
The Early Church on Killing

A COMPREHENSIVE SOURCEBOOK ON
WAR, ABORTION, AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

EDITED BY

RONALD J. SIDER

“The Christian faith made a difference. The resurrection of Christ from the dead revealed that human life was ultimately and with finality the will of God. Human life had a value that was transcendent. Such a faith postured the Christian attitude as distinctly counter to many of the cultural and social habits of the Roman Empire. And nowhere was this more the case than in the church’s attitude toward killing. In a most helpful way and with an evident knowledge of the primary sources, Ronald Sider presents in translation a comprehensive sourcebook of early Christian statements on the issues of abortion, capital punishment, and military service. While not hiding his own ethical stance and at times responding to opinion he regards as mistaken, Sider confronts the reader with the relevant texts themselves and so allows us to make our own independent judgment on the important question of the early church’s position on these difficult and yet highly relevant themes. The sourcebook will be an asset in the libraries of pastors and laypeople alike and a welcome text in college and seminary classrooms.”

—**William C. Weinrich**, Concordia Theological Seminary,
Fort Wayne, Indiana

“The composite portrait that these texts create is one of a radical Christian ethic and of a church that struggled to live into it. Even in the midst of this complexity, one can still see the outlines of a ‘consistent ethic of life’ in which aversion to the shedding of blood is paired with a willingness to lay down one’s life in witness to the Prince of Peace. Should today’s Christian communities have ears to hear this message, then the death-dealing powers that organize our world might have a genuine revolution on their hands.”

—**Christian Collins Winn**, Bethel University

The Early Church on Killing

A COMPREHENSIVE SOURCEBOOK ON
WAR, ABORTION, AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

EDITED BY
Ronald J. Sider


Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2012 by Ronald J. Sider

Published by Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakeracademic.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sider, Ronald J.

The early church on killing : a comprehensive sourcebook on war, abortion,
and capital punishment / Ronald J. Sider.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and indexes.

ISBN 978-0-8010-3630-9 (pbk.)

1. Death—Religious aspects—Christianity—History of doctrines—Early church, ca. 30–600. 2. Murder—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. War—Religious aspects—Christianity. 4. Abortion—Religious aspects—Christianity. 5. Capital punishment—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BT825.S56 2012

241'.697—dc23

2012002598

The internet addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers in this book are accurate at the time of publication. They are provided as a resource. Baker Publishing Group does not endorse them or vouch for their content or permanence.

12 13 14 15 16 17 18 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



Contents

Acknowledgments	9
Abbreviations	11
Introduction	13

Part 1 Christian Writers before Constantine

<i>Didache</i>	19
<i>The Epistle of Barnabas</i>	20
<i>First Clement</i>	20
<i>Second Clement</i>	21
<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>	22
Justin Martyr	23
Tatian	26
Irenaeus	27
Athenagoras	30
Clement of Alexandria	32
Tertullian	42
Minucius Felix	63
<i>Didascalía apostolorum</i>	64
Julius Africanus	65
Origen	67
Cyprian	83
Gregory Thaumaturgus	90
Dionysius of Alexandria	91
Archelaus	92
Adamantius, <i>Dialogue on the True Faith</i>	93
Arnobius of Sicca	101
Lactantius	103

Part 2 Church Orders and Synods

- Apostolic Tradition* 119
- Three Later Church Orders 122
- Synod of Arles* 124

Part 3 Miscellaneous Items

- The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 129
- Paul of Samosata 131
- The Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* 132

Part 4 Other Evidence of Christian Soldiers before Constantine

- “The Thundering Legion” 137
- A Third-Century Christian Prayer Hall Near a Military Camp 144
- Epitaphs 145
- Military Martyrs 151
- Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* 159
- An Early Christian Kingdom? 161

- Afterword 163
- Bibliography 197
- Scripture Index 203
- Index of Ancient Sources and Early Christian Writings 205
- Author Index 209
- Subject Index 211

Acknowledgments

I want to thank the many people who have helped make this book possible.

A number of gifted graduate students (Ayres, Wilberforce, and Sider Scholars) at Palmer Seminary provided excellent research assistance. Peter Sensenig, Regina Downing, Anya Eckelbarger, and Lori Baynard read through the fathers helping to locate relevant texts and identify material for introductions. Heather Biscoe tracked down innumerable books I needed. Stephanie Israel typed most of the manuscript.

Many scholars answered questions: Harold Attridge, Alan Kreider, Michael Gorman, Robert Sider, and Glen Stassen. Rob Arner, Robb Davis, and John Stoner commented on parts of the manuscript. Owen Ewald provided translations of almost all the inscriptions used here. John Helgeland graciously helped with my work on the inscriptions.

Colleagues at Palmer Seminary provided invaluable help. Our librarian, Melody Mazuk, spent hours tracking down obscure texts. Her colleague, Jeron Frame, procured a long stream of needed books on inter-library loan. Chris Hall (Eastern University chancellor, Palmer Seminary dean, and patristics scholar) helped at several stages. Craig Keener and Deborah Watson answered queries.

My two administrative assistants helped in various ways even as they effectively kept the rest of my complicated life on track: Naomi Miller, my wonderful, efficient secretary, colleague, and friend for twenty-eight years, retired in the midst of this project, but Joshua Cradic has effectively taken her place. Finally, thanks to my long-time editor at Baker, Bob Hosack.

None of these friends and colleagues are responsible for weaknesses or mistakes that remain in this book, but without them it would not have been possible.

Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Johannes Quasten, Joseph C. Plumpe, and Dennis D. McManus, eds. 61 vols. (Westminster, MD, and New York: Newman Press, 1946–2008).
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> . Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. 9 vols. (1885; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
CC	<i>Cross Currents</i>
CEHCP	Collection d'études d'histoire, de critique et de philologie
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CSS	Cistercian Studies Series
DACL	<i>Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie</i> . Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq, eds. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933).
ESH	Ecumenical Studies in History
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
Exp.	<i>Expositor</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUS	<i>Harvard Ukrainian Studies</i>
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JRE	<i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library

<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series.</i> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. 14 vols. (1886; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).
<i>NPNF</i> ²	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series.</i> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. 14 vols. (1890; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCES	Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies
SP	Studia Patristica
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians

Introduction

The literature on our topic is vast.¹ Among the hundreds of books and articles, a few stand out as especially important because of their scholarship and influence.² But even the best of these publications reflect major disagreement about the witness of the early church on killing and war. Some scholars have argued that the early church up until Constantine was largely pacifist. Other scholars have vigorously rejected that view.³ And there is still no scholarly consensus.

