

# CHRYSALIS CRUCIBLE

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## Chapter Seventy-Six

In October, the team added to its activities a Boys' Club, having received again permission from the *Wilmersdorf* assembly to use their facility. Still no offers of help from any of the churches to which they connected.

Despite Braxman's arrest, Fiona remained melancholy. She went through the motions of team life, but the lustre had gone. It even showed in her complexion and hair. Jack understandably cursed Braxman. There were phone calls going back and forth between Fiona and her parents, Fiona and G. E., Jack and G. E. The phone bills, Peter's domain, must have been significant. But so far, nothing had been resolved.

Meanwhile, Jean's health remained constant. So for the time being, everyone was holding.

On occasion, the guys' apartment took in "strays" met on the *Ku'damm* during open-air *Evangelisationen*. One night in mid-October, a guy named Mannfred stayed with them. He had become "saved" through a local Jesus People group known as the *Children of God*. He spoke not a word of English but strangely claimed comprehension of English-language Christian magazines he perused in their apartment, believing the Holy Spirit somehow supplied spontaneous comprehension. Andy felt tempted to press him on the content, but other than obliquely so as not to embarrass him, and to satisfy his cynicism, refrained.

Mannfred only stayed one night then rather mysteriously disappeared with not a word of thanks. A few others disappeared with a little more. The first found the change purse and absconded with it. Thankfully, there was little in it. The next disappeared with one of Andy's Schaeffer books. He was less chagrined about that. He knew he was changing...

Gary mentioned some of this petty theft in a letter to G. E. A clear directive arrived shortly thereafter: STOP TAKING IN THE HOMELESS! G. E. went on to say that they had gone to Germany to preach and teach the Gospel. This, he explained, would engage them in Bible studies, door-to-door and open-air work, and many similar kinds of activities. But it was too risky to take in street people. Especially with Sharon, not at all unattractive, living in the apartment. *What is the Gospel?* Andy wondered again.

On the last Friday of October, Jack booked yet another visit to Scott Cunningham at the Army Base. He was going weekly now, working out with him and hanging out. Jack never said much about the visits. Todd Braxman was apparently being held at the Base now. He had suffered a broken collarbone the night of the abduction. No one quite knew how he had survived in the intervening weeks. New German charges were pending for several break and enters, however.

Jack asked Andy if he wanted to join with him for the ride that afternoon. It seemed like he wanted to talk. They agreed that he would not meet with Scott. Andy had no interest, and Cunningham had said as much in stronger terms to Jack. Andy said he'd be glad to go along and take the car to a nearby park for an hour or so while Jack worked out.

The daytime drive to the Base, Andy's first since Fiona's kidnapping, brought back memories of their wild drive there the night of the kidnapping.

"You know, Jack, I can imagine the terror of those Israeli athletes at the Olympics. Look what it's done to

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Fiona weeks later, even with the guy caught.

“She’s a mess, Andy,” Jack acknowledged. “You know what she’s been talking about most? Her son, Timmy.”

“So where’s this all going to end up, Jack?”

“Almost for sure G. E.’s comin’ out in early November. One of the things I’m gonna talk to Scott today about is whether there may be any kind of psychiatric help for Fiona. They have a responsibility we both think. It’s a real bummer. Her parents want her home. I think that’s best.” He paused and glanced at Andy. “I’m thinking of leaving, too.”

Andy said nothing, just processed the implications. Was the whole team tottering?

When they had parked outside the base, Andy got out and stretched. “I’ve got my own key. I think I’m just going to stroll around. Take as long you need.”

Jack waved and headed toward the gates.

“Hey Jack!” Andy said, a novel idea striking him. Jack turned to face him. “What if you were to ask, maybe even with Fiona, to actually see Braxman in jail.”

“Whatever for, Andy?” Jack looked incredulous.

“I don’t know... What if you could actually win him over? That would sure set Fiona at ease.”

Jack shook his head and strode toward the electronic gate. Soon, he was ushered inside, leaving Andy to wander along the *Allee*.

