

Welcoming Strangers in the Name of Christ: Abraham Kuyper and the Ethics of Political Discipleship

Michael Bräutigam

Melbourne School of Theology

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matt 25:31–40)¹

Europe is faced with the most severe crisis after the Second World War. Over a million refugees arrived last year in Germany alone.² Official figures vary as no one really knows the correct number of migrants who crossed the borders overland in Southeast Europe or across the Mediterranean Sea. And we, observing the events from afar, are shocked when we read the stories of those who did not make it over the border alive. Who could ever forget the picture of the drowned Syrian boy who was washed up on the Turkish beach last year.³ It was shortly after this incident that German chancellor

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*® (ESV®), Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

² Cf. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>, accessed 30 January 2016; <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article150678614/1-1-Millionen-Fluechtlinge-kamen-2015-nach-Deutschland.html>, accessed 2 February 2016.

³ See, for example, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/02/shocking-image-of-drowned-syrian-boy-shows-tragic-plight-of-refugees>, accessed 29 March 2016.

Angela Merkel had one of her rare emotional outbursts: “If we are now supposed to apologize for the fact that we are showing a friendly face in this emergency situation,” Merkel said, “then this isn’t my country anymore.”⁴ The Protestant minister’s daughter here responded to critics in her own party who tried to force her to either close the borders or at least introduce an upper limit for refugee numbers that would be acceptable to Germany. What we are currently witnessing in Europe is a crisis on multiple levels.

There is, *first*, of course the plight of the refugees, many of them Christians, who try to escape Bashar al-Assad’s regime or ISIS’ terror, and who risk their lives as they flee to the European continent. *Secondly*, this crisis has plunged the European Union into unprecedented chaos; its member countries disagree on a quota system which could regulate a fair distribution of refugees: member states in the east (e.g. Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia) are less willing to welcome refugees than those in the north or south (Germany, France, Spain, Italy).⁵ *Thirdly*, this crisis challenges societal cohesion in Europe. The more migrants arrive, the greater the need for integration. While the volunteers in refugee centers in major European cities still outnumber those who try to burn them down, pressure is mounting and right-wing parties are gaining considerable support. How are Christians to react in light of this multiple crisis? After all, are we—as members of the body of Christ—not called “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt 5:13–14)? Yet are we, really?

My aim in this essay is *not* to discuss the macro level of world politics but to zoom in on the mission of the Christian Church and its individual members. I am convinced that the Christian Church is a central part of the solution to the refugee crisis. This crisis calls for a new generation of Christian disciples who are active members of society, who love neighbor and enemy, and contribute to the flourishing of human communities. In short, we need radical followers of Christ who are willing to adopt what Graham Ward has termed the “politics of discipleship.”⁶ In what follows, we are

⁴ Cf. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/refugee-policy-of-chancellor-merkel-divides-europe-a-1053603.html>, accessed 10 February 2016.

⁵ Cf. <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article151706915/Diese-Laender-haben-bisher-keinen-Fluechtling-aufgenommen.html>, accessed 29 March 2016.

⁶ Graham Ward strongly emphasized the “call to political discipleship for Christians.” Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 39.

going to explore the key characteristics of twenty-first century political disciples and the way they respond to the present refugee crisis. I intend to proceed as follows: As a first step, we will examine the radical nature of the call into discipleship and the political nature of the disciples. In a second step, we will focus on Abraham Kuyper's contribution, which in my view offers concrete suggestions as to how political discipleship could be effectively implemented today.

Loving God and Neighbor

A professor of theology once asked Jesus, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" (Mk 12:28). Evidently, in the jungle of Jewish laws even an expert could sometimes lose track of what was really significant and what was not. Jesus' answer was clear and crisp: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mk 12:30–31). To love God and to love neighbor is what Jesus demands from his disciples. This second commandment seems particularly challenging to members of the human race. "But who is my neighbor?" another theology expert wants to know (Lk 10:29). And Jesus does what he often does when he is asked a question: he tells a story.