Further study is important for at least three reasons. It is important to know as much as we can about the witness of the early church on killing simply in order to have a more complete, more accurate historical understanding.⁴ Further, what the earliest Christians in the first three centuries understood to be the teaching of Jesus on killing surely has some relevance for our understanding of what Jesus taught. We cannot simply assume that the early Christians accurately understood Jesus's teaching. But it seems plausible to suppose that Christians much closer to the time of Jesus, who lived in a (pre-Constantinian) sociopolitical setting more similar to that of Jesus than Christians living after the reign of Constantine, would be more likely to understand Jesus's teaching on loving enemies than those who lived centuries later. Finally, in a world where devastating violence has wreaked terrible havoc over the centuries—and

1. See Peter Brock's lengthy bibliography covering the years 1888–1987 ("Selected Bibliography").

2. *Militia Christi*, published by the great German church historian Adolf Harnack in 1905; *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, published by C. J. Cadoux in 1919; *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* by Yale historian Roland H. Bainton, published in 1960; and two well-researched scholarly articles by John Helgeland published in 1974 ("Christians") and 1979 ("Roman Army"). In 1992, David G. Hunter wrote a careful survey of the previous decade's further research ("Decade of Research").

3. See p. 163 below for more detailed discussion of the various interpretations.

4. It is astounding that George Weigel begins his commentary on the heritage of Catholic thought on war and peace with St. Augustine—thus ignoring the first three centuries (*Tranquillitas Ordinis*, 23).

continues to do so in the present—the witness of the Christians in the first three centuries provides one source of ethical guidance on a topic of current significance.

Unfortunately no one has published a comprehensive book that includes all the relevant existing data on our topic. Many authors have included (often in translation) some of the most important texts. But no one has sought to compile all the relevant material in one place. That is the task of this volume.

In this book I have sought to provide in English translation all extant data directly relevant to the witness of the early church on killing. The largest amount of data comes from the writings of the early church. A few epitaphs from Christian “tombstones” are also relevant, as are a few statements by pagan Roman historians and recent archaeological discoveries. Doubtless there are relevant data that I have inadvertently missed. And ongoing archeological and other research will discover new data. But I have tried to include everything currently known that is directly relevant to our topic.⁵

Since I hope this volume will be useful not only to scholars but also to the general Christian community, I provide brief introductions to every Christian writer cited and explanatory notes on many specific texts. In every case, I have tried to be as objective as possible and avoid mere speculation. This book is intended to be a careful historical presentation because I believe strongly that the historian must seek vigorously to avoid inserting his or her own biases into the historical task.

That does not mean that I think it is possible entirely to escape one’s own personal bias. Every historian starts at a particular location in history. I do not conceal the fact that I grew up in the Anabaptist tradition, which is pacifist. As a Christian, ethicist, and theologian, I remain committed to that tradition. But I think it would be fundamentally immoral to choose to slant the historical data to support my ethics and theology. I also believe not only that the historian has a moral imperative to strive vigorously for objectivity but also that it is possible to make great progress in moving toward that goal, even though it is never fully reached. Therefore I invite and welcome others to point out places where my personal views rather than the historical data have shaped my conclusions.

The vast majority of the translations here come from the volumes of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. I have slightly modernized the text, primarily to substitute male terms when the reference was clearly about both genders.

The excerpt from *Dio’s Roman History* is reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of the Loeb Classical Library from *Dio Cassius: Roman History, Volume 9*, Loeb Classical Library vol. 177, trans. Earnest

5. I say “directly” relevant because there is a sense in which a vast body of literature and data, both Christian and Greco-Roman, is relevant in a broad sense to our topic. That would include, for example, voluminous material on the Roman emperors and the Roman army in the first three centuries. But to include that kind of “indirectly” relevant material would require many volumes.

Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 27–33. The excerpt from Adamantius’s *Dialogue on the True Faith* is reprinted by permission of the publisher from *Adamantius: Dialogue on the True Faith in God*, ed. and trans. Robert A. Pretty and Garry W. Trompf (Leuven: Peeters, 1997). The excerpt from *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is reprinted by permission of the publisher from Tony Chartrand-Burke, *De infantia Iesu euangelium Thomae graece*, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocraphorum 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 3.2–8.2. The excerpts from *The Acts of Maximilian*, *The Acts of Marcellus*, and *The Martyrdom of Julius the Veteran* is reprinted by permission of the publisher from Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

One final comment about the larger society in which this Christian material on killing emerged. Killing was widespread and acceptable in the world where the early Christians lived. Roman culture of course accepted and glorified killing by the Roman army. Capital punishment via the sword and crucifixion was also the norm. In addition, Greco-Roman culture in the first three centuries justified and accepted widespread abortion, infanticide, and suicide.⁶ And one of the most popular “sports” events of the time was the gladiatorial contests, where trained gladiators fought to the death, cheered on by thousands of spectators.⁷ That was the context in which the early Christians developed their own witness on killing.

6. See Gorman, *Abortion*, and Arner, *Pro-Life*. Only a relatively small number of the texts cited here relate specifically to the topics of abortion and capital punishment. The index will enable the reader to quickly locate those passages.

7. Kyle, *Spectacles*.

Part 1

Christian Writers before Constantine

Didache (c. AD 80–120)

The *Didache* (“the Teaching”) is an anonymous early Christian document. No author, time, or location of writing is mentioned. Contemporary scholars date it anywhere from AD 50 to 180; many consider the period between AD 80 and 120 to be a good estimate (Jefford, *Apostolic Fathers*, 19–22; Grant, *Apostolic Fathers*, 71–76; *Fathers*, 1.167–70; Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 334–43).

The first few chapters contrast the two ways: the way of life and the way of death. Central to the way of life is loving your neighbor, even your enemy. Chapter 2 lists a number of things that should not be done, including murder, adultery, abortion, and infanticide. Both abortion and infanticide were widespread in first-century Roman life (Gorman, *Abortion*, 24–32).

1. There are two ways, one of life and one of death. . . . The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, your neighbor as yourself. And whatever you would not want to happen to you, you should not do to another. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for them that persecute you. For what thanks is there, if you love them that love you? Do not also the Gentiles do the same? But you should love them that hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. . . . If one gives you a blow upon your right cheek, turn the other also; and you shall be perfect [cf. Matt. 5:39–48].¹

2. And the second commandment . . . ; you shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, . . . you shall not murder a child by abortion nor commit infanticide.²

1. ANF 7:377.

2. Ibid.

The Epistle of Barnabas (c. AD 70–135)

This is an anonymous letter, written perhaps in Alexandria, Egypt, sometime between AD 70 and 135. Much of the document is an argument for Christian faith. In chapters 18–20, the author contrasts the “Two Ways” of light and darkness in a way similar to the *Didache*, but scholars do not think the one is directly dependent on the other. Clement of Alexandria assigned it the same authority as the Catholic Epistles, and it appears in the famous fourth-century biblical manuscript Codex Sinaiticus.

See the introduction and large secondary literature cited in Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 370–79.