It was like an Indian summer fall day back home, though on the cool side. Andy remembered that soon it would be Hallowe’en. On which planet again? It all seemed frightfully far away. He was glad Janys had not joined him. He had some serious thinking to do: about Jack and Fiona, about the Team, about life. The sight of the Base, indicative of American power flung to the far corners of the world, was serendipitous inspiration. But not to sing *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

Andy’s mind turned first to G. E.’s forceful missive about only “preaching the Gospel.” He thought immediately of the Matthew 25 passage. Once again, he was overwhelmed by the salvation message of the passage. It all turned upon good works performed in this lifetime. And yet he had been raised all his life to believe “*not by works, lest any man should boast*,” Paul’s teaching, which was all after-death oriented. So did Paul simply contradict Jesus? Did a choice have to be made of that sort? Or was James, in echoing Jesus with, “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do,” simply out to lunch, author indeed of a “right strawy epistle,” unaware that salvation was freely offered without good works?

Were James and Jesus somehow heretics in their teachings? Even though Jesus the icon saved us through His blood? But not through His words lived out? Then Andy remembered the startling discovery in Matthew’s Gospel that the “wise man” was not the one who believed, and the “foolish man” not the unbeliever destined for hellfire. Rather, the wise man was “everyone who hears these words of mine and *puts them into practice*.” And what was the immediate context for Jesus’ “words” to discern that practice? The Sermon on the Mount, which was chock-a-block full of the call to treat the neighbour and enemy with

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justice, mercy, and compassion. That was the purview of the wise man. That was the concrete actualization of salvation that is “today.” How had Andy—the entire Evangelical tradition—misread such evident biblical teaching?

As he walked alongside the Base, Andy turned to the immense human capacity to inflict suffering upon one’s fellow. The American Army was the most capacitated in the entire world to do precisely that! Images of Agent Orange defoliating multiplied hundreds of thousands of hectares of pristine jungle and doubtless deforming thousands of unborn children for a whole next generation competed with images of incinerator ovens; massive bombings; scientific excising of “cancer” from the body politic; cluster bombs scattered by the millions; jungle torture; maiming and slaughter of soldiers, villagers, and anyone else caught in the crossfire; napalm sending a screaming eight-year-old girl naked down the road, the searing pain all over her face, captured for the world by a happenstance photographer. He wondered at the enormous human capacity and lust for perpetrating overwhelming misery against others.

He realized for some time that this had to be the ultimate inversion of evangelism, when bombs and bullets, Agent Orange, and God only knows what else in word and deed, not “the good seed,” were scattered indiscriminately upon the earth. Pain, death, and devastation followed. Massively.

Then the terrifying reminder that, with few exceptions, Evangelicals *en masse* blessed all that! The ultimate world evangelist gave routine assent to such mass carnage and murder as surely as Saul and those stoning Stephen persecuted the early Christians. Billy always prayed with the President during times of national crisis. And with Graham, the vast majority of Western Evangelicals nodded their approval, like the Nazis at Dachau and elsewhere at the end of those one-way train trips. What utter perversion of the Good News. What Gospel travesty. What complete inversion of evangelism. By the world’s greatest evangelist and the world’s most virulent religion propagators.

How could this be? How could a man, not to mention an entire faith tradition, so endorse and defend pure, unadulterated *evil* perpetrated against God’s good creation and his image-bearers, for whom, additionally, Christ suffered a painful victim’s death by “legitimate” state decree? Andy’s mind recoiled at the emerging sense of horror over what he and his fellows accepted as nonchalantly as going out for a Sunday school picnic: mass slaughter of enemies of the State. This was in company with dominant Western Christian tradition since Constantine. It was also in lockstep with Machiavelli, Napoleon, Bismarck, the German Kaiser, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, the Japanese Emperor, Mao, to name only relatively recent mainly Western tyrants.

His horror turned to terror that his entire life he had worshipped God and had been formed in all his core beliefs in company with such sycophants of mass murder and mayhem. As if he had been born into a Mafia family as seen in *The Godfather*, where killing and slaughter were simply routine, justified as what was needed to “get the job done,” to enable “normal” life to go on. “Just War” theory, as Christians had always enunciated it, Andy suddenly understood, was equally the prerogative of the Mob and every vile tyrant known to humanity. No doubt Christians were more sophisticated than what a Mafia family godfather or dictator might articulate, but in the end, it all boiled down to exactly the same thing: *terror and slaughter*. People destroyed, the earth raped and pillaged, all for a “just” cause. How could he have been so duped and not have seen the true face of Christendom viciously “red in tooth and claw”?

