

# CHRYSALIS CRUCIBLE

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## Chapter Forty-Eight

Shortly after returning to the girls' apartment, Joanne called them to supper. Joanne and Sharon had done the meal together. It was one of Hans' favourites: Bratwurst, sauerkraut, and boiled potatoes. Easy to prepare, they were assured, and delicious.

Unintentionally or not, Jack got the conversation going as supper wound down. The four singles had described their day in some detail, and with enthusiasm. "I learned a new word today," Jack started, "*ideology*. It means, if I got it correct, that we all have our ideas about what is true and right, and we end up killing for them."

Hans raised his eyebrows, his mouth still full of Bratwurst.

"Interestingly, Janys accused America of being driven by an ideology of greed rather than goodness toward the rest of the world. I'd like to know, Hans, in light of our last discussion, what are your thoughts on that? Like, for instance, Vietnam. For me it's black and white. Communism is evil. We're fighting evil in Vietnam to make the world safe for democracy. What's your take?"

Hans looked over at Joanne. Joanne looked away and said she'd start clearing the table. Peter got up to help. Jean and Sharon followed.

Hans swallowed his Bratwurst, took a sip of water, and then began. "Let's discuss Billy Graham and ideology, seeing as he trained at Wheaton College, too. Once, he went behind the lines to preach to the GI's about salvation. I'm sure this was at the expense of the American government. If not, it was obviously done with their full permission. Why? Because Billy Graham was a good propagandist for the ideology of the war America was fighting against the Communists.

"I can guarantee that in no part of Dr. Graham's gospel message was there a call to 'love your enemies.' On the contrary, if soldiers became Christians and proceeded the next day to blow their enemies to bits—for the love of whom Jesus died, too—Reverend Graham would have fully approved. He did, in fact. And that's *ideology* at work alien to the Gospel. Specifically, that's American anti-Communist ideology triumphing over the Gospel. Or Darkness overcoming the Light, to use biblical language.

"So I ask, how is that in keeping with Jesus' teachings? Did it ever occur to Evangelicals to go to North Vietnam with the message that God loves the Viet Cong, too, and that one should lay down one's life for them rather than take theirs? Apparently not. So when Billy Graham went to the American troops with the 'Gospel,' should not part of his message have been that they should stop the slaughter because God loves the North Vietnamese as much as he does Americans? Or does God *not* love America's enemies?"

"My conclusion from simple observation is that Evangelicals routinely practise an under-your-breath ideologized footnote theology' that reads repeatedly, 'Except our enemies,' when quoting John 3:16 and all similar New Testament ethical teachings. How could Billy Graham tell the North Vietnamese that God loves them when he fully blessed his own country in displaying the exact opposite feeling—hatred unto death? How could he do this when he was still praying with the President for victory in the War, when he apparently willed the utter inversion of the Gospel regarding treatment of neighbour, enemy, and Creation?"

Andy marvelled at how much Hans had to say on the topic, seeing as he'd had no time to prepare.

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“Remember James’ juxtaposition of ‘saying’ and ‘doing’? ‘Yea, a man may *say*, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith *by my works*.’ The ‘works’ of James are found in the Sermon on the Mount, supremely summed up in ‘Love your neighbour and your enemies’, which is biblical righteousness—justice—in the raw. Without this, Jesus warned the Pharisees, one will never enter the Kingdom! This is what the wise man does, Jesus says in Matthew seven, with reference to the vast background Jesus the Sage brings to Hebrew Wisdom literature.

“This is not the ‘works-righteousness’ my predecessor, Luther railed against. No, it is righteousness consummated, in the raw, acted out as ‘living sacrifice,’ as ineluctable corollary to ‘justification by faith,’ the other side of the two-sided coin of salvation. Salvation embraced, salvation lived. One does not exist without the other. Trouble is, the first exists in American Evangelicalism all too well in utter disregard of the other.”

Hans stopped completely at that. Joanne had entered the room. “Hans can go on like this for hours,” she warned. “My girlfriend asked me to consider what would bother me most about Hans. *This is it!*” To Joanne’s credit, she had said nothing about Hans’ predilection since the last discussion. She was feeling her way now.

Fiona ignored Joanne’s remonstrance. She appeared angry, yet tenacious. “But don’t we want this war to end soon?”

Hans looked at Joanne. She looked away and shook her head.

