthering God's name and reign. At times, Paul even thought about his fellow workers in military terms. In Philippians 2:25, Paul referred to his co-worker Epaphroditus as a brother and a *fellow-soldier* (Ἐπαφρόδιτον … συστρατιώτην μου). Military imagery in Philippians may be explained with reference to the military's role in Paul's imprisonment in Philippi (Philippians 1:13, 4:22), as well as to Philippi's military provenance[37] (Collins 2008:63). In Philemon 2, Paul refers to Archippus as a συστρατιώτης, which indicates that the metaphor was not determined by locality.[38] In fact, Paul used military imagery even for a personified image of the Torah; Romans 7:23 refers to the law that ἀντιστρατευόμενον (wages war) and αἰχμαλωτίζοντά (takes prisoners).[39]

3.1.2 Images related to weaponry and instruments of war

Paul used battle and soldiery motifs, but also wrote about believers bearing weapons and wearing armour (2 Cor. 6:7, 10:4; Rom. 13:12), donning breastplates and helmets (1 Thes. 5:8). Convinced that he addressed a mainly Jewish audience in Thessalonica, some scholars insist that θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης, and περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας engaged intertexts such as Isaiah 59:17 ("He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head"), or the Biblical motif of divine warrior (Collins 2008:38, 169). "Paul's armor imagery may also reflect the standard Jewish idea of a final war preceding the end and the military imagery used by moralists concerning their struggle with the passions" (Keener 1993:592).

While Paul's metaphorical use of the terms is clear, their purpose and frame of reference elicit debate. He did not speak of war or the tools of

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37 Victorious in battle in 42 BCE, veterans from Octavian and Marc Anthony's armies, as well as the Praetorian Guard after Octavian's victory over Anthony in 31 BCE, settled in Philippi. Octavian set up twenty-eight such veteran colonies in Italy (Rankov 2007:35).

38 Military commanders used συστρατιώτης as honorific address, to praise their troops; cf. Caesar who used *commilitiones* (Suetonius, *Julius* 67) and Brutus συστρατιῶται to address his troops in 42 BCE in Philippi (Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.117) (cf. Collins 2008:62-63).

39 Collins (2008:200) notes that "[t]he figurative use of these military terms is rarely attested before Paul" (except Aristaenetus 2.1 with ἀντιστρατεύομαι).

war as such, but of breastplates of righteousness, faith, and love, helmets of hope, and weapons of light. Comparisons with moralists' use of the ἀγών motif have been pointed out, but comparisons are also present in soldiery dress in terms of demeanour.[40] Paul issued more of these general calls to arms. In Romans 13:12, he called upon his readers to, together with him, put on the armour of light (ἐνδυσώμεθα [δὲ] τὰ ὅπλα τοῦ φωτός; cf. Clines 2001:185; Collins 2008:220). In 2 Corinthians 10:4, his reference to τὰ ... ὅπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν clarifies two issues: First, the notion of athletic competition dissipates before weapons of war, emphasised by their purpose of destroying strongholds and, secondly, these weapons which are "ours" (ἡμῶν) are metaphorical since they are οὐ σαρκικά (not fleshly, ordinary) and have divine power (δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ). In short, Paul used military imagery to explain his ministry, and, in 2 Corinthians 6:7, believers are armed with weapons of righteousness (τῶν ὅπλων τῆς δικαιοσύνης) in both hands.[41]

3.2 Subtle imagery

Word studies, however, do not pick up on all military imagery. The verb ὑποτάσσειν, for example, which occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament, mostly as part of moral instruction, is used in other Greek texts for political or military subjugation (Elliott 2000:486). The *Haustafeln* of the Deutero-Pauline Colossians and Ephesians would use ὑποτάσσειν for mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), and the submission of wives to husbands (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:21, 24) and ὑπακούειν for the obedience of children and servants (Col. 3:20, 22; Eph. 6:1, 5). 1 Peter also uses ὑποτάσσειν consistently (2:18; 3:1, 5; cf. 5:5), except for the reference to Sarah (3:6).[42] All in all, ὑποτάσσειν is aligned with the conventional social order of the time, which

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40 For example, for Antisthenes, soldiers' military armour depicts Odysseus' dress of resourcefulness and self-humiliation, since the latter protects his allies (Malherbe 1983:165). "Paul's rhetoric is shaped by the cultural metaphors of masculinity" (Conway 2008:69).

41 Eph. 4:14-17 mentions a metaphorical belt (implied in περιζώννυμαι, to gird), breastplate (θώραξ), shoes (implied in ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας), shield (θυρεός), helmet (περικεφαλαία) and sword (μάχαιρα). Clines (2001:185) notes correspondences with 1 Thes. 5:8.