19. You shall not abort a child nor, again, commit infanticide.³

First Clement (c. AD 80–100)

One of the earliest extant Christian documents outside of the New Testament, *First Clement* is a letter, as its salutation declares, from “the church of God that sojourns in Rome to the church of God that sojourns in Corinth” (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 45). It was written to help resolve a serious schism in the Corinthian church.

Contemporary scholars generally agree that the author was Clement, a prominent leader in Rome at the end of the first century. Both strong ancient tradition and most extant manuscripts say Clement is the author. We cannot date the letter precisely, but most scholars believe it was written in the last couple decades of the first century.

Later tradition (e.g., Irenaeus, one hundred years later) considered Clement the third successor of St. Peter as bishop of Rome (Glimm et al., *Apostolic Fathers*, 3). Protestant scholars, who think there was probably a group of bishops in Rome at this time, consider Clement to have been a prominent member of such a group (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 34–35).

The text says nothing explicit about killing. Rather it uses military imagery to describe the desired unity of the Christian church. Christ is the “emperor” and church leaders “the governors” of the church, which Clement calls “our government troops.”

3. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 435.

What implications this use of military imagery has for Clement’s attitude toward killing and the military is disputed. Swift argues that although the letter does not endorse Christian engagement in war, “one would nevertheless have difficulty in reconciling it with a pacifist stance” (Swift, *Military*, 33). Such a conclusion, however, goes well beyond the evidence. Many Christians in the first few centuries used military imagery (Helgeland et al., *Military*, 18–19; Harnack, *Militia*, 37–62; Cadoux, *War*, 161–70)—including those who explicitly argue that Christians dare never kill (see the section on “Use of Military Language” below).

For additional introductory material and a large bibliography, see Ehrman, *Fathers*, 1:18–33.

37. With all zeal, then, brethren, let us serve as good soldiers under his [i.e., Christ’s] irreproachable command. Let us remember the discipline, obedience and submission that our government troops exhibit when they carry out orders. It is not everyone’s job to lead a thousand men, or a hundred, or fifty or some such number. Each one carries out the orders of the emperor and the governors according to his own rank. Those with great responsibility cannot do without those who have less and vice-versa. Together they form a kind of whole, and therein lies the benefit.⁴

Second Clement

Nothing is known about the author, date, or occasion of this sermon (the oldest surviving Christian sermon outside the New Testament). In the manuscripts, it appears immediately after *First Clement* and probably dates from the first part of the second century. See Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 132–37 and the literature cited there.

13. Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us repent immediately. . . . For when they hear from us that God says, “It is no credit to you if you love those who love you, but it is a credit to you if you love your enemies and those who hate you,” when they hear these things, they marvel at such extraordinary goodness. But when they see that we not only do not love those who hate us but do not even love those who love us, they scornfully laugh at us, and the Name is blasphemed.⁵

4. Swift, *Military*, 33.

5. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 155.

Apocalypse of Peter (c. AD 100–150)

Some unknown author, not Jesus's disciple Peter, wrote the *Apocalypse*. Scholars agree that it was written sometime in the first half of the second century. Several early Christian writers cite the *Apocalypse* starting as early as AD 180. It circulated widely in the West and the East, and for a time some even considered it part of the church's inspired writings.

We have two major manuscripts: a shorter Greek text and a longer Ethiopian translation. Here I use the latter, which many scholars think better presents the original.

Section 8 (section 26 in the Greek) is part of a longer description of hell where many different kinds of sinners suffer excruciating torment. This selection speaks of those who committed abortion—especially those who aborted babies conceived by fornication.

For background, see Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 2:663–68, and Bremmer and Czachesz, *Apocalypse*.

8. And near this flame there is a great and very deep pit and into it there flow all kinds of . . . horrifying things and excretions. And the women are swallowed up by this up to their necks and are punished with great pain. These are they who have procured abortions and have ruined the work of God which he has created. Opposite them is another place where the children sit, but both alive, and they cry to God. And lightnings go forth from those children which pierce the eyes of those who, by fornication, have brought about their destruction.⁶ Other men and women stand above them naked. And their children stand opposite to them in a place of delight. And they sigh and cry to God because of their parents, “These are they who neglected and cursed and transgressed thy commandment. They killed us and cursed the angel who created us and hung us up. And they withheld from us the light which thou hast appointed for all.” And the milk of the mothers flows from their breasts and congeals and smells foul, and from it come forth beasts that devour flesh, which turn and torture them forever with their husbands, because they forsook the commandment of God and killed their children. And the children shall be given to the angel Temlakos. And those who slew them will be tortured forever, for God wills it to be so.⁷

6. The Greek text reads: “And these are those who produced children outside marriage and who procured abortions.”

7. Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 2:674–75.

Justin Martyr (c. AD 100–167)

Justin Martyr is one of the earliest Christian apologists, writing at least two defenses of Christianity in the middle of the second century. Born in Samaria into a gentile family in approximately AD 100, Justin received a Greek education, came to admire Plato, and later became convinced that Christianity was the only true philosophy. He taught for some time in Rome where he was martyred (beaten and beheaded) after refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods sometime between AD 162 and 167.

Justin's *First Apology*, addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius, must have been written sometime between AD 137 and 161. Other evidence (see Barnard, *St. Justin*, 11) suggests that Justin probably wrote it sometime between AD 151 and 155. His purpose was to correct the widespread slander and misunderstanding of Christians and portray Christian faith as the true philosophy. He denies that Christians are guilty of atheism, immorality, and disloyalty. In chapters 14–20 (including 14–17, quoted here), he describes the moral power of Christian truth.

Justin's central argument appears in sections 30–53, where he argues at great length that the Old Testament contains numerous predictions that were fulfilled in Christ. The selection from chapter 39 is just one example. The prophets predicted that in the time of the Messiah, people would beat their swords into ploughshares (Isa. 2:2–4; Mic. 4:1–4). Christians represent the fulfillment of that prophecy because they have turned away from murder and refuse to make war upon their enemies.

The *Dialogue with Trypho* takes the form of a discussion with a Jew named Trypho (otherwise unknown) soon after Trypho had fled Judea after the last Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 132–35). It is thought that Justin Martyr may have written our present document much later at Rome, perhaps sometime between AD 155 and 161. The *Dialogue* is a lengthy argument that Jews should accept the truth of Christianity if they understand their own scriptures.

In this *Dialogue*, as in the *First Apology*, Justin Martyr cites Micah 4:1–4 (Isa. 2:2–4) and then argues that Jesus and the church are the fulfillment of this messianic prophecy. In section 109, Justin Martyr cites all of Micah 4:1–7. Then in section 110, quoted here, he argues that because Christians, who were formerly filled with war, have through Christ changed their swords into ploughshares, they represent the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy.