“Yes, Fiona,” he said finally with anguished voice. He looked again at Joanne. “Just like the Americans wanted World War II to end soon and incinerated over 120,000 Japanese civilians—infants, children, middle-aged, and elderly—to underscore the point. The Americans had held off their obscene napalm bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to await the ultimate laboratory experiment of scientifically (like Nazis in their white coats) observing the effects of not one but two atomic bombs on otherwise unbombed cities. Until the detonations, these civilians were going about their daily lives as normally as anyone else on the planet at that time. Let your mind dwell on that scene. Place yourself in it. Better yet, place any—place all!—your loved ones in Hiroshima or Nagasaki on August 6 or 9, 1945, scene of the grandest scientific experiment ever imagined. Let your mind picture the monstrous horror willed upon the Japanese—and your loved ones! And tell me that it is other than homicidal madness, *premeditated mass murder in the first degree!* The Allies also did that repeatedly to over one hundred cities in Germany and Japan, carpet bombed them with napalm to the tune of over two million civilian casualties!”

“I make this association in my paper. When the thirteenth-century papal legate—chaplain—in the southern French town of Béziers was asked how to distinguish between Albigensian heretics and ‘real Catholics,’ he replied: ‘Kill them all! God will sort out who are his own.’ There is, I believe, an absolute moral equivalency between that medieval inhuman barbarity (they say twenty thousand were put to the sword that day) and America’s today. Incidentally, President Roosevelt used the term ‘inhuman barbarity’ in a memo to all major nations in 1939 with reference to aerial bombing by the Germans of innocent civilians. But America, in sheer numbers, went on under Roosevelt and then Truman to vastly outstrip that innocent civilian body count. Although I do not have the exact figures to prove it, America is arguably responsible for a holocaust that since World War Two adds up to far more than that perpetrated against the Jews throughout the time of the Nazi reign of terror. Most of this is kept hidden by the most sophisticated propaganda machine in human history—American corporate mass media—though such is anything but a ‘free press’ except for those who own one. It outdoes Joseph Goebbels in spades. One becomes what one hates.

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“The sheer wickedness of President Truman’s decision, himself an Evangelical Baptist Sunday School teacher, is so utterly beyond imagining, and yet few American Evangelicals today even question the necessity and righteousness of that choice. Those bombs have *cauterized* the American collective conscience into spiritual numbness and induced mass moral blindness. It would be like the Mafia massacring vast numbers of their enemies through a bomb blast, and, because they were all ‘godless Communists’ anyway, Americans unconscionably elevate the Mafia to hero status! So I ask: Just which ‘sacred text’ was President Truman reading when he authorized full-scale massacre of Japanese civilians—the *Bible* or America’s *Manifest Destiny*? And just what Bible are Evangelicals reading today, when not a question is asked about these horrendous crimes against humanity in Vietnam and elsewhere?”

This was too much for Fiona. “I *believe* in Manifest Destiny for America. I *believe* in righteousness that exalteth a nation, our nation, America the Beautiful. I *believe* in God and Flag!”

“Don’t you think you’ve said enough, Hans?” Joanne asked. She looked pained. Andy quickly surveyed everyone’s face listening in. There was tension everywhere. Maybe it would be best to wind down. But this was fascinating for Andy, albeit perilously.

“I want to hear Hans out,” Fiona insisted. “I want to prove you wrong, Hans! You obviously were not raised American, despite your American mom. I think you are operating under an *ideology* I can’t quite name. But it is alien to America. I think we are the God-given norm, and what you are saying, even when quoting Scripture, is pure ideology. I want to help name it for you and then let you see it, if, like Jesus says, ‘you have eyes to see.’”

It was a valiant retaliation. Fiercely “Texan,” typical American Empire Loyalist standing up for the “right” against all odds. The only problem for Andy was, so far all the “odds” and evidence seemed with Hans, all the *ideology* with Fiona.

Ignoring Joanne’s request, Hans ploughed ahead. “I grant that by comparison to Stalin and Mao in sheer numbers slaughtered, Truman does indeed look like the Sunday school teacher that he was. But isn’t that the point? Sunday School teachers should know better. Much better. Or doesn’t the Bible mean a thing even to Evangelicals beyond serving as the central cultural icon—read idol—of America, all the more, for that honour, to be totally disregarded and trivialized?”

“I am not a Marxist-Leninist, if that is what you are alluding to, Fiona. Far from it. I am a committed Christian who has discovered ‘the strange new world of the Bible’ as Karl Barth called it, and I am trying to find my way through its meaning for today. Of course I’m biased. But I’m trying to make my reading of the Bible challenge my biases, rather than my preconceptions filter the Bible, like I believe American Evangelicals largely do on this issue. That is my conscious *ideological* commitment. Consequently, in my reading of the Bible, I cannot kill for my ideology nor bless any state that does. I agree with Gandhi who in this case rightly read the Bible, and therefore said, ‘It seems everyone but Christians knows Jesus was non-violent.’”