42 Commentators tend to obscure the lingering military connotations. For example, Michaels (1988:124) appeals to the use of ὑπακοή (obedience, 1 Pet. 1:2, 14, 22) for a person's acceptance of the message of Christ as primary and radical commitment, arguing that ὑποτάσσειν, therefore, denotes a secondary and limited obligation, which can be translated with "respect" rather than with "submit to".

required the subordination of the socially inferior to superior,[43] exemplified in military structure and life.

In 1 Corinthians 14:6-7, Paul referred to the distinctive sounds produced by different musical instruments such as the flute (αὐλούμενον) and harp (κιθαριζόμενον), in order to explain different spiritual gifts in the community. In 1 Corinthians 14:8, he switched to the bugle (σάλπιγξ, often translated as "trumpet") as instrument, with its not indistinct (ἄδηλον) sound and its call to prepare for battle (παρασκευάσεται εἰς πόλεμον). The bugle and its explicit military connection suggest more than distinctive sounds of different instruments, or that an intended effect requires a particular sound (Collins 2008:133).[44] Paul also used σάλπιγξ in both 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, where he allocated it a divine use in God apocalyptic, end-time intervention.

More tellingly, Paul appears to have used military imagery in situations where he felt compelled to defend himself. Defending his apostleship in 2 Corinthians 11:7-9 (8), he invoked a military setting with συλάω (to rob)[45] and ὀψώνιον (rations; cf. 1 Cor. 9:7). While, in Homer, συλάω referred to drawing a bow, it was later used with the meaning of victorious soldiers seizing arms, despoiling fallen bodies in war, or pillaging cities. ὀψώνιον again were the provisions or rations a soldier received while on active military service (cf. Collins 2008:178).[46] In 2 Corinthians 12:7, σκόλοψ (often translated as "thorn") also describes a "stake" used by the Roman army to impede the enemy's progress or the instrument used to torture enemy soldiers. Paul used the term for an army marching in order (στοιχέω);[47] four out of the five times it is found in the New Testament (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 5:25, 6:16; Phil. 3:16). Other terms such as ὑπερνικάω (prevail completely, Rom. 8:37) or φρουρέω

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43   The term is also used, for example, in Tit. 2:9; *Did*. 4.11; 1 Clem. 1:3; Polycarp *Phil*. 5:3; Barn. 19.7. In, for example, Rom. 13:1 and Tit. 3:1, ὑποτάσσειν is not used within a household code (Achtemeier 1996:182).

44   Bugle and war are connected in the Hebrew Bible as well; for example, Num. 10:9; Josh. 6:4-20; Judg. 3:27, 6:34; 1 Sam. 13:3; Is. 18:3, 27:13, 58:1; Jer. 4:5, 19, 21; 51:27. In the New Testament, σάλπιγξ appears also in Matt. 24:31 and Heb. 12:19, as well as six times in Rev. (1:10; 4:1; 8:2, 6, 13; 9:14).

45   Spicq (in *TDNT* 3:312-313) understands Paul's use of συλάω (*hapax legomenon*) differently, referring to the right of seizure of property as legitimate retaliation: Paul defended himself but also shamed the Corinthians for being denied his rightful subsistence.

46   Collins (2008:178) notes that Paul used military metaphors in defence of his ministry in 2 Cor. 10 and 11.

47   "Roman phalanx derived it[s] strength from ranks formed and acting in this way [standing and moving forward in a single line]" (Collins 2008:137).

(to guard [with a garrison]; used literally in 2 Cor. 11:32; metaphorically in Gal. 3:23 and Phil. 4:7) also carry military-related overtones.

In fact, military imagery penetrated everyday language use, often in subtle ways. Extensive military infused language can indicate the banality of the military angle, of course, but in conjunction with explicit military metaphors, such language rather suggests an acute awareness of the military. Military imagery did not simply show one side of Empire; the imagery, rather, represented Empire – at the same time indicative of the army's constructive impact and of its potentially destructive role on local communities and their economies. Paul rhetorically constructed the socio-economic life and status of Jesus-follower communities by means of military images. As Steuter and Wills (2008:xv) argue: "What is reflected in language is not reality but construct, something conditioned and assembled, put together from fragments of information and observation".[48] In short, with military imagery widely taken up in first-century discourse, not only the army, but also the Empire are made present in discourse, while they simultaneously defined the discourse.