He crossed over the *Allée* at a light and walked toward the Base from the other side. As he looked at the Base, he imagined all the keen Christians wanting to propagate their faith while they gleefully slaughtered

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their enemies in Vietnam. The juxtaposition was stark.

He thought of past Christian support of the slave trade. Thousands of people were stolen, brutalized, raped, terrorized, and discarded at the behest of those whose largely unquestioned (until politician William Wilberforce) participation in “Christian” genteel society was as grotesque as Nazi concentration camp guards 150 years later or Allied bombers or majority Christian supporters of the death penalty and warfare throughout church history. The entire edifice of Western civilization built upon a gargantuan garbage dump of Christianly justified “holy” terror. *Corruptio optimi quae est pessima*, “the corruption of the best is the worst” indeed.

There was a bench at the edge of the sidewalk. The sun was warm. Andy sat and looked at the expanse of the entire Base.

Again he realized, like awakening from a terror-filled nightmare, that this kind of *justification* was dominant Evangelical Christian reality. Not “justification by faith” putatively productive of a “life of love,” which seemed largely a formidable Christian fraud, a ferocious legal fiction, but *justification of every imaginable form of harm and destruction wreaked upon humanity and nature*—in the name of Jesus. Andy wondered what kind of powerful sorcerer had incanted such a pervasively potent spell, that so much of Evangelical tradition, including millions upon millions of ostensibly Bible-believing, Jesus-following, God-fearing souls, accepted such indescribably sick justifications as Gospel truth? Was there ever any hope of breaking such a spell when the Bible, God, and Jesus, according to most mainline leadership past and present, queued eagerly in unequivocal endorsement?

His mind moved inexorably to justification of every war fought in the entire history of the church. All had been blessed by the Church on both sides of the conflict. Andy knew that over 100 million had been slaughtered in the twentieth century so far alone, mostly with the blessing of the church from every side. He knew from Hans the terrible recitation of mass butchery by Western Allies. These hundreds of thousands of immolated innocents just happened to be living in the wrong place at the wrong time, like the infants under age two that Herod had destroyed to wipe out the Christ child.

Just like that! And they were still murdering the Christ child! What was that Christian World War Two slogan? “Praise God and pass the bombs!” Sick and designedly destructive of the Christ child in every last one of “the least of these”! Herod’s decree became marching orders ever since for virtually all Christendom, world without end, world brought to a horrible end possibly in nuclear nightmare! All enemies for sure consigned to a God-forsaken end, Amen and Amen, intoned by every military chaplain in the history of Christendom.

Why was such an obvious biblical association so out of step with virtually everyone else living in the West? Incredible! Astounding! The power of monstrous myth-making to perpetrate the Ultimate Lie: “*Might is right. Violence is holy.*” Isn’t that exactly what he was looking at? One clarion symbol of that very mythmaking? A two-millennia religious phenomenon, Christendom, including right up to its most vehement contemporary defenders, Evangelicals, utterly at odds with the most straightforward, most pervasive, most undeniably central Gospel ethical truth: *Love your neighbour; love your enemies*. The Core of the Gospel: *all-inclusive reconciliation*. The Core of Christendom: *mass violence*.

Each in diametrically opposed juxtaposition.

Who did Andy think he was to see things so differently? Who did Hans think he was? Dan? Jesus? The questions thudded home like a sledgehammer. Andy recoiled physically, held onto the bench as if falling. Then he wondered: If we’re not following Jesus, who are we following? What had Gandhi said when asked

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what he thought of Western civilization? “I think it would be a *great* idea!” Andy knew the prevaricating ironies: Freedom of the Western press for those who own one. Freedom from violence for those who possessed the biggest guns. Stupid white men facing each other down on Main Street at High Noon. Little kids all, puerile, utter fools every last one.

