Faith & Politics

The Anabaptist Vision of Politics  John Roth  Tolstoy and Modern War  Samuel Moyn
Cornel West  Robert P. George  Stephanie Saldaña  Shadi Hamid  Edna St. Vincent Millay
“Normality is a paved road: It’s comfortable to walk, but no flowers grow on it.”

—Vincent van Gogh

Artwork by Alireza Karimi Moghaddam
Plough Quarterly

BREAKING GROUND FOR A RENEWED WORLD

Spring 2020, Number 24

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Meet the community behind Plough

Plough Quarterly is published by the Bruderhof, an international community of families and singles seeking to follow Jesus together. Members of the Bruderhof are committed to a way of radical discipleship in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. Inspired by the first church in Jerusalem (Acts 2 and 4), they renounce private property and share everything in common in a life of nonviolence, justice, and service to neighbors near and far. The community includes people from a wide range of backgrounds. There are twenty-three Bruderhof settlements in both rural and urban locations in the United States, England, Germany, Austria, Australia, Paraguay, and South Korea, with around 3,000 people in all. To learn more or arrange a visit, see the community’s website at bruderhof.com.

Plough Quarterly features original stories, ideas, and culture to inspire everyday faith and action. Starting from the conviction that the teachings and example of Jesus can transform and renew our world, we aim to apply them to all aspects of life, seeking common ground with all people of goodwill regardless of creed. The goal of Plough Quarterly is to build a living network of readers, contributors, and practitioners so that, in the words of Hebrews, we may “spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Plough Quarterly includes contributions that we believe are worthy of our readers’ consideration, whether or not we fully agree with them. Views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of Plough or of the Bruderhof communities.

Founding Editor: Eberhard Arnold (1888–1935).

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Pick the Right Politics

PETER MOMMSEN

Dear Reader,

For those afflicted, it has all the compulsiveness of a guilty habit: repeatedly scanning news headlines; experiencing mood swings based on the latest polling data; responding to scandals, epidemics, or Wall Street gyrations by first wondering how it will affect the race. The insta-politics addiction (which I fall into from time to time) is a disease of the technological age. Like Instagram-fueled shopping or VR gaming, it promises a heightening of experience while in fact delivering a kind of numbness.

The United States is caught up in the spectacle of a presidential election year, and political obsession is again a social contagion. The full-blown symptoms may affect only a small part of the population, but through the social networks and the media, it influences far more, and the polarized identities it encourages are real enough. That's true even in a relatively open-minded Anabaptist Christian community like the Bruderhof, where I live. When the talk turns to elections, emotions begin to simmer.

It's hard not to suspect your political opponents of willfully shutting their eyes to self-evident truths. How can a follower of Jesus fail to support healthcare for the poor, racial justice, and getting immigrant kids out of cages? Or: how can she tolerate abortion, sex change for kindergartners, and the push to eradicate faith from the public square?

“Ah,” interposes another voice, “neither side is right.” Christians should “rise above polarization,” condemning extremism while seeking principled common ground. By this view, Christian conservatives should recognize their implicit biases and learn to see the world through the eyes of the marginalized; Christian progressives, meanwhile, should spend more time trying to understand the fears and loves of their MAGA brethren.

Which sounds very virtuous, but also quite bloodless. We should be appalled at real evils, whether identified by the left or the right; most of us aren’t appalled enough. Nor is it wrong to desire a transformation of society; most of us
should desire it far more, and be more willing to practice self-sacrificial solidarity with our neighbors.

Equally, the mistake is not “being too political.” By nature we’re the “political animals” Aristotle said we are. Only, by New Testament standards, we too often pick the wrong politics – in fact, the wrong polity – to pledge our allegiance to.

The apostle Paul taught that our polity (politeuma) – our republic, our civil affairs, our citizenship – is the kingdom of God (Phil. 3:20). This politics of the kingdom is not just a theological detail. It’s the whole point of the gospel that Jesus announced and died for. It’s the politics that will truly set right an unrighteous world.

If that’s the case, why do Christians so easily imagine that party politics is where the action is? “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” – yet in real life, we Christians often lavish our time and passion on trying to manipulate the levers of state power, while treating what should be our highest political loyalty as a pious afterthought. It’s worth asking ourselves a few searching questions: Why is it that democratic socialism or national conservatism sets so many Christian hearts racing, when the goal of re-tooling the state is one to which Peter and Paul were notably cool? Why do denominations prioritize action days, voting guides, and statements of political concern, when the Christian fellowship itself is meant to embody the new justice in its common life? Why do ambitious young Christians gravitate to party politics, pouring their talents into think tanks, conferences, and wonkery, rather than into building up the church as a Basil or Augustine did? In short, why does the knockoff form of politics command such attention when Christ himself had so little time or regard for it?

In an election year, the kingdom of God can seem a bit too . . . abstract. It’s affirmed, certainly, as a traditional metaphor for eternal life; it can prove useful perhaps as a source of moral principles to guide our “real” political commitments. But it’s not a flesh-and-blood reality. Maybe later – after Judgment Day? – but not now.

This, however, is the opposite of apostolic Christianity. For the first Christians, the kingdom of God was the only politics that mattered, as scholars such as N. T. Wright have shown. This assertion is nothing novel. It’s a truth hidden in plain sight in the Old and New Testaments and the early Christian writings. Five hundred years ago, it caught the imagination of the farmers, artisans, and village priests who made up the Radical Reformation movement now known as Anabaptism.

Fair warning: This issue of Plough is heavy on Anabaptism. Our purpose is not to promote the Anabaptist brand for its own sake or to claim our forebears were perfect (the Radical Reformers had their blind spots too). Rather, we believe this tradition recovers elements of original Christianity that are a crucial corrective in a year when simply saying you’re Christian strikes many as partisan.

From the start, the Anabaptist movement revolved around questions of faith and politics, church and state, freedom and compulsion.
Belfast’s Divides

On Jenny McCartney’s “Re-Mapping Belfast,” Winter 2020: For all of Jenny McCartney’s background of growing up in Belfast as the daughter of a Protestant lawyer, she struggles to describe what is going on there between the culturally Catholic native Irish population and the culturally Protestant descendants of early modern British colonists.

For Belfast’s – and Ireland’s – ascendant bourgeois class, whether culturally Catholic or Protestant, it’s unpleasant to be confronted with the idea that there are values without which human life becomes meaningless and hopeless – values like family, patria, nation, religion. Lip service may be paid to ideas of loving one’s home, place, and native land, but in reality a great loss of memory and identity is occurring amidst the relentless onslaught of ABBA, iPads, Derry Girls, and influxes of foreigners (though the latter in certain respects has hardly been a change from the last eight hundred years). Is it possible that those on the streets – who dare to remind us that all is not well in cloud-cuckoo-land – might be struggling for something other than just “cruelty”?