This is the story where someone travels from Jerusalem to Jericho and is robbed, severely beaten, and left behind in a serious condition. A priest comes by, sees the injured man, but he passes on the other side of the road. Next, another Jewish religious leader, a Levite, comes down the road. Although he takes a closer look, he too passes on the other side of the road and fails to offer help. Then, a Samaritan comes by, and Jesus' Jewish audience would have expected the Samaritan to be the least likely one to get involved (the Jews did not think much of the Samaritans). However, the climax of Jesus' story is that this Samaritan is a *good* Samaritan. He shows compassion. He sees the need and acts promptly and more than appropriately. He binds the man's wounds, anoints the cuts with oil and wine, loads him on his own animal and takes him to an inn. He even stays the night with him and makes sure that the man will be treated until he recovers. "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" Jesus asked the lawyer, who responds contritely: "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do

likewise.” (Lk 10:36–37). This is a powerful lesson about the ethics of Christian discipleship. We learn here about at least three central characteristics of the political disciple. *First*, she exhibits a strong link between knowing and doing; *secondly*, she expresses her love generously, and, *thirdly*, she does so in a way that does not distinguish between neighbor and non-neighbor.

The Active Ethics of Christian Discipleship

It is not enough to *know* the law which commands us to love God and neighbor. The Priest, the Levite (and the lawyer in the conversation) knew that full well. However, they were not prepared to put their knowledge into practice. Their orthodoxy did not lead, as it naturally should, to orthopraxy. Yet Jesus is very clear that those who are familiar with God’s law ought to put it into practice. If you know these things,” Jesus says elsewhere, “blessed are you if you *do* them” (Jn 13:17, emphasis added). Knowing leads organically to doing. Lived ethics is the central mark of a true disciple. *Secondly*, Jesus calls his disciples to a generous love. However, very much like the lawyer we intend to lower the bar for ethical involvement as we seek to limit the scope of our responsibilities as much as possible. Social psychologists have coined the term “diffusion of responsibility” to describe this phenomenon.⁷ “There are plenty of other people in society who could play the good Samaritan, so why me?” But this just does not apply to Christian discipleship. Minimal obedience is just not good enough. Jesus demands exuberant love and compassion, akin to the love the good Samaritan showed and, in fact, to the sacrificial love Jesus himself has shown for us (1 Jn 3:16). “You go, and do likewise” is a challenging call to generous love, a love that does not hesitate to go over and beyond what is necessary. *Thirdly*, followers of Jesus love with a love that embraces both the close neighbor and the foreign neighbor. They exhibit a love that, in fact, does not know a non-neighbor.⁸ Jesus’ story calls us to be a neighbor to all, regardless of race, gender, color, nationality, religious conviction or non-conviction. The bottom line is this: If someone is in need, you

⁷ John M. Darley and Bibb Latané, “Bystander intervention in emergencies: diffusion of responsibility,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8 (1968): 377–383.

⁸ Pope Francis recently addressed this important point at his General Audience on Saint Peter’s Square, where he discussed the passage in Luke 10:25–37 under the heading “Go and do likewise” (Wed, 27 April 2016); see https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160427_udienza-generale.html, accessed 9 May 2016.

help that person. Full stop. We seem to find it difficult, though, to offer help to those who are less like us and more different from us. While we still might help those who are our very neighbors (family members, members of our own group, class, church, nation, or race), we are more reluctant to show compassion to those who are more distant neighbors. Here, we are blinded by racial biases and gender stereotypes; we exercise in-group-favoritism but outgroup derogation.⁹ Consciously and even sub-consciously, as psychologists tell us, we exhibit xenophobic tendencies.¹⁰ Still, God's Word again and again reminds us to love the neighbor who is foreign to us. We are to show compassion to the stranger in our midst. Why are we supposed to do that? Is there any evolutionary benefit in showing outgroup altruism? The straightforward answer to this question is that God loves the foreigner. "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and *loves the foreigner residing among you*" (Deut 10:18, emphasis added). God always sides with the oppressed, the less advantaged, the neglected and poor. God is a God of the underdog. In his own life Jesus always demonstrated God's love for the outcast. Jesus did not shrink back from touching the leper (Matt 8:3; Mk 1:41), or eating with sinners (Mk 2:15) or accepting the hospitality of a despised tax collector (Lk 19:1–10). Now if we love God (first command) we also love those whom God loves. If God loves the foreigner, so will we. There can be no such thing as a xenophobic Christian. Jesus' disciples are called to be *xenophiles*, they are commanded "to love those who are foreigners" (Deut 10:19a). They take to heart the commandment of old: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." (Lev 19:33–34). From what has been said so far emerges the clear picture of how radical Christian discipleship is envisaged. Christian disciples are radical in their love and generosity towards all. And I

⁹ Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict," in W. G. Austin and S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33–47; Amélie Mummendey and Sabine Otten, "Aversive Discrimination," in M. B. Brewer and M. Hewstone (Eds.), *Emotion and Motivation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 298–318.