Some authors argue that Justin Martyr had no position on whether Christians should be in the army (see Cadoux, *War*, 102–3) because none of these texts explicitly state that Christians dare never kill or serve in the Roman army. But they clearly say that Christians have turned away from violence and murder, and now love their enemies, thus fulfilling the prophetic prediction that in the messianic time, people would abandon war.

For introductory material, see Barnard, *St. Justin*, 3–21; Swift, *Military*, 34–35; ANF 1:159–61; Falls, *Justin Martyr*, 9–18, 23–27, 139–40.

First Apology

14. We who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with people of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies,⁸ and endeavor to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live according to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all.

15. For Christ . . . taught thus: “If you love them that love you, what new thing do you do? For even fornicators do this. But I say unto you, Pray for your enemies, and love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, and pray for them that spitefully use you” [cf. Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14].

16. And concerning our being patient of injuries, and ready to serve all, and free from anger, this is what He said: “To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak or coat, forbid not. And whosoever shall be angry, is in danger of fire. And every one that compelleth thee to go with him a mile, follow him two” [cf. Matt. 5:22, 39–41]. For we ought not to strive; neither has He desired us to be imitators of wicked people, but He has exhorted us to lead all people, by patience and gentleness, from shame and the love of evil. And this indeed is proved in the case of many who once were of your way of thinking, but have changed their violent and tyrannical disposition.

17. And everywhere we, more readily than all people, endeavor to pay to those appointed by you the taxes both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by Him; for at that time some came to Him and asked Him, if one ought to pay tribute to Caesar; and He answered, “Tell Me, whose image does the coin bear?” And they said, “Caesar’s.” And again He answered them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” [cf. Matt. 22:17–21]. Whence to God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of people, and praying that with your kingly power you be found to possess also sound judgment.⁹

8. Cf. also *Dialogue with Trypho* 85: “Jesus commanded to love even enemies” (ANF 1:242).

9. ANF 1:167–68.

39. And when the Spirit of prophecy speaks as predicting things that are to come to pass, He speaks in this way: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” [Isa. 2:3–4; Mic. 4:1–4]. And that it did so come to pass, we can convince you. For from Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number, and these illiterate, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of people that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God; and we who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also, that we may not lie or deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ.¹⁰

Second Apology

4. But lest someone say to us, “Go then all of you and kill yourselves, and pass even now to God, and do not trouble us,” I will tell you why we do not so, but why, when examined, we fearlessly confess. We have been taught that God did not make the world aimlessly, but for the sake of the human race; and we have before stated that He takes pleasure in those who imitate His properties, and is displeased with those that embrace what is worthless either in word or deed. If, then, we all kill ourselves, we shall become the cause, as far as in us lies, why no one should be born, or instructed in the divine doctrines, or even why the human race should not exist; and we shall, if we so act, be ourselves acting in opposition to the will of God. But when we are examined, we make no denial.¹¹

Dialogue with Trypho

85. And I said, “Listen, my friends, to the Scripture which induces me to act thus. Jesus commanded [us] to love even [our] enemies, as was predicted by Isaiah in many passages.”¹²

96. And in addition to all this we pray for you [Jews and pagans who oppose Christians], that Christ may have mercy upon you. For He taught us to pray

10. ANF 1:175–76.

11. ANF 1:189.

12. ANF 1:242.

for our enemies also, saying, “Love your enemies; be kind and merciful, as your heavenly Father is” [cf. Luke 6:35–36].¹³

110. And when I had finished these words [quoting Mic. 4:1–7], I continued: “Now I am aware that your teachers, sirs, admit the whole of the words of this passage to refer to Christ; and I am likewise aware that they maintain He has not yet come . . . just as if there was no fruit as yet from the words of the prophecy. O unreasoning people! . . . [We] Christians, . . . having learned the true worship of God from the law, and the word which went forth from Jerusalem by means of the apostles of Jesus, have fled for safety to the God of Jacob and God of Israel; and we who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons,—our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into implements of tillage,—and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope, which we have from the Father Himself through Him who was crucified. Now it is evident that no one can terrify or subdue us who have believed in Jesus all over the world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others in larger numbers become faithful, and worshipers of God through the name of Jesus.”¹⁴

Tatian (c. AD 110–70)

A native of Mesopotamia and a student of philosophy, Tatian became a Christian and was instructed by Justin Martyr in Rome. He compiled the first harmony of the four Gospels, but his only extant book is his *Address to the Greeks* (written about AD 167). See Goodspeed, *History*, 106–9.

Address to the Greeks

11. I do not wish to be a king; I am not anxious to be rich; I decline military command; I detest fornication; I am not impelled by an insatiable love of gain to go to sea; I do not contend for chaplets.¹⁵

13. ANF 1:247. So too chap. 133.

14. ANF 1:253–54.

15. ANF 2:69.

Irenaeus (c. AD 130–202)

Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons, France, from about AD 177 to 202, is widely regarded as the most significant theologian of the second century. Born in Syria or Asia Minor sometime between AD 120 and 140, Irenaeus studied under the great bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, who sent him to Gaul to help evangelize what is now southern France.

When he visited Rome in 177, he was horrified to discover that the bishop of Rome and others had embraced heretical beliefs. That visit helped move Irenaeus toward his lifelong task of combating Christian heresies, especially gnosticism. He wrote the five books of *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*) over the course of fifteen or more years between 177 and 202. Written in Greek, *Against Heresies*'s primary audience may have been Christians in Rome, but it was read widely and was often quoted by Christian writers from the third century on. As Irenaeus refuted the heretics, he explained Christian faith so well that he is sometimes considered the founder of Christian theology.

There are three different places in *Against Heresies* where Irenaeus writes of things directly related to our topic. In 2.32, he refers to Jesus's command to love enemies. In 4.34, he claims that Christians' turning away from war to peace is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah (2:3) and Micah (4:2).

In 5.24, he quotes Romans 13 to say that God has ordained human government. He understands Romans 13:4 (government "beareth not the sword in vain") to show that God wants government to restrain evil. But neither here nor in a similar passage in 4.36 is there any suggestion (contrary to Hornus, *Not Lawful*, 65) that Christians should use the sword.

The final selections from Irenaeus come from his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*. Eusebius of Caesarea mentions this writing, but it was presumed lost until an Armenian translation was found in 1904. Written while Irenaeus was bishop of Lyons, *Proof* is a letter written to a brother (probably another church leader) to provide a summary of Christian teaching. In chapters 86–100, Irenaeus argues that Christ enables believers to live the law of charity which replaces the Old Testament law (Smith, *Proof*, 3–44).

For introductory information, see Unger, *Irenaeus*, 1; ANF 1:309–13; Smith, *Proof*, 3–44; Goodspeed and Grant, *History*, 119–23.