One is reminded of Brad Gregory’s aphorism in The Unintended Reformation, summing up the sentiments of Europe’s earliest bourgeois classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which Irish bourgeois quaintly think they are so current and fashionable for having just recently joined: “We can’t agree on religion, so let’s just go shopping.”

Crimthann O’Chiarraí, Oxford, England

I grew up as a child of English Protestant church planters in the Republic of Ireland in the 1980s and early 90s. Jenny McCartney’s powerful account of Belfast’s stubbornly lingering sectarian divides is one in which I feel a certain autobiographical entanglement. The “maps” I grew up with in the Republic of Ireland felt different from the ones McCartney describes. The island’s painful history lingered like a vast palimpsest in the geography itself, buried beneath the Anglicized place names that bespoke centuries of English rule. In the 1990s, Ireland’s bold new economic developments promised a future freed from those shadows. But they also forced us to face a different set of challenges. It’s hard to pursue the self-recognition that forms a people when you are promised a prosperous economic future of liberal multicultural individualism – and the price of this future is your community’s memory.

Both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland, a healthy peoplehood can only be forged and sustained through a creative yet faithful work of the moral imagination. What must be discovered is a truthful yet liberating way of articulating the stories of peoples – and of a new people sharing a common good. Only through a work of hopeful imagination can there be genuine movement forward, without deracination and erasure, beyond sectarianism and the imprisoning weight of the past.

Alastair Roberts, Stoke-on-Trent, England

Jenny McCartney responds: I thank Crimthann O’Chiarraí and Alastair Roberts for their responses. I’m certainly not advocating “the loss of memory” – as O’Chiarraí suggests – but rather a more generous, imaginative form of remembering, which also recognizes the experiences and fears of those on “the other side” in Northern Ireland. To see the entirety of our histories is very important: that is part of what telling the two contrasting personal stories in the article was about. But the trouble with some forms of memorializing in Northern Ireland – particularly paramilitary commemorations – is that they often publicly celebrate individuals

Readers Respond
and events that caused great and ongoing pain to bereaved families, and thereby make any vision of a shared future more difficult. Also, while it’s true that middle-class areas were more insulated from community intimidation and violence during the Troubles, the range of paramilitary targets – from taxi-drivers to judges – meant that very few sections of society went completely untouched by tragedy.

I don’t recommend shopping as spiritual balm – but if ABBA, Derry Girls, and even iPads bring communities together through laughter, music, or a technological window on a wider world, that can only be a good thing. I agree with Alastair Roberts that we need a “truthful yet liberating way” of articulating stories – but, alongside that, we need the readiness to listen to those of others.

**Clubs Are Great, But Don’t Forget Churches**

*On Clare Coffey’s “City of Clubs,” Winter 2020:* After a hunt, I finally found the Racquet Club of Philadelphia, where I was expected for a meeting. I ducked in. Or rather, I tried – what I had taken to be its main entrance was actually its locked side-entrance. I waited for a member to leave and sneaked in before the door could latch.

Greeting me was a sign politely explaining that both my shorts and shirt were inappropriate. I was subsequently assured by a member that, the place being nearly empty, no one would care much about my clothes. The faults were mine, of course; I’d recently moved from the Midwest, and I had no idea elite clubs still existed, let alone what the entrance or appropriate attire should look like. This was not Illinois.

While reading Clare Coffey’s wonderful “City of Clubs,” this memory became a parable: for newcomers, Philadelphia’s system of clubs is hard to get into and alien once you do. I’m generally partial to private associations, which nurture local communities around common loves and loyalties. I’m the target audience of a piece delighting in the glories of Philadelphia’s peculiar small-town take on what it means to be a big city. So why did it miss its mark with me?

Like many transplants to major cities, I moved to Philadelphia with few contacts. But clubs often require recommendations from members for admission – so they’re wonderful for maintaining social bonds, but lousy at forging them.

Churches, though, don’t require recommendations, and they’re everywhere. In Center City, there’s a church every few blocks: Tenth Presbyterian Church is only one block away from Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel, two from Liberti Church, and three from the Dominican-run St. Patrick’s Church. The residential neighborhoods are no different. Anyone can move to a new city, show up at a church, and meet people. To be a city of community, Philadelphia must embrace being a city of churches.

*Onsi A. Kamel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**Relearning Hospitality**

*On Brandon McGinley’s “Small Acts of Grace: Building Urban Community in Pittsburgh,” Winter 2020:* I was encouraged by McGinley’s report from the front lines of building Christian community. I was also a little envious. Like most Americans, I find the structures and demands of daily life often leave me aching for the easy intimacies of genuine neighborliness. Too few of us know for sure how to get it. We have been unlearning ordinary hospitality, never mind Christian fellowship, for a very long time.

This privation is a problem for individuals and families to confront. It is also a problem of politics, both high and low. The beauty of
Beyond Capitalism
Will Willimon


My criticism of capitalism is highly suspect. In fact, when I look upon the achievements of capitalism, and how easily I have worked capitalism to my own personal advantage and advancement, I am unsure why anybody would want to go beyond capitalism . . . were it not for Jesus. . . .

Stanley Hauerwas says capitalism survives by convincing us that there is no alternative but the globalized market. By “freedom,” we liberals mean adequate material resources to choose our way into lives worth living. “Equality” means enabling each individual to have the maximum amount of freedom to choose our way out of human contingency. Strangers competing for limited goods in a war of all against all. There is no “beyond,” no telos other than that formed through our arbitrary desires working on our choices by which we impose ourselves on the world. We can buy our way into divinity.

Capitalism promises us freedom, freedom to make up the lives we think we want; yet can’t give us the freedom to live lives that are not determined by capitalism.

As Eberhard Arnold asserted in a speech in 1924, Jesus has every intention of going head-to-head with our false gods; Jesus does not wait until life-after-life to deal with us. “Get rid of the idea that the kingdom Jesus proclaimed is purely otherworldly,” thundered Arnold. New life is intended to begin now; it has to do not only with where we live and how we work, what we eat and drink, but also with where our neighbor lives, especially those neighbors who would gladly feed upon the crumbs from our groaning tables.