Gandhi might have similarly responded to, “What do you think of Western Christianity?” with, “I think it would be a great idea... *Why don't they start by following Jesus?*” What a novel thought. And for different reasons, but in the end with identical outcome, both believer and non-believer respond, “So what?” Billy Graham, the pagan, the lowly Private in Vietnam, latest evangelistic convert stroking his New Testament like a good luck charm while proceeding to engage in routine acts that were utterly *anti-Christ*: blowing, not welcoming, the enemy to Kingdom Come! “Kingdom Come” all right, when all is said and done, at the point of the gun, the discharge of the bomb, the launch of the missile. Praise God and drop those bombs, toss those grenades, spew death from the automatic weaponry, fire those missiles. That's God's true Kingdom Come on earth for Western Christianity. All enemies be damned, God be praised forevermore.

Andy knew that most of his peers did not see war that way. They invariably intoned that war was a tragic, unavoidable necessity so that people could live in freedom and peace. Which people? The hundreds of thousands who “are the dead, though short days ago they lived” whether or not “poppies grow in Flanders fields”? They were to be accorded only the peace of the graveyard while most of Christendom cheered, saying indeed, “Praise the Lord, and pass the bombs” Sick and desperately evil. What a monstrous lie Christendom had believed and perpetrated for centuries. And with ubiquitous, iniquitous, world-conquering outcome.

Andy could not stop his mind's stream of consciousness. What an abject, calculated rejection of the one who taught and lived, “Love your neighbour, especially your enemies.” He wondered, as in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, what emissary from hell might be sent to lift the veil of abject evil from Christians' eyes so that they could see? Or would they rather be as Jesus warned, “seeing, yet they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand?” They already had Moses and the Prophets and Jesus and the Apostles. If they didn't “get it” by reading them, what hope were one even to rise from the dead? Did not Billy Graham and “a great cloud of witnesses” preach “Jesus Christ, Risen Again, Mighty to Save, Able to Keep”? Didn't Andy's home assembly boldly announce the same thing, visible above the pulpit for all comers? The iconic Bible wide open in Billy's and millions of preachers' hands as they thundered their evangelistic message *without the Gospel*—Jesus denied and crucified in blessing mass immolation of victims everywhere. Jesus the Salvation Icon, but not Jesus the Exemplar. Horrors no! *Horrors yes, upon multiplied terrors.*

Andy's mind reeled but had nowhere to turn. He was under no illusion that Evangelicals believed in Billy Graham, for all intents the Pope of Evangelicalism, believed in him far more than they believed in Jesus. If Billy prayed with every President for victory in whatever war America was fighting, then *Billy must be right and Jesus be damned!* Was it as blatant as that?

And who would be thanked for saying, “But the Emperor has no clothes”?

“Crucify him!” Andy suddenly heard the religious hordes crescendo in response, as robustly as the mob in front of Pilate 2,000 years before, or as the soldiers doing Herod's bidding to the two-and-under toddlers in Bethlehem so long ago. Why did Andy's mind think this way? What was the matter with him? What had seized his troubled mind to arrive at conclusions that would get *him* crucified and blacklisted by most Evangelical leaders in the world? Who did he think he was?

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He wondered about Scott Cunningham, who wanted Christ and American Empire, to have his cake and eat it, too. God and Guns. He and Jack were obviously having a good discussion. There was no sign of him yet. Andy felt okay about that. The sun was warm on his face. He still had some ways to go in sorting some of this out.

Had he somehow misunderstood? Did Evangelicals really take Jesus seriously after all? He thought of all the “born-again” military personnel right in front of him. A real revival, the team had been told. He remembered what Hans Beutler had said, recalled his discussions with Dan, and reviewed his own awareness of church history. No. He was not wrong. The vast majority of Christians throughout history and of his contemporaries, best represented by Billy Graham at the White House in his constant blessing of U.S. military interventions, had always underwritten mass slaughter of enemies worldwide. Whenever it served their interests.