Gary, who had been listening intently, suddenly thought of something. “Wasn’t it Christians who not only authorized the atomic bombings, namely President Truman, but also the chaplain who blessed the crew on their mission? Do you claim to know better than millions of believers before you, Hans?” Hans’ eyes narrowed. “Gary, do you really want me to respond?”

“Yes!” Said Fiona and Gary in unison.

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Hans took a deep breath. “Father George Zabelka was the Catholic military chaplain who blessed the crew who dropped the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945 and the second crew three days later. He has since repented totally and has been telling the world that there is no moral or Christian justification whatsoever for such coldly calculated acts of mass murder. He says the entire Christian church has been utterly brainwashed for almost two millennia to accept war of any description (it always gets called ‘just’ by Christians), not least the deliberate slaughter of innocents. Ten percent civilian deaths from the air in World War One. Fifty percent civilian deaths in World War Two. Some claim up to eighty percent in Vietnam. You cannot bomb without huge percentages of civilian deaths. And who said ‘combatants,’ even if that’s all you killed, were *Christianly* fair game anyway? Certainly not Jesus—or any other New Testament writer.

“So you say, Fiona, along with High Priest Caiaphas at the Crucifixion of Jesus: ‘It is better that one should die than that the whole nation perish.’ Or in this case, that 120,000 plus innocent Japanese civilians, or several million North Vietnamese must perish, instead of precious American blood being spilled. Or that multiplied millions of innocents had to have been maimed and slaughtered to stop the Nazis and the Japanese.

“It doesn’t matter. That is conventional scapegoat wisdom, as old and ubiquitous as humanity. Of course, sacrificial violence has always made perfect cultural sense and underwrites all rationalizations for immolating scapegoats amongst peoples as diverse as head hunters in New Guinea, cannibals the world over, the ancient Aztecs or Incas of the New World, Nazis in Germany, Whites lynching Blacks in the American South, and Americans slaughtering the Viet Cong in Vietnam. *It is also utter antithesis of all Gospel logic*, though that is emphatically not majority church theory and practice. So much the worse for the Church over against the Bible! The Bible may be the Church’s *Book*, but it has rarely, with reference to state violence, been the church’s *Guide*.

“Sometime, you must all read an unknown French Catholic author working in America: René Girard. It is doubtful Evangelical theologians will ever appreciate him, since he argues theologically and anthropologically the very inversion of the ‘satisfaction theory of the atonement.’ Another matter...”

“Hans,” Andy interjected, “I read some of Girard in university. What I didn’t like about him was his making a theory—scapegoating—fit all, like his own discovery of a revelation. I think life is always more complex than any one meta-theory.”

Hans replied slowly. “Andy, I liked Girard, because he corroborated and at times elucidated the Bible’s own description and response to violence. Not the other way around. I found Girard supplemental, not revelatory.”

“So,” Gary quizzed, “my main question since the last time is, are you saying there is *never* a place, according to the Gospel, for killing our enemies? Because if so, not only do I dispute that, but it basically says almost everyone in the Church for two thousand years has been wrong. That is pretty arrogant to say the least! And what about Jesus’ cleaning out the Temple with a whip? What about his positive response to soldiers—and John’s, without ever telling them killing was wrong? What about the two swords Jesus said were ‘enough’ when the disciples presented them before his arrest? What about Jesus’ depiction of God as a sentencing judge, bringing down the violence of the State? What about a doctrine of hell that is pure violence in the end, *ultimate violence*?”

The dishes had long since been done. Peter had turned on the lights on the way to his room. Jean, Joanne, and Sharon diffidently had sat down at the table again. Andy felt the vibes from Joanne. Sharon looked, if anything, bored. Jean was just blank, though once again apart from Peter. Andy remembered his thinking from that very afternoon. He piped up, surprised at his sudden boldness in favour of Hans. “Isn’t killing the

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enemy, Gary, the *exact opposite* of evangelism as I think Hans said last time—what we Evangelicals say all the time is our main mission on earth? How can we warmly underwrite sowing life-giving seed, evangelism to bring life, on the streets of West Berlin while equally supporting strewn cluster bombs—and worse—on the villages of North Vietnam? Is that not evangelism’s exact inversion—to bring death—as they once did over Berlin?”

