

LOVE *in a Time of* HATE

**The Story of Magda and André Trocmé
and the Village That Said No to the Nazis**

Discussion Questions Study Guide by Ardell Stauffer

Part I

1. Magda Grilli di Cortona's family of origin came together from different countries, experiences, and faith traditions. How did the different strands of her family interact to form the person she became?
2. What were the benefits or disadvantages to Magda of the different Christian traditions running through her family? What faith traditions shaped your childhood, and do they continue to shape you?
3. Children are influenced by how the adults in their family respond to crisis, conflict, and life experience. What, in your view, were the positive and negative influences on Magda of her family's responses?
4. The adults and officials in young Magda's life brought conflicting expectations of who she should be and how she should believe. How did Magda respond to these pressures and expectations? How can adults positively influence young people while making space for their growth and increasing independence of thought?

Part II

1. The young André Trocmé was raised with certain understandings of social class and nation. What led him to reconsider his understanding of class? His understanding of the nation and its rightness?
2. What attracted André about war, and later about military service? What moved him away from choosing the military?
3. Why did André believe that if he chose the life of a military officer he would be renouncing his belief in Jesus?
4. What is your experience with military service and/or with pacifism? What do you believe about military service and Jesus' teachings on peace? Are you willing to engage this topic with those who don't share your views?

Part III

1. Both Magda and André experienced the benefits of wealth and chose to serve the poor. What influenced their choice?
2. What was the role of other Christians in supporting or opposing André and Magda's understanding of their faith in Jesus and their call?
3. How can Christians support each other in being faithful to the biblical call of Jesus, in the face of opposition, sometime even from other Christians?
4. How did the Trocmés engage with those with whom they disagreed, even within their families?

Part IV

1. What gave André the courage to directly confront the church leaders who condemned his pacifism? To speak directly to the Brownshirt audience in Reutlingen?
2. Magda and André Trocmé did not think Le Chambon a good fit for them. Have you ever had an apparent misfit of plans that ended up being a situation in which God used you in unexpected ways?
3. How did the Huguenot history and inheritance in the Cévennes region contribute to the strong resistance to state-sponsored wrongdoing? Is persecution a source of spiritual power?

4. How was the sheltering of refugees in Le Chambon the result of planning? In what ways was it the result of the unexpected and improvisation?
5. Consider how pastors André Trocmé and Edouard Theis introduced the idea of resistance to the state to their congregation. What resources of history, theology, and belief were they drawing on to make their case?
6. How did church leaders engage and train people throughout their rural districts to resist unjust edicts of the state? What lessons do these methods hold for us when we consider how to convince others to resist state-sanctioned wrongdoing?

Part V

1. In Vichy France, a town and region hosted substantial numbers of Jewish children and schooled them while many Jews were being sent to French internment camps under government orders. What made this possible?
2. Not saluting a flag, not ringing church bells in honor of a national holiday, not attending a state parade: these are symbolic acts of resistance. Are symbolic acts like this significant? Why or why not?
3. Everyone admires people like Magda and André Trocmé, Edouard Theis, and the resisting pastor Peter Brunner (pp. 175–76)—after the fact, when history is written. They are notable to us now because so many Christians were complicit with evil at the time and so few Christians openly resisted. How can Christians train each other to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves,” in Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:16, about resisting evil—*before* the fact?
4. At the beginning of chapter 19, author Hannah Schott writes: “Once a stone is thrown into the water, there is no way to prevent ripples.” What were the stones that started the ripples of resistance to the Vichy government’s persecution of Jews?
5. When the church faces dire moral choices, Christians often disagree about what to do. The exchange between André Trocmé and Reformed Church president Marc Boegner—“Protect the Jews!” and “You will invite the rage of Hitler against the Reformed Church!” (p. 203)—has echoes throughout history. How can Christians use these stories of ethical dilemma to help us be well prepared for future moral choices?
6. The statement that students from the upper grades of the École Cévenole gave to the Vichy minister of youth powerfully stated what they knew, their call for change, and their intent to hamper official wrongdoing. How did these young people arrive at this bold and risky stance?
7. How did Magda and André respond to André’s arrest and the police who came for him? How did the village respond? What lessons can we draw from this about faithful confrontation with authority?

Part VI

1. André Trocmé and Edouard Theis went into hiding because of word that they were unsafe from the Germans. But locals who supported violent resistance may have spread this rumor to get them out of the way. In a shifting situation of rumor and violence, where should people of faith turn to make decisions about safety and faithfulness?
2. Seized by the Gestapo, André was conflicted about his false papers and lying, and decided he would tell the truth. In that event, he was not asked directly, and he and his son were able to escape. When, if ever, is lying the ethical choice for Christians? In terms of lying, deception, disobedience, etc., how does a time of violence change the moral calculus of right and wrong? What would you have chosen in André's situation?
3. What do you think of André's personal confession of faith (p. 239)? Do you share his beliefs? If you were to write a confession of faith, what it would it say?
4. The Trocmés in Le Chambon, and Albert Camus in Panelier nearby, writing his novel *The Plague* (pp. 239–41), were both addressing evil using their own callings and talents. How would you compare the two approaches? Place yourself in their time and place: what options could you pursue with your calling and talents?
5. The village of Le Chambon was freed in 1944. Author Hanna Schott writes: “[André] had long recognized freedom as more than an external state of being. ‘But we were, of course, always free!’” (p. 243). What did André mean? What is true freedom? And how do we use it well?
6. Why did the end of war not mean an end to violence in the Le Chambon region?
7. André Trocmé wrote “Refusal to conform for reasons of conscience is the first obligation of anyone who is a follower of Jesus” (p. 251). Do you agree with this view?
8. In Trocmé's story of the monk and the bird on pp. 257–58, is the bird wise or foolish? Are its actions faithful or pointless? Compare this to the actions of the people of Le Chambon in the 1940s: What were their motives? Did they succeed? What are the results of their choices in the 1940s and today?