

CHRYSALIS CRUCIBLE

Chapter Forty-Five

Dear Professor Norton:

Dan told me once that he could deal with the straight-on attacks against the faith fairly easily. Most had to do with starting-point questions, epistemology. It was the fifth-columnist stuff that got to him. Not least for him the question, if Christianity is so true, why is the church so false?

Well, I have a variation. If Christianity is about Love Incarnate, why is its face to the world through the centuries so often one of Hate Manifest (American “Manifest Destiny,” for instance)?

I thought I knew an easy answer. “They’re not true Christians in those churches.” Besides the sheer arrogance of that, it’s a tad more troubling if I listen to Hans Beutler, whom I’m sure you know. Turns out that Christianity’s vaunted love ethic—love of God, neighbour, and enemy—isn’t quite that way in the Church after all. That contradiction is well disguised under the Church’s doctrine of the State. The real bare-bones ethic goes something like this: “Love your enemies, do good to them. But the real enemies, the ones who actually might kill you, whom you would like to kill, who might do you harm, whom you would love to throttle, does the Church have good news for you! Jesus allows you to turn them over to the State to do an end-run around everything He taught.” You see, there’s the “personal gospel,” and there’s the “State gospel.” And everything holding you back from evil toward the enemy personally is handily available through the State. Just a tad more bureaucracy! “Murder” is the State’s supreme prerogative, according to Evangelicals. Oh, the word is dressed up in more elegant semantics like “capital punishment” and “just war.” But it is all killing. Murder in the first degree—in the worst degree.

But for most centuries the Church has blessed the State to do its dirty work: premeditated slaughter and savagery, all in the name of “being subject unto the higher powers” (shades of Gothard). Personally, you must overcome evil with good. But as for the “Big Ticket” items, forget about even a whiff of good! FULL THROTTLE EVIL to every Goddamned enemy in sight—and their women and kids, abominations in the eyes of the Lord, like the Amalekites.

“Subject unto the higher powers”? It’s really nothing of the sort. For centuries, the Church has directed those higher powers to destroy its enemies. According to its extra-biblical State “gospel,” which is anything but Good News to the victims, when Christians may not personally do so, the State is fully authorized to despatch its enemies through any and every bestial brutality and savagery it can dream up. This is the Great Evangelical End-Run.

For in “giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s,” it is self-evident that Jesus meant our enemies as sacrifices for the State, as surely as enemy captives were sacrificed to Moloch. And while we quote the text that says God loves the whole world, we really know Jesus only meant the ones we “give to God.” Those we evangelize and welcome into our little religious Kingdom. The others we turn over to Caesar in this life and to hell in the hereafter. This is the “binding and loosing” Jesus meant. Hell in the eternal is State punishment and warfare in the temporal. The only difference is, God can sustain life, and consequently suffering ad infinitum, the State cannot—too bad! Just think what tyrants like Stalin or Hitler (or Churchill or Truman) would have done throughout history with the awesome power of sustaining indefinitely the excruciating pain of, say, burning at the stake or napalming. Why, they’d all be wonderful Liberators like God, I guess. (Or is that the Devil Incarnate—and the difference?) Something’s not right here (theo)logically. I’ll get it in a minute I’m sure, or an eternity...

So the church through the centuries has played this little game called “God is Love,” and under that banner has put out the welcoming mat of evangelism, declaring, “Whosoever will, may come.” Under its breath,

CHRYSALIS CRUCIBLE

it has, however, whispered wickedly, “God damn our enemies! They are not welcome, may they rather roast in hell!” And the earthly counterpart to that last consignment is the State. The State may “give ‘em hell” as foretaste of what is mere warm-up for the Ultimate Bonfire.

Well, Professor, this is crazy-making. This wickedly schizophrenic ethic. This two-faced speak-with-forked-tongue Church. This demonic deity Evangelicals worship. Yet that is precisely what you have believed at one time in your life, and for years. Worse, that is exactly what your Evangelical peers and most Christians have subscribed to throughout church history. Sick and obscene beyond imagining!

Professor, I need answers! Now! Hans stirred it all up. But the sediment must be long-since my doing—God’s doing? He’s shaken the jar, and my mind’s going crazy with all the bits of information wildly flying that make “Christian” ethics utterly impossible if one believes in war; if one believes in hell. But if one does not? Am I an unbeliever or just another kind of believer? Does the Bible force me to a traditional doctrine of hell, of war, or have Christians bought these in spite of the Bible? Is God Ultimate Cosmic Tyrant, Terminal Hater, or in fact Love (as the only text I know of actually says)?

Write when you have the chance, Professor. Please!

Anguished Andy