Andy continued to speak as a light within him seemed to increase intensity. “Those same people who send us monthly cheques to support inviting Berliners into the Kingdom simultaneously underwrite with their patriotism and taxes and sons and daughters *consignment to hell* of countless Vietnamese, an utterly inverse “Kingdom Come.”

“And they applauded, participated in, and prayed for the same slaughter of Berliners, parents and grandparents of those we now minister to, barely a generation ago! Isn’t that juxtaposition contradictory of all human logic?”

Hans nodded. “Adduce Gospel logic—the only reality test Christians are to employ—and the unfaithfulness of Christian support of war and capital punishment materializes as surely as acid or alkaline solutions are demonstrated in a litmus test.

“So no, Gary, I see no place for ever legitimating killing one’s enemies. Not in Gospel logic. And there are responses to the exegetical issues—issues of interpretation—that you raise. I’ll ask you: Is there ever a place for extra-marital sex in a marriage? Not in New Testament teaching, no matter how rampant the alternative cultural norm. There are likewise no exceptions to Jesus’ call to love neighbour and enemy. On the contrary, see if there is not New Testament consistency that the only way to know you love God is to love your neighbour. And the litmus test for that is loving your enemy.”

Gary said nothing, so Hans continued. “Let me add again about Billy Graham, who so classically represents the Evangelical mindset—that’s why I single him out. I believe he is a great man of God in his own context, utterly sincere. According to the Gospel as I read it, what Dr. Graham should be doing in addition to preaching to the American soldiers in Vietnam is going to his own Evangelical churches to challenge them to call for deep nationwide repentance that would end the war. No war since Christ has ever been God’s will. The American Evangelical church is worshipping an idol, not God, when it participates in war, sends its children to war, blesses America and others in war. *All wars, past, present, and future, are unreservedly contradictory to Gospel*, its most complete inversion. War, all war by all sides, is utter transgression and the greatest heresy, according to biblical revelation.”

Fiona looked nonplussed. Where could she begin, Andy wondered? “But America stands for *Truth!*,” she exclaimed. “the *truth* that ‘shall set one free.’ *Freedom! Truth and Freedom!* They are America’s birthright and bequeathal to the world. And that’s what Vietnam is all about! What do you say to that, Hans? What you are saying is so, is so, *untruth!*”

Janys, Andy suddenly realized, had listened intently to the entire exchange without comment. Was she feeling repentant for having been too hard on Fiona earlier? He looked at her. Her face registered fascination, even contentment. Was she wishing Ted had been there? Was she comparing Ted to Hans? He’d love to have a long talk with her afterwards.

“Well?” Fiona’s challenge was almost shrill.

Hans did not look at Joanne. “The first casualty of all war, of all violence, by the state or the individual, is *truth*. This is what former U. N. Secretary General U. Thant once said and Cain’s religiosity demonstrated.



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The first casualty of all *religion*, war's first cousin, is also *truth*, Fiona. And that's why religion and war inevitably intertwine, the one feeding into the other and looping back again. That's why all military chaplaincies are about truth's opposite: *violence*. Their final word is worldly *death*, not Gospel *life*. I would add, incidentally, all sports chaplaincies too. That's why the worst plague on the planet has ever been religious wars, likewise the ultimate scourge of Western Christendom.

“Now contrast that with Jesus, whom religious people claim to be ‘*the Truth*.’ Something has to give. If violence is not truth's casualty, like darkness' dissipation the sun's supreme handiwork, then all you have left is *Jesus the Untruth*. Jesus the Violent. Jesus the Avenger. Jesus the Comic Book Hero. Jesus the Cosmic Tyrant. Not Jesus the Truth. Not Jesus the Life of the World. Not Jesus the Light of the World. Not Jesus the Prince of Peace. Then Constantine's *in hoc signo vinces*, “in this sign you will conquer,” rings true to Mars the god of war but *utterly false to Jesus the God of love and peace*. The contrasts are utterly stark and irreconcilable.

“But most of us prefer our lies, are addicted as surely as any alcoholic to prevaricating violence. So it is with dominant American Evangelicalism. This is the brilliant point of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*. As John's Gospel puts it, ‘men love darkness—lies and violence—rather than light.’ Why Jesus called the Devil a “murderer and a liar from the beginning.” Americans, Westerners, most of us, likewise love lies more than truth. That is why Nazi Germany was so successful in liquidating six million Jews. While truth promises to set us free, we fairly grasp instead after our violent addictions: national security, right to private possessions, nationalism, and the free enterprise system. We thereby negate ‘the mind of Christ’ that didn't ‘grasp after’ Christ's own prerogatives as deity. Remember, He could have called ten thousand angels but refrained. Your President calls up ten thousand G. I.'s to fight in Vietnam, and Billy Graham and American Evangelical leadership cheer on the slaughter. Billy even goes to preach in support of them, just like Bob Hope goes to entertain. Same difference. Identical ideology. Both utterly foreign to the Gospel, that's all.