¹⁰ Anthony G. Greenwald and Mahzarin R. Banaji, "Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes," *Psychological Review* 102.1 (1995): 4–27; David M. Amodio and Patricia G. Devine, "Stereotyping and Evaluation in Implicit Race Bias: Evidence for Independent Constructs and Unique Effects on Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91.4 (2006): 652–661.

am convinced that the answer to the growing radicalization in Europe can only be a radical form of Christian discipleship.

Radical Discipleship

In fact, Jesus' call "Follow me!" is radical. It stands in opposition to the calls that go out from many a sugar-coated pulpit where we are promised that once we welcomed sweet Jesus into our hearts, financial freedom will follow suit. The opposite, in fact, might be the case. "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:26). Following Jesus, Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us, involves not cheap grace but costly grace. "Cheap grace [*billige Gnade*] is the mortal enemy of our church. Our struggle today is for costly grace."¹¹ This is true even today. "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (Lk 6:27–28).¹² It does not get any more radical than this. This is a call to radical love and hospitality. Of course, if we were to take this radical call seriously and welcome so many foreigners with open arms, we might end up welcoming a Judas into our midst. We might run the risk of welcoming the traitor who does not share our view of a pluralist democratic society, of feminine emancipation and religious diversity. But can we ever fully eliminate this risk? Are we supposed to? Just because we are afraid that there might be two or three bad eggs among the migrants crossing our borders, does that mean we will not help the other 999,998 poor souls who have just escaped Assad's regime? Jesus never promised us perfect safety and protection from physical

¹¹ Bonhoeffer writes: "Cheap grace [*billige Gnade*] is the mortal enemy of our church. Our struggle today is for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace as bargain-basement goods, cut-rate forgiveness, cut-rate comfort, cut-rate sacrament; grace as the church's inexhaustible pantry, from which it is doled out by careless hands without hesitation or limit. It is grace without a price, without costs... Cheap grace means grace as doctrine, as principle, as system... It means God's love as merely a Christian idea of God. Those who affirm it have already had their sins forgiven... Cheap grace is, thus, denial of God's living word, denial of the incarnation of the word of God. Cheap grace means justification of sin but not of the sinner. Because grace alone does everything, everything can stay in its old ways. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of the community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, transl. from German edition, edited by Martin Kuske and Ilse Tödt, Engl. edition edited by Jeffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, transl. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 43.

¹² "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44).

or psychological harm. On the contrary, those who follow in their master's footsteps, who was crucified, will suffer, too (Bonhoeffer knew that full well). The Apostle Peter makes this point very clear: "But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:20b-21). Suffering is always part of the deal. Having established the radical nature of Christian discipleship we are now in the position to add its significant political nature to the overall picture.

Political Discipleship

In recent decades, the subject of political theology and, in particular, political discipleship has enjoyed ever-growing attention. In his *Politics of Jesus* (1968), Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder described the church as a political body.¹³ Lutheran theologian Jürgen Moltmann offered in his lecture series on *Following Jesus Christ in the World Today* (1983) a critique of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine, putting forward his own view of a Christian messianic ethics.¹⁴ In *The Desire for the Nations* (1996)¹⁵, Anglican ethicist Oliver O'Donovan attempted to "re-state an Augustinian-Reformed approach to Church-state relations."¹⁶ Graham Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, recently presented a manifesto for a *Politics of Discipleship* (2009) against the backdrop of increasing globalization and secularization.¹⁷ Finally, last year, African-American theologian Vicent E. Bacote, who teaches at Wheaton College, published his little book, *The Political Disciple*,¹⁸ in which he confesses that Abraham Kuyper's theology had left a deep impression on his view of church and politics.¹⁹ In fact, Bacote

¹³ John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972).

¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Jürgen Moltmann Lectures in Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 3–18.

¹⁵ Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Luke Bretherton, "Introduction: Oliver O'Donovan's Political Theology and the Liberal Imperative," *Political Theology* 9.3 (October 2008): 268.

¹⁷ Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*.

¹⁸ Bacote, *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

¹⁹ Bacote, *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life*, 22–29.

writes that Kuyper's word were "like oxygen" to him.²⁰ Bacote stands, *pars pro toto*, for a new generation of pastors and theologians who rediscover Kuyper's heritage at the outset of a new millennium. Kuyper's emphasis on common grace and on sphere sovereignty, his view of a "culture-affirming Christianity,"²¹ that combines spiritual vigor with social engagement speaks powerfully into the challenges of our present age. For this reason I consider it very promising to take a closer look at political discipleship through the Kuyperian lens.

Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper was convinced that we all share a particular responsibility towards the broader *polis*, that we all have a special role to play on the public sphere, and he clearly acted upon it (he clearly saw the link between knowing and doing we mentioned earlier). Originally ordained as a Reformed minister, Kuyper's broad interests led him to found a newspaper, a political party, and a university, while he also served for some years as Prime Minister of the Netherlands (between 1902 and 1905). His biography tells the story of a political disciple who saw no conflict between a passionate engagement in the church *and* for the state. Throughout his life, Kuyper was keen to counter any dualistic views that distinguished too sharply between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of Christ, which only left behind confused disciples who were unsure of their calling. "Every division must be opposed with every possible power," Kuyper argues, "[t]emporal and eternal life, our life in the world and in the church, religious and civic life, Church and State and so much more, *may not be separated*."²² Kuyper's holistic view of gospel proclamation *and* social responsibility is both liberating and challenging. "It is one and the same *I* who is a citizen of the country and a member of the church," he claims.²³ "The Calvinist cannot shut himself up in his church and abandon the world to its fate," Kuyper states. "He feels, rather, in his high calling to push the development of this world to an even

²⁰ Bacote, *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life*, 24.

²¹ Bacote, *The Political Disciple: A Theology of Public Life*, 20.

²² Abraham Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie*, part ii, 638, quoted in Gerard Dekker and George Harinck, "The Position of the Church as Institute in Society: A Comparison between Bonhoeffer and Kuyper," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 28.1 (2007): 90.

²³ Abraham Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 185.

higher stage, and to do this in constant accordance with God's ordinance, for the sake of God, upholding, in the midst of so much painful corruption, everything that is honorable, lovely, and of good report among men."²⁴ Kuyper's message was originally directed at Christian escapists who were busy day-dreaming of their heavenly citizenship while forgetting their earthly calling. And I think this message is just as valid today as it was back then.²⁵ Kuyper warns us against a "monastic flight *from* the world" and encourages us to serve "God *in* the world, in every position in life."²⁶ This is what makes a disciple a political disciple. We are now concerned about the proclamation of the gospel *and* social justice, about spiritual growth *and* the welfare of the migrants, about liturgy *and* a fair distribution of wealth. Political disciples are "duty-bound to honor an operation of divine grace in human civic life by which the curse of sin, and sin itself, is restrained even though the link with salvation is lacking."²⁷ The crucial—and obvious—question is, of course: How are we going to achieve a balance here? How can we engage in the public square without becoming Social Gospellers?

Organic Political Disciples

I find Kuyper's distinction between the church as institute and organism helpful in this context.²⁸ Kuyper claims that the church has an institutional and an organic mode of existence.²⁹ The church

²⁴ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931), 73.

²⁵ Oliver O'Donovan recently lamented that "[t]he neo-orthodoxy that put Christ as the center without putting him at the center of the created world gave birth to an ethics that danced like an angel on the head of a needle, wholly lacking worldly dimensions and focused solely on a conversion-encounter with the cross." O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 93.

²⁶ Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 30 (emphasis original).

²⁷ Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 193.

²⁸ I have discussed this important Kuyperian distinction in more detail elsewhere. See my essay, "The Christian as *homo politicus*: Abraham Kuyper and Democratic Imbalance in Post-Democratic Times," in *The Kuyper Center Review*, volume 4: Calvinism and Democracy, edited by John Bowlin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 67–85.

²⁹ "[T]he Ecclesia visibilis has a twofold form of existence, firstly as organism and secondly as institute. As organism, where you can observe its organic workings in the people and in the relationships among them, and as institute, in as far as it has, through independent organization, developed into a specific form." Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, part III (Kampen: Kok, 1908/09), 204; quoted in Gerard Dekker and George Harinck, "The Position of the Church as Institute in Society: A Comparison between Bonhoeffer and Kuyper," 91. See also Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 193–194; James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 56–59.

as institute focuses on its main mission, namely the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments.³⁰ As such, the church is holy, separated from the world and set apart for God. The church as organism, however, permeates the world as it is made up of disciples who are active in society: they participate in political grassroots movements and town hall meetings, they voice their concerns as journalists and bloggers. “Whereas the Church as institute is removed from the world and therefore stands opposite to it,” Kuyper writes, “the Church as organism enters into the life of the world in exactly the opposite way, turns it around, gives it another form, raises it and sanctifies it.”³¹ This distinction is helpful insofar as it enables the church to do what it does best and what it is called to do, while it also sets political disciples free to go out and transform society. They go out and contribute to the flourishing of human communities as the “organic church,” or, as Graham Ward put it, the “apophatic body of Christ in action.”³² This is, in fact, a language that Kuyper would have approved of. Kuyper’s theology of active political discipleship is rooted in a clear understanding of the church as Christ’s body in action. “The Church,” writes Kuyper, “is thus not just a gathering of Jesus’ followers; no, it has become in the full sense of the term the body of Christ, the rich organism wherein not just his spirit but Christ himself lives on.”³³ For this reason, “[n]o area of life,” Kuyper contends, “remains alien to the Christian!”³⁴ Since Christ is active in this world, his body is an active church, a “sanctified Church”³⁵ that enters “every terrain of life.”³⁶ Political disciples have not only realized that God is still graciously inclined towards this fallen world, but, much more importantly, that they are members of Christ’s body and as such God’s instrument to extend his loving hand towards creation.