From my own failings to resist the wiles of capitalism, from my observations of the way a capitalist extraction economy corrupts even so noble a project as the university, I believe that Arnold is right: it’s virtually inconceivable openly to listen to Jesus and boldly to follow Jesus without a Jesus community backing you up. Capitalism cannot be fully critiqued from within capitalism, because capitalism is so successfully totalistic. What’s required is not a change of heart, or even an intelligent reframing of the problem; it’s the formation of a living, breathing, visible people who refuse to sacrifice their children to the market.

Amid Political Turmoil, a Local Church Steps Up
Dominic Kunaka

Located in the capital of a country facing political upheaval and economic challenges characterized by shortages of fuel, electricity, water, and food, the Holy Name Catholic Church of Zimbabwe is a vibrant center of life and hope. With a congregation of fifteen hundred from varied social and economic backgrounds, the church offers daily Masses in Shona and in English. Parishioners make time for communal prayer and fellowship despite
In just such weather, my favorite English teacher used to peer over her glasses and declaim in e. e. cummings’s whimsical tones and lowercase letters that “the world is mud-luscious” and “the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee.” I did in fact see the balloonman recently, though he was not exactly whistling, but rather clinging to the frame of a wildly bucking box kite. Truthfully, he wasn’t really little either, but the size of the kite must have made him feel so.

Fox Hill Bruderhof had been preparing for our Kite Festival for weeks. Young families, inventive singles, creative grandpas, practically everyone on our community had been designing, constructing, and “secretly” flight-testing their aeronautic wonders for this big day. Good luck to anyone searching for a spare scrap of Tyvek, dowels, or twine.

Ironically, we were fresh out of wind. It’s a quandary. Large-scale community events requiring preassembly also require a day firmly pinned down on a calendar. The chief element of this event was not so easily pinned. But why try to corner a commodity so lavish over our open meadows and bald hilltops that only its rare moments of absence are a cause for any comment? And there was comment—plenty of it, when the only movements of air to be felt on the highest knob of hilltop were the gusty sighs of grounded kite-meisters.

The judges threaded through the crowd, ready to tot up points for the highest flyer, biggest frame, most environmentally friendly, most inventively designed, or greatest flop. But all seemed to vie equally for the latter category.

Maureen Swinger is an editor at Plough. She lives at the Fox Hill Bruderhof in Walden, New York.
The Politics of the Gospel

An Interview with Cornel West and Robert P. George

As a US election year unfolds, how does Christianity apply to politics? Plough’s Peter Mommsen sits down for a conversation with Cornel West and Robert P. George—friends, colleagues, and public intellectuals who hail from opposite sides of the political spectrum.

Plough: The mission of Plough is to “apply Christianity publicly,” to quote from our founding document written in 1920. One hundred years on, we’re still committed to tackling the questions both of you have spent careers addressing as distinguished Christian political philosophers. Cornel, you’re known as a leftist: What is your fundamental critique of the left? And Robby, what is your fundamental critique of the right?

Cornel West: For a lot of people, left means liberal. They think of MSNBC, CNN, and the Democratic Party. That’s not what I mean by the left: I’m talking about the tradition, both secular and religious, that pushes back against the logic of the market, that pushes back against corporate power. There ought to be much more of a focus on the primacy of the moral and the spiritual than what I see on much of today’s left.

Cornel West, a philosopher, activist, and author, is Professor of the Practice of Public Philosophy at Harvard University and serves as honorary chair of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Robert P. George, a legal scholar and political philosopher, is the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University.
Robert P. George: The form of American conservatism that I am attracted to is old-fashioned liberalism in the tradition of James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville. A tradition that views freedom as important, not as an end in itself, but as a means to other ends. It focuses not simply on the individual, but on the institutions of civil society, which help transmit to new generations the basic values and virtues that they need to have successful lives.

Where the contemporary conservative movement goes wrong is when it becomes too individualistic, so focused on freedom that it begins to see freedom as the end itself. Take the market, for example. We conservatives ask more of the market than it can give when we imagine that any result produced by a market is by definition just. That’s simply not true. There are independent moral standards by which we must judge our political and economic institutions.

West: There’s a common strand of critique between Brother Robby and myself, which is a profound rejection of idolatry. Market, state, race, gender: all of these can become idols. An idol is anything that is deified and fetishized rather than placed under the cross. That idolatry leads to spiritual poverty.

Speaking of spiritual poverty, we live in the richest society in history, yet we see what’s been called an epidemic of loneliness: deaths of despair to addiction and suicide, and rising rates of mental illness among young people. Why?

West: Let’s go back to Tocqueville. There’s a chapter in Democracy in America, written in the 1830s, called “Causes of the Restless Spirit of Americans in the Midst of Their Prosperity.” He talks about loneliness, isolation, spiritual disquietude. He could see what was required: social forms that would help people find fulfillment in relationships and communities.

The Catholic tradition is much better on this than my own Protestant tradition. Catholic social teaching understands that need for solidarity and subsidiarity. It understands the role of those layers of association between the family and the nation-state.

George: Secular ideologies have told people that material prosperity will give them what they’re looking for in life. Well, we’ve got the material prosperity, at least a lot of people do. There are places that were once mired in poverty that are now flourishing materially. But even in those communities, why are so many unhappy? Why are so many lonely? They’re looking for something more than happiness – they’re looking for joy, fulfillment, a sense of wholeness, a sense of being part of something that matters. They’re looking for God.

You’re both talking about a vision of human flourishing and of the common good that grows out of Christianity. But in a pluralistic society, can this Christian vision be translated into politics?

West: The Christian way of life allows us to look unflinchingly at the wretchedness in the human condition, and still emerge with joy,
convince people to really be citizens— to think about the public interest— rather than to be just consumers or constituents, viewing politics as something that helps you get your piece.

George: Two things that are integral parts of any promotion of the common good are the sanctity of human life, and the dignity of the marriage-based family. If life in all stages and conditions is to be protected and honored, that means we’re going to have to genuinely care about, and care for, people. All must enjoy equal protection under the law: all races, male and female, born and unborn, frail and healthy.

The trouble, of course, is that politicians will claim to take these issues seriously, but very often they don’t. Trump has delivered on some pro-life promises. I believe that this is basically transactional. And it raises the question with a commitment to perseverance. Happiness in the modern sense is not really part of Christian discourse. The Declaration of Independence tells us that we have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But that’s a secular influence. When it comes to spiritual food, I don’t really go to brothers like Thomas Jefferson. When you’re committed to trying to love people, really trying to be a neighbor, then you run into W. H. Auden’s wonderful question: How do you learn to love your crooked neighbor with your crooked heart? That’s the call, that’s what’s demanded, that’s the wretchedness that we must look at unflinchingly. But it doesn’t turn you into a nihilist, or to revenge or hatred. What’s on the other side is following Jesus: “Pick up your cross and follow me.”

