"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... Stand firm, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breast plate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

No-one questions that various texts from Isaiah have heavily influenced Eph 6.14-17. What is debated is the nature and precise extent of this influence and whether an appreciation of this OT background has a bearing on the interpretation of these verses. Kamlah, for instance, is rather pessimistic and holds that the OT sources behind Eph 6.14ff are not enough to explain the passage satisfactorily.1 This may or may not prove to be so. What can be shown is that an increased awareness of the OT background is rewarding.

Commentators on the theology of this epistle have regrettably frequently passed over this passage frequently, as Arnold rightly complains.2 This may be attributed partly to a lack of certainty among scholars, as to the epistolary interpretative framework of ch 6.10-20. It is not entirely clear whether these verses are meant to conclude just the ethical section of the epistle (chs 4 - 6), or the entire letter including the doxological first half. This question is linked closely with another: does the armour imagery expounded here allude to the full gear of a Roman soldier, as has traditionally been thought, or are there other interpretations which may be used to supplement the traditional explanation of the imagery employed? It is partly the aim of this chapter to propose such a supplementary understanding and show how it relates to the OT language characterising this passage.

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1 In Wild, "Warrior", 286.
2 Arnold, Powers, 226 and 227 n6.
It is not only the co-textual framework of these verses which is somewhat difficult to determine, the historical context which occasioned this concluding imagery is equally hard to establish. Attempts to relate the epistle as a whole to a specific historical situation have been somewhat lacking in recent decades—the exception is Arnold's study—and even less efforts have been made to find a suitable Sitz for this passage in particular. Rather than attempting to reconstruct a setting for the epistle from ch 6.10ff, scholars on the whole approach this concluding section in the light of historical assumptions based on other portions—usually ch 2.11ff—of this document. Thus Käsemann conjectured that the growing gentile Christianity pushed aside and despised Jewish Christianity.\(^3\) Along somewhat similar lines Schmithals argues that the author had attempted to bring together those Christian communities which broke away from the diaspora synagogues in the wake of the destruction of the Temple.\(^4\) Schnackenburg and Merklein claim that the cause of disunity was a post-apostolic leadership crisis.\(^5\) Pokorny suggests that the main reason for the disunity among the addressees consisted of differences in the evaluation of gnostic concepts by Jewish and gentile members among the congregations.\(^6\) Each of these proposals can be related only vaguely, if at all, to ch 6.10ff.

More relevant to interpreting this text is Lona's proposal to explain the letter on the basis of a fundamental Weltangst found in the social environment into which the letter was directed.\(^7\) This acknowledges that our text presupposes a situation of conflict which may well have gone beyond the confines of the Christian sect.\(^8\) The assumption that the armoury passage should be treated as a plain encouragement to take the spiritual battle to the forces of evil may well prove to be in need of some modification. New avenues will have to be explored, and I propose to re-examine the use of traditional language in this text.

It will be necessary, first, to become acquainted with the role of this section within the epistle and, secondly, to ascertain the internal coherence of this text. This will be followed by locating and

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3 Käsemann, "Ephesians and Acts", 291.
4 Schmithals, Corpus, 122.
5 Schnackenburg, Epheser, 31 and Merklein, Kirche, 386ff.
6 Pokorny, Epheser.
7 Lona, Eschatologie, 439.
8 Such Weltangst lies at the heart of much of the astrological and magical activities which characterised first century Western Asia Minor (Seiterle, "Artemis", 3-16; Arnold, Powers, 471-4).