³⁰ See Dekker and Harinck, “The Position of the Church as Institute in Society,” 93.

³¹ Abraham Kuyper, *De gemeene gratie*, part III, 424–425; quoted in Dekker and Harinck, “The Position of the Church as Institute in Society,” 96.

³² Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*, 258.

³³ Kuyper quoted in Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 174.

³⁴ Kuyper quoted in Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 58.

³⁵ Kuyper quoted in Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 54.

³⁶ Kuyper quoted in Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*, 59.

Conclusion

Europe in 2016 is under pressure. There are still thousands of refugees seeking shelter, the European Union member states are still strident and their societies are growing ever more unsettled, which plays into the hands of right-wing parties who are recently gaining considerable support.³⁷ I have argued that Christian disciples are called to play a major role when it comes to tackling this crisis, and I have put forward an understanding of discipleship that is radical, political, and organic. In my view, it is crucial that we emphasize the radical nature of the Christian call to discipleship again. Followers of Christ live in what Dietrich Bonhoeffer has called the “this-worldliness” (*Diesseitigkeit*) of human existence.³⁸ They follow Christ to the difficult places and practice *kenosis* for the good of their close and distant neighbor. The dramatic situation of the migrants calls for acts of radical hospitality that have an eschatological bearing. “‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’” (Matt 25:37–38). “[T]he church’s goal is to be God’s peace in the broken places,” writes Mark Gornik, “and to bear witness to the kingdom of God. It sides not with the privileged and powerful but with those the world counts as nothing. This is the politics of Christ and the cross.”³⁹ Christian disciples are political disciples. They do not hide in their churches but emerge as concerned citizens, giving a voice to those who are speechless in face of persecution and oppression. Richard J. Mouw is right when he argues that Christians must actively “work together as agents of this restorative program that encompasses the whole range of cultural involvement.”⁴⁰ And here is certainly room (and necessity!) for creativity. Political disciples politely but firmly oppose the claims of right-wing movements such as those of PEGIDA, AfD, Marine le Pen and their allies. They articulate powerfully but respectfully the Christian point of view on the public

³⁷ See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36150807> and <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2016/jan/26/rightwing-parties-are-on-the-rise-but-they-wont-win-power-without-women>, both accessed 9 May 2016.

³⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Eberhard Bethge, 21 July 1944, in Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, The Enlarged Edition, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM, 1971), 370.

³⁹ Mark R. Gornik, *To live in peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 124.

⁴⁰ Richard J. Mouw, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 20.

stage, via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, using all the means available. They pursue “generous justice” (Tim Keller) as they actively participate in local civic life, in round tables, town hall meetings, pressure groups and neighborhood groups. They happily volunteer in refugee centers and enjoy helping Syrian children with their homework. In short, they are witnesses to Jesus Christ through “a network of ever different relations of agape” (Charles Taylor).⁴¹ I have, finally, argued for an organic understanding of Christian political discipleship. Organic in the sense that political disciples are organically united with Christ; they are members of his body, and as such, the *missio dei* becomes their mission;⁴² they love those whom Christ loves, they care for those for whom Christ cares. As members of the organic church, Christian disciples “seek the welfare of the city” (Jer 29:7) and pray for a positive transformation of human societies.⁴³ This world yearns for radical Christian political disciples who welcome strangers in the name of Christ. And the disciples, in turn, eagerly look forward to the day when they hear their King saying to them: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matt 25:40)

⁴¹ Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*, 259.

⁴² Nicholas Wolterstorff reminds us: “We are workers in God’s cause, his peace-workers. The *missio Dei* is our mission.” Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 72.

⁴³ Graham Ward emphasizes the importance of prayer as crucial instrument when it comes to the transformation of our culture. He describes prayer as “the *Urgrund* of Christian discipleship: we live and act as transistors for the transformation of the world through Christ.” Ward, *Politics of Discipleship*, 281–282.