George: Human flourishing has got to be something more substantial than just “happiness” considered as a pleasant psychological state that might be induced by serotonin-stimulating drugs, or hedonistic living, or by wielding power over others. We are embodied creatures who are also rational souls. And we can make choices that advance our flourishing in our physical and intellectual lives. We can eat well; we can think carefully; we can nurture our relationships with family members and friends; we can appreciate excellence in literature, music, art and architecture, sports, and other domains; we can delight in the beauty of nature; we can love and honor God. We can make choices that define our character.

With all this in mind, looking at the 2020 presidential election in the United States, what do each of you see as the most urgent task for politics?

West: The crisis of the common good, the crisis of democracy, is very deep. We need to convince people to really be citizens— to think about the public interest— rather than to be just consumers or constituents, viewing politics as something that helps you get your piece.

“Market, state, race, gender: all of these can become idols. An idol is anything that is deified and fetishized rather than placed under the cross.”

Cornel West
Yoram Raanan, *Balaam*, 2005, acrylic over lithograph
The Anabaptist Vision of Politics

The church, not the state, gives history its meaning.

On April 27, 2003, the citizens of Paraguay elected a new president. Paraguay is such a small country—it’s population was only 5.5 million at the time—that the story barely garnered a mention by the major US networks. Yet for Mennonites in Paraguay, the election of Nicanor Duarte Frutos that spring was a momentous event. Although the newly elected president himself was Catholic, along with 90 percent of the country, Duarte’s wife, Gloria, was an active member of the Raíces Mennonite church, a
large Spanish-speaking congregation in the capital city of Asunción. Moreover, for several years, Duarte himself, along with the couple’s five children, regularly attended the church.

In the weeks that followed the election, the Mennonite connection to Paraguayan politics became even more visible. By the summer of 2003, for example, Duarte had persuaded four Mennonites to serve in cabinet-level positions in his government – proof, he claimed, of his seriousness about cracking down on government corruption. In the fall of 2003, Duarte resisted pressure from US president George W. Bush to send troops and military aid to Iraq, citing his Christian convictions and the pacifist witness of his wife’s congregation. In the meantime, he continued to attend worship services at the Raíces congregation, now accompanied by a retinue of armed bodyguards.

Duarte’s public association with the Mennonites of Paraguay evoked a fierce debate among the country’s Catholic elites, who took it for granted that Paraguay was a Catholic country. But it also triggered an animated discussion among Mennonites there about the relationship between church and state, a discussion deeply embedded in the nearly five-hundred-year-old Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

Anabaptist Origins
The Anabaptist movement – which gave rise to groups like the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish – emerged in the sixteenth century within the tumultuous context of the Reformation. When Luther appealed to the authority of “scripture alone” (sola scriptura) and invited ordinary people to read the Bible in the vernacular, he assumed that all earnest Christians would arrive at the same conclusions as he did. For Luther, of course, the great insight revealed by Scripture was the distinction between gospel and law, and the conviction that humans are saved by grace alone. But others discovered in the same biblical texts – especially in the teachings of Jesus – a blueprint for social transformation. During the Peasants’ War of 1525, thousands of peasants and artisans in southern Germany, appealing to Luther’s principle of sola scriptura, rallied around the “Twelve Articles.” They demanded the right to elect their own pastors; freedom of movement; fair treatment in taxes, tithes, rents, and corvée labor; and the right to hunt and fish or gather wood. Although their concerns sound tame today, in the context of the sixteenth century the Twelve Articles challenged fundamental political and economic assumptions of feudal society. Perhaps their most revolutionary aspect was their explicit appeal to the Christian conscience. “If one or several of the articles mentioned here are not in accordance with the word of God,” the writers insisted, “we shall withdraw them if it is explained to us on the basis of the Scripture.”

The Peasants’ War marked a decisive moment in Christian political theory. Under pressure from his prince to restore social order – and in the interest of preserving his reforms – Luther sided firmly with the feudal lords. In May he published “Against the Robbing, Murderous Hordes of Peasants,” an incendiary tract that called on the princes of Germany to spare no blood in crushing the uprising. Shortly thereafter, at the battle of Frankenhausen, the peasants were brutally crushed. Going forward, Luther further expanded his conservative political theology,
November 1933, Hesse, Germany. The Bruderhof, a community of about 125 men, women, and children recently established on a farm in the Rhön Mountains, had just learned of a new mandate from the National Socialist government: all citizens must vote in a referendum to demonstrate approval of the regime. The Bruderhof was warned by government officials that nonparticipation could mean imprisonment in one of the “concentration camps” the ten-month-old Reich had established for its enemies.

The ballot asked, “Do you . . . approve the policy of your Reich government, and are you ready to affirm and solemnly pledge yourself to this policy as the expression of your

John Huleatt is a member of the Bruderhof and is the community’s General Counsel.

As the Bruderhof marks its hundredth year, a lawyer who is a member reflects on how a Christian community interacts with government.
own conviction and will?” After prayer and discussion, members decided that instead of checking yes or no, they would each write out a statement:

My conviction and my will bid me stand by the gospel and for the discipleship of Jesus Christ, the coming kingdom of God, and the love and unity of his church. That is the one and only calling God has given me as mine. In this faith I intercede before God and humankind for my people and their fatherland and in particular for their imperial government with its different calling, given by God, not to me but to my beloved rulers Hindenburg and Adolf Hitler.

The newspaper reported these votes in the “yes” count. But five days later, the little community found itself surrounded by over one hundred and forty armed SS and Gestapo.1

The “different calling” for which the Bruderhof members promised to pray is the God-given task of government (Rom. 13:1–5). Its leaders, they believed, were to be regarded as “beloved” in obedience to Jesus’ command to love both neighbors and – as in the case of Hitler – enemies. Their ballot statements alluded to the Christian belief that the state’s purpose is subordinate to that of the church: the state maintains order so the work of the church can be carried on and “all people [can] be saved and . . . come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

But the statement also points to a fundamental uneasiness in the church’s relation to the state, an ambiguity that has been there since Jesus taught his followers to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17). For two millennia, Christians have struggled to discern how to interact with their societies’ political authorities. This is all the more true for the Bruderhof, an Anabaptist community easily distinguished from secular society because of members’ commitment to nonviolence and to sharing all things in common in the spirit of the early church (Acts 2 and 4).

