dynamic complexities and nuances of all traditions, some of which perhaps could even positively change the church.

All in all, this challenging book is a valuable contribution to North American church life. It is sure to spark powerful dialog, calling Christians to reject the violence seen all too often in the state in favor of the nonviolent politics at the heart of the gospel and Jesus' love for neighbor and enemy alike.

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Ronald J. Sider, ed. *The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion, and Capital Punishment*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012

For many years Ron Sider has written about Christian attitudes to life issues, and has advocated Christian nonviolence and a consistently pro-life approach to war, abortion, and capital punishment. In *The Early Church on Killing* he brings his historian's training to bear on the search for roots in the first three centuries of the church's history. He is aware that Christians today are often selectively pro-life; so he finds it illuminating to study abortion (which many oppose) together with war and capital punishment (which many favor).

His method in this book is to assemble all the relevant material in one place, punctuated by his own commentary, which draws upon the extensive scholarly writing on the subject. He is aware that he has theological convictions and he states his own Anabaptist perspective; but he is determined that as far as possible he will eliminate bias from his historical judgments, for he views it as "fundamentally immoral" (14) to slant texts to fit a pre-existing ideological position. Where there are texts that are ambiguous or (from his vantage point) problematic, he is determined to

look the difficulties in the face. In charitable but at times pointed asides he requires similar craft and transparency from other writers.

Four-fifths of *The Early Church and Killing* is a valuable collection of excerpts from Christian writings of the centuries prior to the emperor Constantine's accession in the early fourth century. Some of these sources are theological (Sider devotes twenty pages to Tertullian); others are church orders (such as the *Apostolic Tradition*); and some—such as the grave inscriptions for Christian legionaries—are archaeological. Sider knows that inadvertently his coverage of the sources will be incomplete, but his batting average is high; I know of only two pre-Constantinian sources that I wish he had included. His comments address scholarly differences, and he appears fair in his representation of the work of leading non-pacifist scholars John Helgeland and Louis Swift; only where a German scholar "reads his own assumptions into the text" does Sider bristle (152). I regret that the translations of the early Christian writings that Sider uses—slightly modernized—are those in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* that were published in Scotland over 140 years ago.

In a concluding "Afterword" Sider sifts and summarizes the materials that he has presented. About abortion and capital punishment he offers evidence that the sources unanimously reject these practices. But when he comes to killing, war, and military service, he recognizes that he has entered contested territory. He nevertheless confidently offers summaries under nine headings. In general I believe that he occupies the scholarly high ground. On the topic of the book—killing—Sider is hard to refute: "Nine different Christian writers in sixteen different treatises say that killing is wrong. No extant Christian writing before Constantine argues that there is any circumstance under which a Christian may kill" (168).

On two other points—the early Christians' immersion in the admonitions in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to love the enemy, as well as their recurrent references to the Isaiah/Micah "swords into ploughshares" passages—his evidence is equally strong. Under his fifth heading, reasons for rejecting Christian participation in the military, Sider notes—correctly, I believe—that the Christians, who were concerned to avoid idolatry, more often based their refusal upon their commitment not to kill.

Nevertheless, from the mid-3rd century onwards, an increasing

number of Christians were found in the legions. Under his final heading, Sider deals with these, acknowledging the messiness of the story (from the late 2nd-century *Thundering Legion* to soldier martyrs such as Julius the Veteran); he also recognizes ways that soldiers, after conversion, might be able to be stay in the legions without violating the church's prohibition of killing.

At times I would like a different shading of the evidence. For example, I would have Sider take more seriously the primitive biblical theology of the North African soldiers whom Tertullian met ("Moses carried a rod . . . and Joshua the son of Nun leads a line of march, and the people warred" [*De Idololatria* 19]), not least because they were anticipating, from below, themes that in the early 5th century Augustine of Hippo would make central to respectable Christian theology (*Epistle 189, to Boniface*). But in general I find Sider to be an authoritative guide who has the gift of writing crisply and effectively, and I warmly welcome this book.

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Jared Burkholder and David C. Cramer, eds. *The Activist Impulse: Essays on the Intersection of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012.

What do you do if you are located in an evangelical tradition long removed from its Anabaptist heritage and you discover that heritage and find it attractive? If you are Jared Burkholder, a professor at Grace College, and David Cramer, a doctoral student at Baylor University and former instructor at Bethel College (Indiana), you tap other like-minded young scholars and sympathetic senior scholars and produce a lively, thought-provoking collection of essays contending that evangelicals would benefit greatly from more appropriation of Anabaptist emphases—and that Anabaptists should see their tradition as compatible with evangelicalism.