Against Heresies

2.32. Moreover, this impious opinion of theirs with respect to actions—namely, that it is incumbent on them to have experience of all kinds of deeds, even the most abominable—is refuted by the teaching of the Lord, with whom not only

is the adulterer rejected, but also the person who desires to commit adultery; and not only is the actual murderer held guilty of having killed another to his own damnation, but the person also who is angry with his brother without a cause: [Christ] commanded His disciples not only not to hate people, but also to love their enemies;¹⁶ and enjoined them not only not to swear falsely, but not even to swear at all; . . . and not only not to strike, but even, when themselves struck, to present the other cheek to those that maltreated them; and not only not to refuse to give up the property of others, but even if their own were taken away, not to demand it back again from those that took it; and not only not to injure their neighbors, nor to do them any evil, but also, when themselves wickedly dealt with, to be long-suffering, and to show kindness towards those that injured them, and to pray for them [cf. Matt. 5:21–48], that by means of repentance they might be saved—so that we should in no respect imitate the arrogance, lust, and pride of others.¹⁷

4.34. The Jews used the Mosaic law until the coming of the Lord; but from the Lord's advent, the new covenant which brings back peace, and the law which gives life, has gone forth over the whole earth, as the prophets said: "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He shall rebuke many people; and they shall break down their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and they shall no longer fight" [Isa. 2:3–4; Mic. 4:2–3]. If therefore another law and word, going forth from Jerusalem, brought in such a reign of peace among the Gentiles which received it [the word], and convinced, through them, many a nation of its folly, then only it appears that the prophets spake of some other person. But if the law of liberty, that is, the word of God, preached by the apostles (who went forth from Jerusalem) throughout all the earth, caused such a change in the state of things, that these nations did form the swords and war-lances into ploughshares, and changed them into pruning-hooks for reaping the corn, that is, into instruments used for peaceful purposes, and that they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek, then the prophets have not spoken these things of any other person, but of Him who effected them. This person is our Lord.¹⁸

5.24. As therefore the devil lied at the beginning, so did he also in the end, when he said, "All these are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give them" [Matt. 4:9]. For it is not he who has appointed the kingdoms of this world, but God; for "the heart of the king is in the hand of God" [Prov. 21:1]. Paul the apostle also says upon this same subject: "Be ye subject to all

16. Cf. also 4.13, where he says the Lord taught us "not to love our neighbors only, but even our enemies" (ANF 1:477; see also 3.18).

17. ANF 1:408.

18. ANF 1:512.

the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: now those which are have been ordained of God" [Rom. 13:1]. And again, in reference to them he says, "For he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, the avenger for wrath to him who does evil" [Rom. 3:4].

For since humanity, by departing from God, reached such a pitch of fury even to look upon his brother as his enemy, and engaged without fear in every kind of restless conduct, and murder, and avarice; God imposed upon humanity the fear of people, as they did not acknowledge the fear of God, in order that, being subjected to human authority, and kept under restraint by their laws, they might attain to some degree of justice, and exercise mutual forbearance through dread of the sword suspended full in their view, as the apostle says: "For he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, the avenger for wrath upon him who does evil." And for this reason too, magistrates themselves, having laws as a clothing of righteousness whenever they act in a just and legitimate manner, shall not be called into question for their conduct, nor be liable to punishment. But whatsoever they do to the subversion of justice, iniquitously, and impiously, and illegally, and tyrannically, in these things shall they also perish; for the just judgment of God comes equally upon all, and in no case is defective. Earthly rule, therefore, has been appointed by God for the benefit of nations, and not by the devil.¹⁹

Proof of the Apostolic Preaching

61. [Here he expounds Isa. 11:6–7, which he quoted earlier in chap. 59.] Those who formerly acted like animals and waged war on other people have now been transformed by faith in Christ. For he now tells in parable the gathering together in peaceful concord, through the name of Christ, of people of different nations and like character; for the assembly of the just, who are likened to calves and lambs and kids and children, will not be hurt at all by those, both men and women, who at an earlier time had become brutal and beast-like because of selfish pride, till some of them took on the likeness of wolves and lions, ravaging the weaker, and waged war on their like, . . . these gathered together in one name will be possessed by the grace of God in justice of conduct, changing their wild and untamed nature. And this has already come to pass, for those who were before most perverse, to the extent of omitting no work of ungodliness, coming to know Christ, and believing Him, no sooner believed than they were changed.²⁰

96. Therefore also we have no need of the law as pedagogue. . . . For no more shall the law say: . . . *thou shalt not kill*, to him who has put away from himself

19. ANF 1:552.

20. Smith, *Proof*, 88.

all anger and enmity. . . . Nor *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, to him who counts no man his enemy, but all his neighbors, and therefore cannot even put forth his hand to revenge.²¹

Athenagoras (d. c. AD 180)

Athenagoras was probably a fairly prominent leader in Alexandria's Platonic school. After his conversion, he became one of the most learned Christian apologists of the second century. Internal evidence shows that his *Plea for the Christians* was written sometime between AD 177 and 180. Here Athenagoras refutes the widespread charges that Christians were guilty of atheism, cannibalism, and incest.

Athenagoras does not explicitly state that Christians do not go to war and kill as soldiers. But he refers to and quotes from Matthew 5:38, including Jesus's command to love enemies, and claims that even uneducated Christians do that (chaps. 1, 11).

In chapter 35, he argues not only that Christians do not kill but also that they even refuse to attend the enormously popular contests of gladiators. Christians also condemn abortion and infanticide as murder. By opposing killing everywhere, he claims, Christians consistently follow their rule.

For introductory material, see Crehan, *Athenagoras*, 3–27; Gorman, *Abortion*, 53–54; ANF 2:127; Goodspeed and Grant, *History*, 115–16; Rankin, *Athenagoras*.

A Plea for the Christians

To the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia, and more than all, philosophers.