4. RETHINKING FIRST-CENTURY SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MILITARY TERMS

4.1 Purpose of military imagery

Military imagery derived, at least partly, from the ubiquity of soldiers and military materials, whether in their physical presence or by them occupying ideological space. The Gospels (for example, Luke 13:1-3 and Mark 13:7) and Acts 5:36-37 provide acknowledgement of tensions between Jews and the Empire, and of revolt and retaliation, hinting at the broader and more pervasive impact of imperial domination.[49] The incidental argument alone does not explain the purpose or rationale of the use of such imagery – which, in the case of Paul, was probably closer related to his gender-based, rhetorical aims than anything else.

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48   Re identity construction in the imperial period:

> These identities do not denote a reality but are the product of a group of persons' conviction that they share essential qualities that consolidate them as a community and distinguish them from non-members of that community (Perkins 2009:3).

49   Cf., for example, Schotroff's (1992:157) calculations of the vast numbers of soldiers during the time of Augustus.

Military imagery functioned in a context where "a man (or a state) was judged as good at something (*agathos*) or as possessing *arete* (excellence) to the extent that he demonstrated superiority over others" (Roisman 2005:67). The Greeks used ἀνδρεία and ἀρετή for manliness,[50] which was expressed by the Roman *virtus*. The Greek ἀρετή described manliness inclusive of physical prowess or courage as one element, but for the Romans in republican and imperial times, *virtus* was defined by it.[51] True manliness was someone's bodily ability and mettle, which explains both the militaristic nature of Roman society and the extensive use of *virtus* for courage amidst a wide semantic range (McDonnell 2003:236). Military exploits informed the construction of masculinity and differences between men and women. In fact, individuals used ideas from war to understand and construct their own personalities (Sidebottom 2004:10). Gender determined ancient social standing, and the construction of identity through soldiery meant a claim to power, which construed a kind of "warrior masculinity" (James 2011:54). Ancient rhetoricians associated military prowess, manliness and mastery with virtue, or a sense of good (Gunderson 2009:119).[52]

However, while military imagery was important for his male self-understanding, Paul's position on fighting was ambiguous. "[F]ighting itself (*machomai, machee*) is a bad word for Paul" and "[f]ighting (*machee*) is what Paul's opponents do, not an activity in which he engages (2 Cor 7:5)" (Clines 2001:185).[53] It is, however, inaccurate to suggest that when he replaced μάχη with ἀγών, a switch was made to athletic or similar contests. The link between Paul's readiness for battle, engagement in warlike contest and self-understanding as a man is instructive. Military imagery gendered social life, which again determined social standing and impacted on notions of disadvantage. Evidently, the "use of military metaphors does not make the

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50 "The idea that honorable death in battle was preferable to ignoble cowardice was a cornerstone of the Athenian ideology of masculine honor … war was seen as a contest in which Athenians proved their superiority and manly worth" (Roisman 2004:67).

51 "Christian men of late antiquity shared with their pagan counterparts a desire to see themselves as manly, a desire also threatened by the military crisis of the Roman Empire. … Out of that desire and because of those worries, Christian men fashioned for themselves the image of the soldier of Christ" (Kuefler 2001:105).

52 In Quintillian's *Institutes*, the constant recalling of military metaphors produces a subtext to the text as a whole by insisting on the excellence, appeal and authority of public speaking (Gunderson 2009:119).

53 Cf. also Clines (2001:185) on the Pastorals: "*machai* in 2 Tim 2:23 are quarrels, which Timothy must avoid, and likewise *machai nomikai,* quarrels over the law (Titus 3:9)".

speech nor the speaker inherently violent" (Zerbe 2012:138), but does raise the question as to why these metaphors? To regard "Paul's socially binary or militarily combative conquest language [as] most certainly amenable to misappropriation", yet to claim that this "fault" "cannot be ascribed simply to Paul" (Zerbe 2012:138) exonerates Pauline language too quickly, also in its unwillingness to consider Pauline ambivalence on these matters. Military imagery bolstered his self-presentation claims, but also allowed for remapping social location.

4.2 Social disadvantage and military terms

Military imagery clearly contributed to the rhetorical construction of social life in the first century. From the discussion, at least two conclusions became evident. One, if it is indeed correct to argue that a primary purpose of the Roman army was related to ensuring economic stability across the imperial lands, military presence cannot be ignored in discussions about socio-economic concerns. In addition, abundant military imagery in the Pauline letters underwrote the apostle's claims and defence towards other proselytisers, and shows the penetration of the military into first-century consciousness.[54] In short, Paul rhetorically constructed the socio-economic life and status of Jesus-follower communities through military images.