“The truth that sets us, sets nations, free is nonviolence. In the CIA building is inscribed Jesus' statement: ‘You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.’ The irony is palpable. An organization that is committed to covert violence and secret lies on a massive scale claims freedom as they lie and murder, kidnap and assassinate, and God only knows what else the world over! This is George Orwell's haunting doublespeak. This is Jeremiah's ‘peace, peace, when there is no peace.’ This is what America's most famous evangelist, and most others, sell to America and to the world as ‘beautiful’ and God-ordained, blessed, demonstrative of a righteous ‘manifest destiny.’”

Fiona was near tears. She was utterly tongue-tied as well. Andy also felt sick but speechless. But Hans still had more to add.

“To resort to violence means to deny God, since we trust in it instead and are bound by the ultimate anti-god, what is the final ‘anti-Christ.’ ‘In Guns we Trust’ is America's *de facto* motto, what they really believe. ‘One Nation Under the Gun’ is the last truth of American social reality played out in American overt and covert interventions the world over. America was born in violent revolution against a lawful state. It

proceeded to steal wholesale an entire continent from its rightful occupiers and now acts as Robber Baron to the rest of the world. The CIA, many say, is about to orchestrate a military coup in Chile to overthrow a democratically elected leader, Salvador Allende, because of his socialism! And they almost invaded Cuba because Castro is Communist. And so it goes, all over Latin and South America, Asia—the entire world. But you'll never hear an American Evangelical leader question the righteousness of all this monstrous murder and mayhem. Rare as hen's teeth at least.

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“In the end, therefore, as I read Jesus’ teaching, evangelism means introducing others to Jesus. But,” and he leaned forward to accentuate his words, “Jesus’ teaching is, *if we cannot find God in the enemy, we will not find God at all!* God is most clearly revealed in the face of Jesus. Yes. But that face, as it turns out, is visible first and foremost—and perhaps ultimately—in our enemies!”

Fiona responded, her voice shaky. “Are you telling me that my brother, who loved Jesus but who spent years being educated through the Air Force and in training as a fighter pilot, was wrong?” Hans nodded.

“I can’t accept that! My brother was a great man and a wonderful Christian! And I met lots of his fellow trainees, all Bible-believing, born-again, and on fire for the Lord. We’ve all met lots here at the American Army Base. You can’t tell me they’re all wrong, millions and millions of them! You can’t tell me that standing up for America, for patriotism, for God and flag, is not part of loving Jesus! I’ve always understood that one leads to the other, and back again. I taught my school kids that in every discussion about the flag we had.

“Your views sound like sheer arrogance over against majority Evangelical and Church teaching for centuries. You say God is against war! How dare you! Have you never read the Old Testament? God repeatedly endorses war there. So who isn’t reading their Bible? Who’s the liberal? God does not change! ‘For I am the Lord, I do not change.’! Malachi three six, my life verse.”

Fiona’s cheeks were flushed, her voice long past quavering. “America was founded by Bible-believing godly men, and God honoured us by making our land rich and powerful, first among the nations, giving us a ‘manifest destiny’ as some call it. How dare you question all that?”

Jack touched her hand. She wheeled suddenly and ran to her room.

Silence hung like a sticky mist, finally pierced by Gary’s quiet voice. “I think we should wind down for tonight. Hans, you have strongly held views, to be sure! Perhaps another time we will hear more of them. If I may say though, for Peter and his family, he’s just grateful that the Allies liberated them from the Nazis. Possibly neither he nor any of his family would be here today had it not been for that. Sometimes there is no alternative option to the peace we have grown up with in the West since the last War. Some things you simply have to fight for. One of them is freedom.”

The get-together ended on that note. On his way out, Andy quietly asked Hans for a copy of his paper. Hans promised he’d send him one as soon as he got home.

The following day they had an official farewell for Hans and Joanne. Everyone had a great time, and nothing about the previous night’s discussion was said. Just like that, Hans and Joanne stepped out of the Team’s life.

Except the paper. After receiving it in the mail, he read it several times, veritably devoured it. He corresponded about it several times with Hans. And though Hans and Joanne had intended it, they never visited the Team again. Perhaps just as well, Andy thought.