1. In your empire, greatest of sovereigns, different nations have different customs and laws; and no one is hindered by law or fear of punishment from following his ancestral usages. . . . In short, among every nation and people, people offer sacrifices and celebrate whatever mysteries they please. . . . But for us who are called Christians you have not in like manner cared; but although we commit

21. See also chaps. 59–61, where Irenaeus quotes from Isa. 11:1–9 and then explains (chap. 61) that formerly vicious people who waged war had come to know Christ and changed their “wild and untamed nature.” The text here is from Smith, *Proof*, 106.

no wrong—nay, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse, are of all people most piously and righteously disposed towards the Deity and towards your government—you allow us to be harassed, plundered, and persecuted, the multitude making war upon us for our name alone. . . . You will learn from this discourse that we suffer unjustly. . . . For we have learned, not only not to return blow for blow, nor to go to law with those who plunder and rob us, but to those who smite us on one side of the face to offer the other side also, and to those who take away our coat to give likewise our cloak.²²

11. If I go minutely into the particulars of our doctrine, let it not surprise you. . . . What, then, are those teachings in which we are brought up? “I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven, who causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust” [cf. Matt. 5:44–45]. . . . Who of those . . . who teach homonyms and synonyms, and categories and axioms, and what is the subject and what the predicate, and who promise their disciples by these and such like instructions to make them happy: who of them have so purged their souls as, instead of hating their enemies, to love them; and, instead of speaking ill of those who have reviled them (to abstain from which is of itself an evidence of no mean forbearance), to bless them; and to pray for those who plot against their lives? On the contrary, they . . . are ever bent on working some ill, making the art of words and not the exhibition of deeds their business and profession. But among us you will find uneducated persons, and artisans, and old women, who, if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth: they do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those that ask of them, and love their neighbors as themselves.²³

35. What person of sound mind, therefore, will affirm . . . that we are murderers? For we cannot eat human flesh till we have killed someone. . . . If anyone should ask them . . . whether they have seen what they assert, not one of them would be so barefaced as to say that he had. And yet we have slaves, some more and some fewer, by whom we could not help being seen; but even of these, not one has been found to invent even such things against us. For when they know that we cannot endure even to see a person put to death, though justly; who of them can accuse us of murder or cannibalism? Who does not reckon among the things of greatest interest the contests of gladiators and wild beasts, especially those which are given by you? But we, deeming that to

22. ANF 2:129.

23. ANF 2:134.

see a person put to death is much the same as killing him, have abjured such spectacles. How, then, when we do not even look on, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, can we put people to death? And when we say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? For it does not belong to the same person to regard the very fetus in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care, and when it has passed into life, to kill it; and not to expose an infant, because those who expose them are chargeable with child-murder, and on the other hand, when it has been reared to destroy it. But we are in all things always alike and the same, obedient to our rule, and not ruling over it.²⁴

Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150–215)

Well educated in Greek philosophy and poetry before his conversion, Clement became a sophisticated proponent of Christianity and a prominent teacher and eventually leader of a famous Christian school in Alexandria led by Pantaeus. A Greek city, Alexandria was the second largest city in the Roman Empire with a vibrant intellectual community and superb libraries with vast holdings. Perhaps born in Athens, Clement traveled widely before he settled in Alexandria about 180. He taught there for more than twenty years, and Origen was his most famous student. During the intense persecution of 202–3 that killed thousands of Christians, Clement fled from Alexandria. He died about AD 215.

In his many writings, Clement sought to combine the best of Greek and Christian thought, trying to show that Christianity was intellectually respectable. He clearly loved the Greek classics and his works contain over seven hundred quotations from about three hundred pagan authors. We have no exact information on the dates of his major writings, but many of them were probably written in the second half of his time in Alexandria.

His *Exhortation (Protreptikos) to the Greeks* attempts to demonstrate that Christianity is the fulfillment of the best of Greek poetry and philosophy. The *Educator (Paedagogus)* is a lengthy treatise (three books) on what the Christian life should be, showing how Christ the Educator molds Christian character. And *Miscellanies (Stromata)* is a vast writing (eight books) covering a wide range of topics that seeks to explain the knowledge that will lead a Christian

24. ANF 2:147. In the last sentence, I follow the translation of Crehan, *Athenagoras*, 76, and Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 173.

toward perfection. It is frequently difficult to follow Clement's meandering thought in *Miscellanies*.

I include several sections from each of these major works plus one from fragments of other lost books and one from *Prophetic Eclogues*.

In spite of the large size of Clement's extant writings, there is very little about war and abortion. In the two passages on abortion, it is quite clear that Clement is totally opposed to it. But the nine brief passages related to enemies, war, and the military are less clear. One scholar observes that in Clement "there is to be no compromise with the world . . . in military service" (Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, 62). Another argues that Clement considers military service one acceptable occupation for Christians. In fact, this author suggests that one can see in Clement the general idea of the Just War tradition (Johnson, *Peace*, 20–22, 50). Even Cadoux says that some of Clement's statements "concede the compatibility of military service with the Christian faith" (*War*, 232).

While not explicitly prohibiting Christian participation in the army, a number of passages stress the peaceful nature of Christians. Clement says that Christians employ the Word ("the one instrument of peace") rather than the trumpets used by experts in war (*Exhortation* 4). Christ gathers his "bloodless host" of "soldiers of peace" rather than blowing the trumpet that collects "soldiers and proclaims war" (*Exhortation* 11). He cites Jesus's call to turn the other cheek (*Educator* 2.12; *Miscellanies* 4.8). He notes that Christians not only do not train women to be warriors but also "wish the men even to be peaceable" (*Miscellanies* 4.8), and he quotes Jesus's call to love enemies (*Miscellanies* 4.14; *Educator* 3.12).

In a few passages, Clement refers to military service without any indication whether he thinks Christians should be soldiers (*Educator* 2.12–13). He notes John the Baptist's advice to soldiers to be content with their wages without any comment on what that means for Christians and the army (*Educator* 3.12). The same is true of his brief reference to the Deuteronomic teaching that the man who is betrothed but not yet married should be free of military service (*Miscellanies* 2.18).

There is one passage (*Exhortation* 10) that some claim clearly shows that Clement considers military service acceptable for Christians.²⁵ But as I show in a note on that passage (see pp. 34–35), that interpretation goes well beyond what the text says.

It is surprising that an author who wrote so much, especially on how Christians should live, said so little on war and the military. But we dare not read our own preferences into Clement's relative silence.

For introductory material, see Ferguson, *Clement*, 3–19; Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, 31–65; Oulton and Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*,

25. Johnson, *Peace*, 20–22, 50, and Helgeland, "Christians," 154.

15–39; Wood, *Clement*, vii–xviii; Butterworth, *Clement*, xiii–xx; Johnson, *Peace*, 20–22, 50–53.