The embedded economics of the first century privileges an inter-sectional approach, which stresses the multiple contacts through which people and groups experience life, such as gender, ethnicity, the status of someone's work, class, geographical location (especially urban and rural), status (slave, free or freed), but also these factors' interwoven and at times confluent status.[55] Truncated and one-sided perspectives of social context studies of ancient economics or gender or Empire miss out on the rich intersections between these different components. Within this bigger, interrelated world, military images fed into an "overarching system of subordination and control" (Marchal 2005:281). The military setting impacted on social consciousness, as suggested by the Pauline texts' widespread military imagery. The general military awareness goes beyond the army's material presence and influence on social life and economics. Military imagery impacted on societal consciousness with consequences

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54 "Metaphors have to be taken seriously as indicators of the social values of the group. They are a means of self-definition" (Hobbs 1995:255).

55 Cf. also Oakes (2012:78) on the usefulness of intersectionality in the study of ancient economics; he stresses that specific identity variables remain, retaining their importance in, and of themselves, but also as economic markers.

for notions of social disadvantage in the sense of reflecting or construing social status.[56]

Pauline military imagery suggests the Roman army's ambivalent but often malignant influence on communities, and its lingering effects. In postcolonial mimicry style, Paul took up military imagery to further his own ministry, often framing values in opposition to those of Empire. His use of military images as metaphors and not references to actual military events indicates that he co-opted imperial language for his own purposes. On the one hand, the power of Paul's images stacked up against the power of imperial images (cf. Collins 2008; Zanker 1990; Lopez 2012).[57] On the other, the ambivalence often inhabiting postcolonial contexts are also present in Pauline letters. Similar to Paul's positive use of slavery metaphors to describe the life in Christ against slavery's dehumanising tenor, he used military imagery in a way that forces a rethink of social disadvantage in so far as Roman politics and military systems impacted upon early Jesus-follower communities.[58]

Paul's metaphorical language neither provides nor depends on accurate real-life scenarios, and discourages misplaced attempts at reconstructions. His military imagery suggests familiarity with the Empire's war machine and propaganda, and with common literary *topoi* of moral philosophers. "[T]he military metaphor presents a decisive shift in the self-understanding of at least a substantial part of the primitive Christian community" (Hobbs 1995:255). Metaphorical use of harmful concepts such as slavery or war for constructive purposes suggests contexts where systems such as slavery and enterprises such as war were valued even by those on the sharp side of such systems and enterprises. The mimical use of concepts aligned with Empire redraws the social world and its inhabitants from a constructivist perspective, emphasising the conjoined nature of life in Empire.[59] Taking up military imagery, Pauline discourse simultaneously evoked the army's

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56 Related questions such as the role of patronage *vis-à-vis* citizens and soldiers (veterans) cannot be addressed in this instance.

57 Pauline military imagery reached full development in the Pastorals, with their call to become God's soldiers. The correspondence between τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν (1 Tim. 1:18), καλὸς στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (2 Tim. 2:3), ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως (1 Tim. 6:12) and τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγώνισμαι (2 Tim. 4:7) is evident (cf. Pfitzner 1967:165-171).

58 Slavery and military imagery are related to war as a principal source of slavery; the Roman *Digesta* 1.5.4.2-3 explains that slaves (*servi*) are called that, because generals preferred taking captives and preserving (*servare*) rather than killing them (cf. Harrill 2006:30).

59 "Colonial mimicry", a concept coined by Bhabha (1994:85-92), at once indicates "the ethical gap between the normative vision of post-Enlightenment civility

contribution to social life and its destruction of land and life, for Paul's person and the communities he addressed.

5.   CONCLUSION

The Roman army and accompanying military apparatus had a decided if ambivalent impact on ancient social life, offering economic benefits for the insiders, while impacting harshly on those remaining on the underside of history. Paul's use of military images in his rhetorical construction of communities shared such ambivalence, especially since in his letters the instruments that threatened lives were now employed to define life in Christ. In broader socio-historical perspective, Paul and the small communities he addressed were by and large those who contributed to a history from below. Nevertheless, he overtly and covertly used military images to construe positions, especially his own with regard to others. Paul also construed first-century communities' lives through war-related imagery. Recourse to military imagery resulted from the pervasive presence of Roman soldiers on various levels, also in trade and industry, especially given how economics was nested into various other social and political networks. In addition, and careful not to exaggerate the relation between language and (real-life) reference, or to negate previous remarks about language's constructive functions, Paul's military metaphors are indicative of communities living in the presence of the Roman army. When considering the social location of Paul and his communities, their social disadvantage or otherwise, the Roman Empire and the impact of its military apparatus are, therefore, of vital significance for an accountable hermeneutics of the Pauline letters.

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and its distorted colonial (mis)imitation", and also becomes the "sly weapon of anti-colonial civility, and ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience".

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