I’ve been a member of the Bruderhof since 1997, and have served as the community’s General Counsel for the last eighteen years. In this role, I’ve had many opportunities to reflect on how the Bruderhof has engaged with government over the course of its hundred-year history, and how it does so today.

Basic Convictions

The Church in the World

As a community that is just one part of the universal Body of Christ, we seek to obey his teachings and example in the Gospels in everything we do. We understand our calling as a shared way of discipleship, shaped by the early church and by the sixteenth-century Anabaptists of the Radical Reformation.2 Following their example of voluntary poverty and Christ’s instruction that we cannot serve both God and mammon (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13), we don’t own property privately: the houses we live in and the cars we drive are not ours. In these ways, we seek a life that in practical ways is opposed to the rule of money, which is the root of much of the violence that makes government necessary (1 Tim. 6:10).

We are citizens of the state, but are part of a stateless church, not bound to any country. During our hundred-year history, “the state”

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2. For a fuller description of this, see “The Anabaptist Vision of Politics” by John D. Roth on page 28.
In August 1934, the Bruderhof informed the German government that it would refuse to participate in a mandatory national plebiscite to affirm Hitler’s regime. The group was already under constant police surveillance and had been raided twice by the SS. In the community’s worship meeting the Sunday before the vote, its pastor Eberhard Arnold gave the following address on the relation of church and state.

The state is God’s order for hell. But Christians belong to an order of absolute love.
In no absolute monarchy has there been such centralization as there is in today’s fascist and Bolshevist states. It calls to mind imperial Rome. But no Roman emperor claimed such idolatry, such a deification of his own person, as do present-day dictators. For Nero and other emperors, little incense altars were erected here and there, where little balls of incense had to be offered to testify to the religious significance of the unified imperial power, to the genius of the emperor: not to the emperor in person, but to the genius of the emperor. But never did Nero or any other Roman emperor bring matters to such a point that at every street corner people called out “Hail, Nero!” The dictator of today is so utterly without all religious or supernatural impulses that he does not even believe in the genius of the dictator, only in the little person of the dictator.

Thus idolatry is today coarsened in the most vulgar way. It is the loud voice, the hair, and the nose of the dictator that is worshiped. As a result, authority is also robbed of all genius. What the dictator says is done. He who thinks is hanged.

Modern fascism is such that one could weep about it day and night. Freedom of thought is forbidden. Objective justice is abolished. Goebbels says, “If we are right, it follows that no one else is right. For us there is no other justice than that which serves our interests.” Stupidity reigns. In the twentieth century, that is appalling. Who still believes in progress? I do not believe that such an unspiritual conception ever prevailed among the primitive Germanic races of Europe. There the chieftain or duke was bound to observe the decisions of the Ting, the legislative assembly; he was bound to the place of gathering and to the legal conception of the order of the body politic. Today, however, national egotism and the self-assertion of the present dictator-group control law and justice and all thought.

What power opposes this force? What is England’s parliamentary monarchy doing? What are the other countries with great spiritual traditions doing? What are the churches doing? What are the great philosophies and the great spiritual movements doing? The Pope signs one concordat after another with Hitler. Raids on the bishop’s palace, the murder of two of the most outstanding Catholic priests, priests arrested and taken to concentration camps – none of this prevents the Pope from dealing reasonably and respectfully with Hitler again and again.

The Protestants, meanwhile, are led by a cleric [Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller] whose ignorance is unprecedented in thousands of years. Within the Lutheran churches, orthodox groups have bristled a little at the rule of violence in the church, most vigorously in regions where pietism was strong. And the Reformed churches have proven more capable of resistance than the Lutherans. Yet it seems that one established church after another is succumbing to brutal violence and base deceit.

It is interesting to note that the Confessing Church synods have issued the slogan, “No separation from the church!” But this paralyzes all energy. For when the church becomes godless one cannot say, “We protest, but we remain in the church.” When the church is ruled by demons and idolatry, one cannot say, “We protest, but we remain in the church.” Even the protesting groups in the Catholic and Protestant Churches render unconditional homage to the present state. They make the offering of “Heil Hitler!” They are prepared

Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935) was the founding editor of Plough and co-founder of the Bruderhof.
“At present I absolutely want to paint a starry sky. It often seems to me that night is still more richly coloured than the day; having hues of the most intense violets, blues and greens. If only you pay attention to it you will see that certain stars are lemon-yellow, others pink or a green, blue and forget-me-not brilliance. And without my expatiating on this theme it is obvious that putting little white dots on the blue-black is not enough to paint a starry sky.”

—Vincent van Gogh
Holding Our Own

Is the future of Islam in the West communal?
In the 2000 presidential election, my parents, together with nearly everyone I knew in our largely immigrant Muslim community in suburban Pennsylvania, voted for George W. Bush. Republicans, they thought, were natural allies on matters of faith, family, and morality. It was then that many of our parents were becoming more religious on the heels of the Islamic awakening that had spread across the Middle East in the 1980s and 1990s. As we entered our teenage years, concerns about the effects of Western culture became more pronounced. Even though my parents were becoming more integrated and somewhat more “Americanized,” that fear of cultural corruption was something I distinctly remember feeling in our local community.

Shadi Hamid is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the author of Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World.
As the writer Asma Uddin, who comes from a similar background, describes her own experience to me:

Most Muslim immigrant parents are always going to consider America more “liberal” than where they came from. So even if America was relatively more conservative back then, it wasn’t conservative enough for my parents. I think they worried less than I do about what their kids were learning in school or seeing in the media, but the general idea was the same: create a safe haven, a community within the larger community, that reflects your way of life.

Today, Muslim Republicans are a rare breed. After the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration’s support for surveillance powers under the Patriot Act cast law-abiding Muslim communities under a permanent cloud of suspicion. The rhetoric of “clash of civilizations” and “crusade” didn’t help. And then there was the Iraq War. Over time, Republican politicians stopped even trying to court a community that saw their party’s national security agenda as anathema. The election of Donald Trump, with his unapologetic anti-Muslim rhetoric, represented the culmination of a fifteen-year process. In Trump’s America, a Muslim Republican is likely to face accusations of betrayal.

Meanwhile, Democrats have embraced Muslims as a core constituency in the party’s patchwork coalition. In some ways, this has accelerated the shift that our parents worried about. As Muslims – and particularly young, urban Muslims – become more integrated into American society, they tend to be shaped by liberal norms, even while remaining more religiously observant than the rest of the population. Anti-Muslim alarmists may decry “creeping sharia,” but what is actually happening within American Islam is “creeping liberalism,” as the author Mustafa Akyol puts it.