There was always justification for Western Holocaust. The “other justification,” like Paul’s “other gospel,” was pure symmetrical inversion of biblical “justification by faith.” Was it Evangelicals’ primary gospel, foremost kind of “justification”? Was the Gospel of Jesus Christ, of the Bible, unknown or secondary? Andy concluded that there was no difference between Christian doctrine and Mafia belief in the end. Regrettably or not, in cold blood, or with a glimmer of conscience, *people must die, the good earth be wasted!* Whatever it took to get the job done. It was the logic of High Priest Caiaphas, who said of Jesus that it was better that one man should die than that the whole nation perish. Evangelicals, all of Christendom, had simply repeated that scapegoating anti-Gospel dogma throughout their long, sick, and desperately wicked history. The dynamics that had killed the Prince of Peace were identical to those theologized, endorsed, and perpetuated by *most* of Christendom *most* of history, by *most* everyone. Andy’s mind echoed with the words of Jeremiah, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?”

And there was Andy door-to-door at the Centre, on the streets of Berlin, with the evangelistic throngs at the Munich Olympics, preaching the “anti-Gospel,” representing reversed “Good News.”

He stood up then sat down again; feeling like he might throw up, oust some kind of forbidden food. But he knew it was far too late. He had long-since swallowed such belief, which included, like King Herod, perpetual endorsement of mass slaughter of innocents. Most Christian believers were King Herod’s foot soldiers when it came to war and capital punishment.

So what about all the Germans, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese—enemies all within the past thirty-five years—murdered on a grand scale by the “Good Guys” and blessed by all Christendom, except “enemy” Christendom, which, of course, identically called down God’s blessing on the slaughter of the “Good Guys”? Had God not made them in his image, too? Had Christ not died for them? Were they not equally entitled to hear the Good News? Did “love” mean, in the end, what the papal legate said centuries before and majority Christians explicitly follow in the present day, “Kill them all, God will sort out who are his own”?

Andy wished Jack would hurry up. He needed to put a stop to the impossible build-up of thoughts somehow. There had been very little traffic on the *Allée*. He felt tempted to get up and walk again. His mind roared on.

What kind of utter perversion, inversion, of biblical “love” had Christendom embraced, to permit the wholesale slaughter throughout the centuries of domestic and foreign enemies, who were neighbours, who were “God,” at least God’s image-bearers, in whom, “the least of these,” Jesus was to be found? Why had seemingly so few in the history of the church from within screamed out, “*The Emperor has no clothes!*”

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In consideration of the overwhelming unrighteousness of Christian belief and action for centuries, was not the era of the Enlightenment a supreme gift from God to the Church? To the world? Were its proponents not the “stones” made to cry out by God after the Church had endorsed and committed endless atrocious adulteries with the State for centuries? Was not the revolt of atheism over against the church’s horrendous unfaithfulness *pure religion* of the sort James spoke of? Were not Unitarians in their pacifism far more faithful even when throwing out the baby, Jesus’ Incarnation, with the bathwater? Was not Gandhi “right on” in his rejection of the missionaries’ Christ?

Was not Martin Luther tragically misguided in *only* trying to find justification before a holy God, yet never likewise before God’s image-bearers, not least God’s chosen, the Jews? Had not Luther instructed the German nobility, “Smite, slay and kill!” the peasant hordes and committed to writing some of the most vituperative anti-Semitic hate literature known to humanity? (Which the North American Lutheran Church officially rejected only *after* the Nazis, steeped in Martin Luther’s German Christianity, had slaughtered six million Jewish innocents.)

Contrary to mainstream Protestant understandings, was not the *only* way to find a holy God *through loving embrace of neighbour and enemy*? How had Evangelicals, so adamant about following Jesus, sucked him utterly dry of all true content when it came to his central teachings and example about love of neighbour and enemy?

Andy’s mind had built up such momentum that nothing was able to stop the ineluctable questions he was posing to himself. He felt immobilized, like a terrified mouse before the proverbial snake. Yet somehow the serpent, unlike in the Primordial Garden, *rightly* was about to swallow its prey. Wasn’t the Church, in light of its long and terrifying history of violence, *one of the most evil scourges on humanity the world had known*? Possibly *the most evil*? He remembered again a line from a German poem, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Erde, O Herr, hat Dich getötet*—“the righteousness of the earth, O Lord, has killed you.” Only Andy would change *O Herr* to *O Kirche*. The Church had self-imploded in light of all human standards of righteousness, which were far more vaunted than the Church’s. Or were they? Had the secular world simply imbibed the Church’s biblical teaching despite Christendom’s contrary example—the corruption of the best—and was now holding the Church to account when it had so quickly and so long since turned faithless to its founding texts?