Exhortation to the Greeks

3. Well, now, let us say in addition, what inhuman demons, and hostile to the human race, your gods were, not only delighting in the insanity of people, but gloating over human slaughter,—now in the armed contests for superiority in the stadia, and now in the numberless contests for renown in the wars providing for themselves the means of pleasure, that they might be able abundantly to satiate themselves with the murder of human beings.²⁶

The meaning of the following passage is disputed. Johnson (*Peace*, 20–21) cites this passage as evidence that Clement “accepted military service [for Christians] as one possible occupation alongside others (he mentions farmers, sailors and merchants)” (so too Helgeland, “Christians,” 154; Swift, *Military*, 52; and Harnack, *Militia Christi*, 75). But two things make that interpretation questionable. First, in the case of farming and sailing, the text explicitly urges Christians to participate in that activity, albeit in knowledge and dependence on God. But the wording in the third case is quite different. He does not say, “Be a soldier.” Rather he says that if one became a Christian while one was a soldier, then one should do what the commander says. The second consideration relates to the question: Who is the commander? If it is a military leader, then Johnson is probably right. But if it is Christ, then the text only says that soldiers who become Christians must obey Christ. It says nothing about what Christ wants a soldier who converts to do. That the commander to be obeyed is Christ is rather likely in light of another statement by Clement where he explicitly speaks of Christ the Instructor (or Teacher), using the image of a military leader and seafaring pilot: “As therefore the general directs the phalanx, consulting the safety of his soldiers, and the pilot steers the vessel, desiring to save the passengers, so also the Instructor [i.e., Christ] guides the children to a saving course of conduct. . . . Whatever we ask in accordance with reason from God to be done to us, will happen to those who believe in the Instructor” (*The Educator* 1.7; ANF 2:223). And in another place (*The Educator* 1.8), he refers to “our great General, the Word, the Commander-in-Chief of the universe” (see Bainton, “Early Church,” 199). Furthermore, as Bainton points out, in the case of farming and sailing Clement refers to God in the second part of the sentence. Therefore it is likely that he does the same in the case of the third example. It is also relevant that later in the same chapter, Clement says that those who become Christians should follow God’s laws not to kill and rather

26. ANF 2:183.

to turn the other cheek. To assert that in this statement Clement says that military service is as acceptable for Christians as farming or seafaring is to go well beyond what the text says. Rather than seeing this text as an endorsement of Christians serving in the military, it is more likely that we should understand the text in light of the *Apostolic Tradition* (see below, pp. 119–21). In that case, Clement would think that if a soldier becomes a Christian, he dare not kill.

10. Persons have been otherwise constituted by nature, so as to have fellowship with God. As, then, we do not compel the horse to plough, or the bull to hunt, but set each animal to that for which it is by nature fitted; so, placing our finger on what is a person's peculiar and distinguishing characteristic above other creatures, we invite him—born, as he is, for the contemplation of heaven, and being, as he is, a truly heavenly plant—to the knowledge of God, counseling him to furnish himself with what is his sufficient provision for eternity, namely piety. Practice farming, we say, if you are a farmer; but while you till your fields, know God. Sail the sea, you who are devoted to navigation, yet call the whilst on the heavenly Pilot. Has knowledge taken hold of you while engaged in military service? Listen to the commander, who orders what is right. . . . If thou enroll thyself as one of God's people, heaven is thy country, God thy lawgiver. And what are the laws? "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not seduce boys; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt love the Lord thy God." And the complements of these are those laws of reason and words of sanctity which are inscribed on people's hearts: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; to him who strikes thee on the cheek, present also the other."²⁷

11. But it has been God's fixed and constant purpose to save the flock of people: for this end the good God sent the good Shepherd. And the Word, having unfolded the truth, showed to people the height of salvation, that either repenting they might be saved, or refusing to obey, they might be judged. This is the proclamation of righteousness: to those that obey, glad tidings; to those that disobey, judgment. The loud trumpet, when sounded, collects the soldiers, and proclaims war. And shall not Christ, breathing a strain of peace to the ends of the earth, gather together His own soldiers, the soldiers of peace? Well, by His blood, and by the word, He has gathered the bloodless host of peace, and assigned to them the kingdom of heaven. The trumpet of Christ is His Gospel. He hath blown it, and we have heard. "Let us array ourselves in the armor of peace, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, and taking the shield of faith, and binding our brows with the helmet of salvation; and let us sharpen the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" [cf. Eph. 6:14–17]. So the apostle in the spirit of peace commands. These are our invulnerable

27. ANF 2:200, 202.

weapons: armed with these, let us face the evil one. Let us quench “the fiery darts of the evil one” with the sword-points dipped in water that have been baptized by the Word. . . . O this holy and blessed power, by which God has fellowship with people! Better far, then, is it to become at once the imitator and the servant of the best of all beings; for only by holy service will anyone be able to imitate God, and to serve and worship Him only by imitating Him.²⁸

The Educator

1.7. It is time for us in due course to say who our Instructor is.

He is called Jesus. Sometimes he calls himself a shepherd. . . .

As therefore the general directs the phalanx, consulting the safety of his soldiers, and the pilot steers the vessel, desiring to save the passengers; so also the Instructor guides the children to a saving course of conduct, through solicitude for us; and, in general, whatever we ask in accordance with reason from God to be done for us, will happen to those who believe in the Instructor. And just as the helmsman does not always yield to the winds, but sometimes, turning the prow towards them, opposes the whole force of hurricanes; so the Instructor never yields to the blasts that blow in this world, nor commits the child to them like a vessel to make shipwreck on a wild and licentious course of life.²⁹

1.12. But let us, O children of the good Father—nurslings of the good Instructor—fulfill the Father’s will, listen to the Word, and take on the mold of the true saving life of our Savior. . . . He makes preparation for a self-sufficing mode of life, for simplicity. . . . For He says, “Take no anxious thought for tomorrow” [Matt. 6:34], meaning that the person who has devoted himself to Christ ought to be sufficient to himself, and servant to himself, and moreover lead a life which provides for each day by itself. For it is not in war, but in peace, that we are trained. War needs great preparation, and luxury craves abundance, but peace and love, simple and quiet sisters, require no arms nor excessive supplies. The Word is their sustenance.³⁰

2.4. For a person is truly a pacific instrument while other instruments, if you investigate, you will find to be warlike, inflaming to lusts, or kindling up illicit love affairs, or rousing wrath.

In their wars, therefore, the Etruscans use the trumpet, the Arcadians the pipe, the Sicilians the pectides, the Cretans the lyre, the Lacedaemonians the

28. ANF 2:204; cf. the translation in Merton, *Clement*, 27.

29. ANF 2:222–23.

30. ANF 2:234–35.

flute, the Thracians the horn, the Egyptians the drum, and the Arabians the cymbal. The one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honor God, is what we employ. We no longer employ the ancient psaltery, and trumpet, and timbrel, and flute, which those expert in war and despisers of the fear of God were wont to make use of also in the choruses at their festive assemblies.³¹

2.10. Our whole life can go on in observation of the laws of nature, if we gain dominion over our desires from the beginning and if we do not kill, by various means of a perverse art, the human offspring, born according to the designs of divine providence; for these women who, in order to hide their immorality, use abortive drugs which expel the matter completely dead, abort at the same time their human feelings.³²

The following passage comes at the end of a rather extended section on the importance of modest shoes for women. Women should not expose their feet, but going barefoot is quite acceptable for men—when they are in military service. The text does not give any clear indication whether Clement is speaking of military men in general or Christians in the military. However, given the fact that Clement’s whole book is devoted to describing how Christians should live, we should probably assume that Clement is thinking of Christians in the army. But it goes beyond what the text says to claim (as does Helgeland, “Christians,” 154n44) that this text is “another example of his neutral feelings about the military.” At most, it shows that Clement knows of Christians in the army without telling us anything about what he thought about that.