That Muslims are increasingly not just with the left but of the left has resulted in their adoption of some of the core beliefs of the progressive coalition. The most telling example of this is gay rights, with American Muslims going through an even more pronounced version of the shift that the broader American public experienced over the Obama presidency. According to a Pew Research Center survey, in 2007 only 27 percent of Muslims in the United States said that homosexuality should be “accepted by society.” By 2016, that number had increased to 52 percent. This may reflect what Uddin, in her book *When Islam Is Not a Religion*, describes as “a tacit agreement that Muslims, as religious believers, will never challenge any of the rights championed by the Left, such as a progressive vision of gender or sexual equality.”

**Arguments about a culture increasingly hostile to people of faith apply not just to Christians.**
The isolation built into mainstream American life is bad for the soul.

Every time I drive past an apartment complex, I feel an ache in my chest because I cannot live there – not in all of them. And yet I dream of making a home in each of these hidden-away spaces where people are crammed in right up next to each other. My recollections of my many apartments over the years are all dreamy: sunlight filtering through windows, breaking bread with neighbors, being welcomed into communities culturally and socially so different from each other and from the ones I’d grown up in.

My husband remembers it differently. He reminds me that in certain seasons we were so busy responding to outside demands that we were like ghosts, slight impressions on the microcosm of life in a complex. Other times we were frightened by the sounds of our neighbors screaming in rage, wailing in sorrow, taking their fights out into the corridors, people in mental-health crisis and people trying to wash away their sadness with gallons of vodka or pipes full of hard drugs. The sickly-sweet smell of passing out, of numbing out.

D. L. Mayfield works with refugee communities and is the author of The Myth of the American Dream (InterVarsity Press, 2020), from which this article is adapted. She lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband and two children.
of trauma breaking through. Or the nights when neighbors would sail into our apartment without knocking, when our small living room was another extension of the outdoors—so little privacy, all exposed, no respite for the introverts, constant invitations into spaces and feasts and stories.

When my husband reminds me of these experiences, I can start to remember the nuances. But it all goes out the window as I drive slowly past a complex, full of peeling paint and mothers bouncing babies on their knees, a big sign saying “Now Accepting Applications.” I want to live there; I want to sit around and see how people go about their lives; I want to become a known entity, benign as a mailbox, a staple of the community, a watchful grandmother. I want to do this in every apartment complex in America. I want to know and be known by every person who lives in these spaces that cater to those working very hard to make it. That’s not too much to ask, is it? Sometimes I tell this to my husband, and he just shakes his head at me. “Danielle,” he says, full of kindness, full of wisdom. “You can’t be neighbors with everybody. You can only be a good neighbor to a few. So pick those neighbors on purpose.”

*Philoxenia*, the Greek word for hospitality, means “love of the stranger.” Much of the hospitality shared on my social-media feeds is geared toward family, friends, and church groups. Often it revolves around immaculately decorated houses or complicated recipes pulled off with aplomb. It is about a hostess with killer hair and a cozy house. For some it’s just a way of expressing themselves; for others, already drowning in bills, in children, in an inability to get out of bed to tidy up, this kind of hospitality is a millstone around their necks.

There’s a story about a woman, Kristin Schell, who put a picnic table in her front yard, painted it a bright turquoise, and sat at it until she started meeting some of her neighbors. She wrote a book about this table, colored the same shade that a multitude of Christian inspiration books also mysteriously display. The turquoise table is not a bad idea, not at all. It was a bold move to break free from the isolation that the American suburban experience is built on. It was one woman making a claim that the dream was too narrow for her. She needed a flag, a bright turquoise one, that she could plant as a sign that there was more to life than the kingdom she was building inside. She sat at the table and invited others to join her, and relationships were forged.

This woman reached out to the strangers around her, and it resonated with others who, I assume, felt that same pull toward neighborliness. But is it true hospitality, I wonder? Does it get to what love of the stranger really means? In order to love the stranger we have to love the people who are most estranged from us. And that would involve upending the entire system, how neighborhoods and shopping centers and schools and churches are all built by people wanting to be with those who are just like them. A turquoise table simply won’t reach far enough if the composition of your neighborhood is the result of targeted systems of segregation. A turquoise table will not do if your suburb—your neighborhood—is built on the backs of the excluded.
Tolstoy’s Case
Against Humane War
After a few years devoted to gambling and women, Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy joined the army at age twenty-two in 1851. The young aristocrat dropped out of university, sat the cadet exam, then spent three years in the Caucasus. With the outbreak of war in 1854, Tolstoy, now a junior officer, was mobilized west. After a stint on the Romanian front, where strife had broken out after Western powers opposed Tsar Nicholas I’s designs on Ottoman lands, Tolstoy was sent to the Crimean peninsula where he passed almost a year in and around the picturesque Black Sea town of Sevastopol, then under

Samuel Moyn is Henry R. Luce Professor of Jurisprudence at Yale Law School and Professor of History at Yale University. He is the author of several books, including Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World (Harvard University Press, 2018).
siege by a multinational alliance of armies. Tolstoy manned a fortified bastion during the climactic ten-day bombardment, developing a lifelong resistance to making physical brutality more humane through modest reforms and stopgap improvements.

Tolstoy wrote three short stories about the siege that crystallized his belief that war itself, rather than how it is fought, is the moral evil to be concerned about. *Sevastopol Sketches*, which established Tolstoy’s national fame, begins with the narrator’s introduction to the city under siege in December 1854, in a moment of quiet when he is rudely led into the amputation room for wounded soldiers. “You will witness fearsome sights that will shake you to the roots of your being,” he writes, “you will see war not as beautiful, orderly and gleaming formation, with music and beaten drums, streaming banners and generals on prancing horses, but war in its authentic expression – as blood, suffering and death.” While that first sketch concludes with nationalist hopes for Russian victory, its concern for wounded soldiers already prompts grim reflections on the propriety of the enterprise.

In the second sketch, set in May 1855, concern has become corrosive doubt. After months of siege, the reports of bullets and the shriek of cannon fire ring in the narrator’s ears as both echo daily between the ramparts and the trenches. The “angel of death” has “hovered ceaselessly,” for in a stalemated confrontation “the dispute which the diplomats have failed to settle is proving to be even less amenable to settlement by means of gunpowder and human blood.”

The second sketch concludes with an episode Tolstoy himself had witnessed. Following two days of fighting, the surviving officers agree...
Julian Peters is an illustrator and comic book artist living in Montreal, Canada, who focuses on adapting classical poems into graphic art. This visual interpretation is taken from Peters’s collection Poems to See By (see page 103). plough.com/poemstoseeby
He is in haste; he has business in Cuba.