Andy didn’t know where to turn. Who had written on this stuff? Why didn’t he know of it? When in Church history, if at all, did at least a few lonely voices cry out about the Emperor’s, Christendom’s, Evangelicalism’s stark and shameful, vile and unconscionably evil, nakedness; its unrepentant and endlessly repeated whoredoms? Were there at least 7,000 in the long history of the Church who had not bowed the knee? Would he have to leave the Church to find God? Would he have to turn to the secular thinkers and philosophers to discover true biblical religion? Was the Church, in the end, the ultimate evil?

A car honked. For a split second, Andy actually thought someone was acknowledging his question. He decided he would get up to walk some more. His mind plunged forward headlong.

Andy wished he could tear out that part of his brain that was causing so much offence, like Jesus had said one should do with an eye or a hand. But wasn’t the Church, in fact, *the primary offender*? He recalled a saying he had read by Simone Weil: “The church is that great totalitarian beast with an irreducible kernel of truth.” Weil refused to join it throughout her lifetime. No wonder. Hadn’t she also said the most fundamental act of forgiveness humans needed to undertake is toward God? Wasn’t she right? Might it have been better had Jesus never been born, had the word “God” never first been uttered long ago amongst Semitic nomads, given how the Church and its precursors had desecrated so violently its content?

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Andy felt wretched. It seemed like he was being thrust inside an Alfred Hitchcock horror movie, when all perspectives and norms were rendered kaleidoscopic. Where could he turn when everything normal had convulsed into a thousand distortions? He had come over to Germany to propagate faith and instead had found his faith buffeted and sent topsy-turvy, not by contrary intellectual argument from others—he had braced for that—but from his own experience and rethinking within the faith. He was his own fifth columnist, his own desperate traitor. Self-betrayed! How distressing! He had unwittingly been lying in wait to ambush his easy-believism, cheap-grace Evangelical faith, so proud and cocky about having “the Truth” that he didn’t know that he was the hunted, not the hunter.

The tables had been turned. The shoe was on the other foot. *He* needed to be evangelized. *He* was that Emperor without any clothes. This was *his* moment of truth. Would he repent and turn? But from what? Faith? Or would he, like the Emperor, thrust his head a little higher and strut stark naked to the beat of Christendom’s droning blood-drenched drums? He knew the sycophants who would cheer him on. Out of the frying pan, into the fire. Was he, in his evangelistic zeal, only guilty of traversing the ocean to make his converts *twice the sons of hell* for his efforts? Was this the indictment of most missionary and evangelistic efforts worldwide, of every Billy Graham evangelistic crusade he had so unthinkingly prayed for? How dare he think such thoughts? Wasn’t this ultimate heresy? *Who did he think he was?*

“O wretched man that I am!” He suddenly cried out. He looked around quickly. No one had heard. God perhaps?

Around the corner there was a horrific thundering as Army vehicle upon Army vehicle rolled down *Clayallee* to enter the Base compound. There must have been twenty or more—tanks, armoured cars, and a fleet of others he could not identify. They must have been on some kind of training exercise. He was wrong, therefore. All the Christians were not at the Base. Some at least were training once again to kill. He felt like launching a rocket to wipe them all out, and then felt even more wretched at how easily his mind had slipped into such a vindictive mode.

Jack came out after the last vehicle had turned in to the Compound. For the first time since leaving Jack, Andy remembered that Jack and Fiona might be leaving the team, so engrossed his ruminations had become.

When Jack saw Andy, he said it looked like Andy had seen a ghost. Andy said he *had*, millions of them. But nowhere the Holy Ghost.

Jack did not even try to understand. “Let’s head back. I’ll tell you about the visit on the way,” he said.

Andy looked again at the Base for the Holy Ghost, maybe Jesus. He saw neither.