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.

The book's first section, "Intersecting Stories: Historical Reflection on the Nexus of Evangelicalism and Anabaptism," draws on three senior scholars, including two Mennonites (Steve Nolt and John Roth), who warmly welcome the interest of evangelicals in Anabaptism and emphasize the compatibility between the two streams of Christianity. Roth, especially, seeks to counter the more hostile response to evangelicalism from Anabaptist scholars in an important earlier collection (Norman Kraus, ed., *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism* [1979]).

The discussion by Nolt and Roth points to a complicated issue lurking throughout this volume. What precisely do we mean by "evangelicalism"? The editors intentionally did not ask their writers to follow a given, stable definition but gave them the freedom to use the term as they saw fit. Nolt's definition is followed by most of the other authors: "Evangelicalism is a stream of Protestant Christianity marked by emphases on religious conversion, active and overt expression of faith, the authority of the Bible, and Christ's death on the cross" (13). This rather benign definition doesn't clarify why there would be any tension between "evangelicalism" and "Anabaptism." Writers in this book don't want to emphasize tensions; most advocate harmony between the two streams.

Nolt's definition puts 20th-century American evangelicalism in a direct trajectory with earlier Protestants. The definition followed by contributors to the Kraus volume would suggest more discontinuity between earlier Protestants and 20th-century American evangelicals that has to do with the emergence around 1900 of the fundamentalist movement. More recent evangelicalism, according to this alternative definition, cannot be understood apart from its identity as a kind of "post-fundamentalist" movement. As such, evangelicalism builds on fundamentalism and in some sense remains defined by its core elements. These elements are quite a bit more specific than Nolt's list. For example, it's not just "the authority of the Bible" but "verbal, plenary inspiration" and inerrancy. It's not just "Christ's death on the cross" but the substitutionary atonement. And, importantly, less than full adherence to these beliefs is considered heretical.

When we think of evangelicalism in terms of its modern fundamentalist roots, it is easier to grasp why some see stronger tensions between evangelicalism and Anabaptism than are expressed in *The Activist*

Impulse. However, since the book seeks to encourage evangelicals to be more open to Anabaptist influences, it makes sense that such tensions would not be front and center. Only if we approach this conversation from the other side—whether Anabaptists should be more open to evangelical influences—do the points of tension become more important.

Several essays sketch historical background for formerly Anabaptist evangelical groups such as the Missionary Church and Grace Brethren. Two others show how (admittedly a small minority of) evangelicals have been open to Anabaptist influences, especially from John Howard Yoder, in contrast to the view that evangelicalism should be understood *only* in terms of conservative politics.

The final section includes stimulating essays linking evangelical and Anabaptist theologies in order to enhance our peace witness. Kirk MacGregor argues persuasively for a nonviolent atonement theology more "orthodox" than Denny Weaver's, and David Cramer draws heavily on Yoder to make a strong case for a biblically-based pacifism with the potential to draw Anabaptists and evangelicals closer together. Timothy Paul Erdel argues for Christian social faithfulness focusing on "making Christian disciples" (defined in terms of "biblical pacifism") more than on secular politics. Erdel, like others in this collection, appears to believe that evangelicals who are pacifists in the Anabaptist sense have something more fundamentally in common with non-pacifist evangelicals than they do with non-Christian pacifists or, perhaps, even non-evangelical pacifist Christians. I wonder if evangelical pacifists take seriously enough the problem of evangelical Christianity tending to influence people to be more violent, not less.

This may be at least partly why earlier Mennonite writers were concerned about the influence of evangelicalism. My problem is not with the four points Nolt lists in defining evangelicalism, but with the impact of fundamentalism on those older evangelical beliefs during the 20th century, and the sense that this book's writers don't take seriously that impact's problematic effect—perhaps paradigmatically expressed in typical evangelical hostility toward pacifism that makes me question how much common cause Anabaptists could have with non-pacifist evangelicals. The suspicion I, as an Anabaptist, have about rapprochement with evangelicals is largely due to their antipathy toward pacifism. My question to Cramer and

others is why, as pacifists, they want to remain identified with such an anti-pacifist stream of Christian faith.

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Peter J. Leithart. *Between Babel and Beast: America and Empires in Biblical Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.

The movement of empire studies over the past several decades has left hardly any discipline untouched, and theology is no exception. Publishers have produced books on Christianity's imperial history, Jesus and empire, Paul and empire, revelation and empire, the prophetic critiques of empire—the list is nearly exhaustive. So, what might Peter J. Leithart's book contribute to the conversation?

To begin, Leithart sees his volume as uniquely positioned in the debates of the left and right in American politics. He denounces the imperial form Christian politics has taken in America (i.e., nationalism), while simultaneously calling America to a truer Christian nationhood—what he calls "God's imperium." That he can position himself both for and against the political right and left has the potential to move particular debates beyond the impasse of partisan politics. But his attempt to play ally and critic to both could also backfire. How his work will be received remains to be seen.

Leithart's project, though highly political, is also thoroughly theological. The author's analysis of American empire is foregrounded by his biblical exposition of the Israelites' deuteronomistic history, especially Genesis. Since Cain, political orders have been built on the sacrifice of others. In Leithart's reading, the tower at Babel is the culmination of a sacrificial, dominant, imperial order, in which a nation attempts to make a single, unified, universal Name and power for itself. Yahweh intervenes, confusing its language and scattering it, effectively dissolving the imperial project. This does not, however, signal that all empires are bad. Such a suggestion, made