Business in the Balkans, many calls to make this morning.

But I will not hold the bridle

While he clinches the girth.
A copy of the icon sits on my desk, calling to me: the nineteen martyrs of Algeria, who gave their lives in love during the civil war of the 1990s. Here they stand gazing at me, in the loose robes they might have worn when visiting the market, nursing the ill, teaching, or saying Mass. Monks and nuns, priests, a bishop, all with their faces haloed. Simple, humble, their feet firmly planted in the Algerian soil.

It is rare that beatification happens so quickly, that I can call “Blessed” those who lived and died in my own lifetime, those I might once have passed in the street. Yet here they are, not thirty years after they were martyred, dying along with nearly 200,000 of their Algerian neighbors. Their beatification, held on December 8, 2018, in Oran, serves as a stark reminder that holiness lives among us, that saints do not belong to other eras but to our lives, our friendships, our own streets.

But it is not their nineteen faces that draw me in most. Instead I find myself turning towards a twentieth figure—a young man, standing in the corner, wearing jeans, sandals, and a blue shirt with polka dots. He has no halo; its very absence pulls me to him. He gestures toward the minaret of a mosque. How did he come to be on this icon of the Christian martyrs of Algeria?

Stephanie Saldaña is a writer based in the Middle East and the author of, most recently, A Country Between (Sourcebooks, 2017). She lives in Jerusalem with her husband and children.
In time, I learn that his name is Mohamed Bouchikhi, and that this young Muslim offered his life for his Christian friend, Bishop Pierre Claverie.

The story of how Mohamed came to be on the icon of nineteen Christian martyrs is equally the story of how nineteen martyrs came to be on the same icon as Mohamed, in whose country, Algeria, they chose to live and die. It is the story of Muslims and Christians witnessing to hope together, asking, even in death, to be written into a single frame.

The icon’s most imposing figure is the bishop himself, Pierre Claverie, who stands with a staff in hand, wearing red and white vestments. His journey onto this scene was as unlikely as Mohamed’s. Claverie was born in Algeria in 1938 when it was still a French colony. As the child of French settlers, whose family had lived in Algeria for generations, he would later reflect back on a happy childhood, but also on the “colonial bubble” in which he grew up – raised by loving parents but little aware of his surroundings. He spoke no Arabic and had almost no contact with Muslim Algerians.

He traveled to complete his studies in France, and it was there, as a young student and a seminarian, against the backdrop of the rising Algerian independence movement back home, that Claverie’s worldview was shaken. For the first time, he met those who questioned the French presence in Algeria, angry that they might have to risk their lives in military service there. Claverie became aware that as a Frenchman in Algeria he had participated in a system that excluded his Muslim Algerian neighbors. “How could I have lived in ignorance of this world, which demanded recognition of its identity and dignity?” he asked. “In churches, how could I have so often have heard the words of Christ about loving the Other as myself, as Him, and never met that other?”

Even as many French in Algeria left for France in the wake of Algerian independence, Pierre Claverie experienced a conversion of the heart. He became a priest and asked to return to Algeria – no longer as part of a group in power, but as a common pilgrim bound together with his neighbors. He wanted to rediscover the country of his childhood as he had never known it, to study Arabic and Islam and to give his life to this new Algeria. He wrote: “It’s there that my true personal adventure began – a rebirth.”

Claverie became part of a transformed church, a diminished group of Christian religious who decided to stay as guests in the house of Islam. They were led by Archbishop

“The covenant with God passes through the covenant with the people to whom he gives us.”

Bishop Pierre Claverie

Photograph from the Sacred Heart Archives
Editors’ Picks

**Apeirogon: A Novel**
Colum McCann  
(Random House)

In his latest book, Colum McCann stretches the boundaries of the novel. First, his subjects are real, living people. Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian, and Rami Elhanan, an Israeli, are fathers united by grief after each lost a daughter. Former combatants, they have opted for understanding the other as the only way to end the violence. Now practically brothers, they have been speaking together for years; *Plough* featured them in 2018.

The publishing world has been much occupied this year with questions about who has a right to tell whose story, with the outcry over *American Dirt*, a novel about migrants by a non-migrant. It appears Aramin and Elhanan don’t share those reservations about their own stories. Since McCann’s book is clearly fiction, they didn’t ask him to change anything.

The book consists of 1001 short chapters, a nod to the Arabic classic *One Thousand and One Nights*. These fragments gradually coalesce into the intertwined stories of the two men and their daughters, Abir and Smadar, though not chronologically, and with frequent asides about migratory birds, rubber bullets, and tightrope walkers that connect only tangentially. In Chapter 500 we hear from Aramin and Elhanan in their own words; after that the book counts back down to 1. Some may find this technique overwrought – many chapters are a mere sentence – but for this reader, at least, it was effective.

An apeirogon, we learn, is a geometric shape with an infinite number of sides. McCann gives us a sense of this: this conflict is not a black-and-white story with two sides, but one with as many perspectives as there are people who experience it.

**How to Burn a Goat: Farming with the Philosophers**
Scott H. Moore  
(Baylor University Press)

What happens when a philosophy professor decides he’s read enough Wendell Berry and it’s time to get some literal muck on his boots? Well, about what you’d expect. “If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need,” says Cicero. Cicero was wrong, our hobby farmer learns soon enough: “You will also need friends. And rain. And perhaps a chain saw.”

With self-effacing candor, Moore recounts the time he badly underestimated what it would take to burn a 150-pound dead goat on the brush pile, which leads to musings about burnt offerings and true sacrifice. He finds he can’t mow the hay without worrying about slaying Robert Burns’s “Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim’rous beastie” who is our “earth-born companion, an fellow-mortal.”

The juxtaposition of formal essays – including one first published by *Plough* on the virtues of college farms – with vignettes of encounters with skunks, rattlesnakes, and unruly steers can make for uneven reading. But for people who believe farmers can be philosophers and philosophers farmers, and especially for those who are considering putting their localist and agrarian ideals into practice, this book could be a gentle nudge in a positive direction.
Boys Aren’t the Problem

A review of Francis Wardle’s Oh Boy! Strategies for Teaching Boys in Early Childhood

The year my older son was three-turning-four, he attended an English nursery school that was—and I hardly exaggerate—a little boy’s heaven, a heaven of things to see and try and do. Indoors and out the school offered, in the words of the Victorian educator Charlotte Mason, a “wide and varied feast” of engaging experiences, which became evident literally as you walked through the door. When I first came to visit the school, the spring before our son began as a pupil, a flock of baby chicks, recently hatched from an incubator and now peeping and scratching in a box outside the head teacher’s office, made me pause on the threshold and think, “This looks like a good place.”