2.12. Women are to be allowed a white shoe, except when on a journey, and then a greased shoe must be used. When on a journey, they require nailed shoes. Further, they ought for the most part to wear shoes; for it is not suitable for the foot to be shown naked: besides, woman is a tender thing, easily hurt. But for a man bare feet are quite in keeping, except when he is on military service. “For being shod is neighbor to being bound.”

To go with bare feet is most suitable for exercise, and best adapted for health and ease, unless where necessity prevents.³³

2.13. How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! . . . The excellence of man is righteousness, and temperance, and manliness, and godliness. The beautiful man is, then, he who is just, temperate,

31. ANF 2:248–49.

32. Gorman, *Abortion*, 52–53.

33. ANF 2:267.

and in a word, good, not he who is rich. But now even the soldiers wish to be decked with gold, not having read that poetical saying:

With childish folly to the war he came,
Laden with store of gold. [*Iliad* 2.872]

But the love of ornament, which is far from caring for virtue, but claims the body for itself when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, is to be utterly expelled.³⁴

3.3. If only wild beasts were destroyed who wait to prey upon blood! Yet, it is not right for a person to touch blood, either, for his own body is nothing less than flesh quickened by blood. Human blood has its portion of reason, and its share in grace, along with the spirit. If anyone injures it, he will not escape punishment.³⁵

3.12. Further, in respect to forbearance. “If thy brother,” it is said, “sin against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. If he sin against thee seven times in a day, and turn to thee the seventh time, and say, I repent, forgive him” [Luke 17:3–4]. Also to the soldiers, by John, He commands, “to be content with their wages only” [Luke 3:14], and to the tax-collectors, “to exact no more than is appointed.” To the judges He says, “Thou shalt not show partiality in judgment.”

And of civil government: “Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things which are God’s” [Matt. 22:21].

Wisdom pronounces anger a wretched thing, because “it will destroy the wise.” And now He bids us “love our enemies, bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us.” And He says: “If any one strike thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone take away thy coat, hinder him not from taking thy cloak also” [Matt. 5:40].³⁶

Miscellanies

Here Clement writes of the treasure the children of Israel took from the Egyptians as they fled Egypt.

1.23. Whether, then, as may be alleged is done in war, they thought it proper, in the exercise of the rights of conquerors, to take away the property of their

34. ANF 2:268.

35. Wood, *Clement*, 220.

36. ANF 2:293.

enemies, as those who have gained the day do from those who are defeated (and there was just cause of hostilities. The Hebrews came as suppliants to the Egyptians on account of famine; and they, reducing their guests to slavery, compelled them to serve them after the manner of captives, giving them no recompense); or as in peace, took the spoil as wages against the will of those who for a long period had given them no recompense, but rather had robbed them, it is all one.³⁷

1.24. Our Moses then is a prophet, a legislator, skilled in military tactics and strategy, a politician, a philosopher. And in what sense he was a prophet, shall be by and by told, when we come to treat of prophecy. Tactics belong to military command, and the ability to command an army is among the attributes of kingly rule. Legislation, again, is also one of the functions of the kingly office, as also judicial authority.

Now, the Greeks had the advantage of receiving from Moses all these, and the knowledge of how to make use of each of them. And, for the sake of example, I shall cite one or two instances of leadership. . . . Furthermore, he put to flight and slew the hostile occupants of the land, falling upon them from a desert and rugged line of march (such was the excellence of his generalship). For the taking of the land of those hostile tribes was a work of skill and strategy.³⁸

2.18. Again, it is said, “If anyone who has newly built a house, and has not previously inhabited it; or cultivated a newly-planted vine, and not yet partaken of the fruit; or betrothed a virgin, and not yet married her” [Deut. 20:5–7]. Such the humane law orders to be relieved from military service: from military reasons in the first place, lest, bent on their desires, they turn out sluggish in war; for it is those who are untrammelled by passion that boldly encounter perils; and from motives of humanity, since in view of the uncertainties of war, the law reckoned it not right that one should not enjoy his own labors, and another should, without bestowing pains, receive what belonged to those who had labored. The law seems also to point out manliness of soul, by enacting that he who had planted should reap the fruit, and he that built should inhabit, and he that had betrothed should marry.

Now love is conceived in many ways, in the form of meekness, of mildness, of patience, of liberty, of freedom from envy, of absence of hatred, of forgetfulness of injuries. . . . Does it not command us “to love strangers not only as friends and relatives, but as ourselves, both in body and soul?” . . . Accordingly it is expressly said, “You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in Egypt” [Deut. 23:7]; designating by the term Egyptian

37. ANF 2:336.

38. ANF 2:336–37.

either one of that race, or any one in the world. And enemies, although drawn up before the walls attempting to take the city, are not to be regarded as enemies until they are by the voice of the herald summoned to peace [cf. Deut. 20:10].³⁹

4.8. Further, manliness is to be assumed in order to produce confidence and forbearance, so as “to him that strikes on the one cheek, to give to him the other; and to him that takes away the cloak, to yield to him the coat also” [cf. Matt. 5:39–40], strongly restraining anger. For we do not train our women like Amazons to manliness in war; since we wish the men even to be peaceable. I hear that the Sarmatian women practice war no less than the men; and the women of the Sacae besides, who shoot backwards, feigning flight as well as the men.⁴⁰

The following passage is especially difficult to understand. Much of it is a long, complex sentence. Clement seems to want to say that among the “things present” that cannot separate us from the love of Christ are “the hope entertained by the soldier and the merchant’s gain.” Does that mean that Clement thought that there was no activity that soldiers or merchants could do that would separate them from the love of Christ? Probably not. Since this passage says nothing about activity Christian soldiers or merchants should not do, the passage probably tells us no more than that for Clement simply being in the army did not preclude one from being a Christian.

4.14. How great also is kindness? “Love your enemies,” it is said, “bless them who curse you, and pray for them who despitefully use you” [Matt. 5:44–45], and the like; to which it is added, “that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven,” in allusion to resemblance to God. . . . “For I am persuaded that neither death,” through the assault of persecutors, “nor life” in this world, “nor angels” (the apostate ones), “nor powers” (and Satan’s power is the life which he chose, for such are the powers and principalities of darkness belonging to him), “nor things present,” amid which we exist during the time of life, as the hope entertained by the soldier, and the merchant’s gain, “nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,” in consequence of the energy proper to a man,—opposes the faith of him who acts according to free choice. “Creature” is synonymous with activity, being our work, and such activity “shall not be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” [Rom. 8:38–39].⁴¹

39. ANF 2:365–67.

40. ANF 2:420.

41. ANF 2:426.