It was a good place, though the things that made it good were simple. Indoors it

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consisted of two large rooms, a “noisy room” and a “quiet room.” The noisy room had an art table with paints and modeling clay, and another table dedicated to “model-making,” with donated cereal and shoeboxes, paper towel and toilet paper rolls, and lots of tape. In a corner, children could experiment with musical instruments of the rhythm and general-loudness sort: rattles, maracas, clappers, xylophones, drums, bells. A lofted structure like an indoor treehouse served variously, with changes of costume and props, as a kitchen, a rabbit hutch, a mechanic’s shop, a fire station, and a spaceship. A ball pit was the locus of noisy activity. Meanwhile, in the quiet room – about which I don’t remember hearing much, now that I think of it – children could page through picture books or play simple educational computer games.

Outdoors, the school had a covered paved area, where even on the rainiest days children could ride tricycles, scooters, and pedal cars, or push and pull each other in wagons. In the schoolyard stood an elaborate climbing frame and slide. There was a large sandpit where, a teacher told me one day, my son occupied himself happily in digging for a Roman city. Daily the children spent at least an hour outside. In the last twenty minutes of the day, they went indoors to gather in small groups for stories and songs. Otherwise, indoors or out, they were free to roam from activity to activity as their interest led them.

In this school, the teacher’s role was far less oriented toward instruction than toward support and observation of the children in their pursuits. Teachers were there to mix paint colors, to find the end of the roll of tape, or to buckle on a firefighter’s hat. It was in informal conversations with his teachers that I discovered many things about my son. I learned, for example, that like many little boys he was a kinetic learner, who formed and communicated his thoughts about, say, interplanetary travel while hopping on one foot. Or that he was generous: once he’d spent his entire outdoor time pulling a wheelchair-using classmate around the covered pavement in a wagon. Or that he was imaginative and perhaps unusually historically literate for a three-year-old; the dig for the Roman city had clearly bemused the teacher who beheld its progress. At any rate, daily I came away with an illuminated view of my child as a person who was thoughtful, interesting, imaginative, kindhearted, able, and good. Inevitably, it seems to me now, he came away from nursery school with a similar impression of himself. In hindsight I can see that this early vision of himself shaped and empowered him, as a student and a human being, in lasting ways.

Recently I have encountered a term that encapsulates everything I treasure in my memory of that nursery-school experience. In Oh Boy! Strategies for Teaching Boys in Early Childhood, educator Francis Wardle invokes the phrase goodness-of-fit to describe, as he puts it, “a match between a child’s unique behaviors, characteristics, and dispositions, and the social and physical environment in which the child develops and learns.” Goodness-of-fit, in other words, suggests an educational experience that acknowledges both the fullness of the child’s personhood and the fact of his developmental stage. In this paradigm, his education is oriented toward the reality that he is a person, here and now, with
Melissa: When *You Carried Me* was published three years ago, my birth mother and I had just met face-to-face for the first time after years of communicating through emails, cards, and photos. As two women so deeply wounded by abortion, we needed those years to build trust and love. Meeting each other was a natural outflow from the relationship we had established. In the book, I shared what a sacred experience that was. Yet as forthcoming as we were about that meeting and the convergence of our lives, there are some important specifics...
we left out in order to protect her privacy. We can share those now. First, her name: Ruth. My father was Elliot.

**Ruth:** The day I heard that Melissa had survived the abortion my mother had performed on me was a Sunday in August 2007. My twin sister, Mary, called in the afternoon. I could tell it was going to be a serious conversation, so I went to the bedroom. Mary told me that the child Elliot and I had was alive. My first thought was: what a cruel joke to play on your twin sister. But she continued, telling me that I had a daughter who was alive and well, and living in Sioux City. My daughter had done an interview with the KMEG TV station and there was a segment on the website where I could see her.

I was crying hysterically as I came out of the bedroom. I told my boyfriend to turn off the TV because we had to talk. I began telling him all about the situation, of which he knew nothing. He is an easygoing person but was in utter disbelief that this could have happened.

Despite my shock, it dawned on me that this was finally the beginning—a chance to get to the bottom of what had happened.

**Melissa:** We chose to meet for the first time at the Kansas City Zoo because it’s a public place that felt natural and family-friendly. But there’s more. Not only do I live in the Kansas City area, but so do Ruth and my half-sister, Jennifer. Yes, you read that correctly. Without knowing it, we had ended up living in the same city, hundreds of miles from our roots and the hospital where my life began.

In fact, when Ruth’s cousin, Susan, contacted me back in 2013 with details about the abortion being coerced, about my grandmother being responsible for so much of it, and how my survival had been kept secret from Ruth for over thirty years, her primary reason for reaching out was because I had publicly announced we were moving to Kansas City. As a family, they felt it was time to approach me. I’m so grateful Susan did reach out and that Ruth is now a part of my life, as well as my half-sisters. I’m thankful the information they shared gave me more pieces to the puzzle of my life.

**Ruth:** The day we first met was a Sunday, May 22, 2016. I had to work three hours that morning. Then I went to my daughter Jennifer’s house. I changed clothes, grabbed some lunch, and headed for the zoo with Jenny and her two children. We were to meet Melissa at one o’clock.

Melissa, Ryan, and Olivia arrived shortly before we did. (Ava had recently been in the hospital so was unable to come.) When we arrived, we stood in the picnic area where we planned to meet and looked around. Jenny spotted them first and waved. Melissa and her family walked our way. When we met, I embraced Melissa in a big hug. The tears started flowing. I told her, “I never got to hold you.”

I eventually let go of her and we walked around the zoo. The kids held hands like they had known each other forever. Ryan and Jenny kept track of them so Melissa and I could talk. It was my best day ever. I remember thinking, “I can die now. I have all my children in my life.”
Bishop Samuel Ruiz García

Jason Landsel is the artist for Plough’s “Forerunners” series, including the painting opposite.
Jesus calls on us to be defenders. Even if in so doing we must follow his path: that of the cross.

The question with which God will present us at the end of our existence will be:

Which side were we on?

Whom did we defend?

For whom did we choose?

- Samuel Ruiz
How ridiculous are liberations that talk only about having higher wages, about having more money and better prices!

Liberations that talk only about political change, about who is in the government, are only bits and pieces of the great liberation, the one that paid for the root of all our injustices.

Oscar Romero, archbishop of San Salvador and martyr