

GOD...
AND
DR. BANNISTER

This War Can Be Stopped

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"Psychiana," Inc.

MOSCOW, IDAHO, U.S.A., 1941

GOD . . . AND DR. BANNISTER

FIRST PRINTING

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AMERICAN BOOK-STRATFORD PRESS, INC.**

DEDICATORY

This book is lovingly dedicated to my wife Pearl, my son Alfred, and my daughter little Florence, who, together, have provided me with the inspiration, courage, protection and infinite love I needed through many trying periods. Had it not been for their unflinching devotion, their unstinted love, and their perhaps unconscious inspiration, this book could not have been written.

This dedication would not be complete if the author did not express his gratitude to the Great Spirit of God for Its leadings, inspiration, and complete response whenever help was needed. This indwelling Spirit can manifest in every life that recognizes Its presence and overwhelming Power. That Power is abundantly available for all, without church affiliation of any sort. Affiliation with religious organizations is good . . . AFTER ONE HAS FOUND THE INDWELLING POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD; before that, it means nothing at all.

The Author.

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THE CHARACTERS IN THIS BOOK ARE ALL
FICTITIOUS. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO PERSONS
LIVING OR DEAD IS PURELY COINCIDENCE.

The author desires to express his appreciation of the help and inspiration given him by his friend, Dr. George W. Allison of Ridgewood, N. J.

The author also acknowledges the kindness and friendship extended to him by the Management and entire staff of the Multnomah Hotel in Portland, Oregon, where this book was written.

INTRODUCTORY

THERE IS SOMETHING radically wrong with humanity. There is something radically wrong with religion. The latter statement is the cause of the first statement. Religion tells us that in some mysterious manner, Almighty God gave unto it His sublime secrets. It tells us, on its own unsupported word, however, that a long time ago, Almighty God spake to the writers of their many bibles, and through those writers gave to religion secrets which God withheld from the rest of the human race. An unsound theory in the first place. An unjust theory in the second place. An untrue theory in the third place.

As a result of these rather far-fetched and somewhat impossible claims, there are on this earth today, eleven major systems of religion operating. All except one are very much older than Christianity. Their bibles are of far greater age. There are one billion and a half men and women following these eleven systems of religion. Each system has a theory that Almighty God, in order to save this world from sin, came down to earth, dying an ignominious death on a cross. By this means, "salvation" has been made possible for the entire human race. So religion tells us. But I see no "salvation" anywhere.

There are many things wrong with this theory of God. In the first place so many different "gods" have descended from heaven in like manner to save the world from sin, that a poor confused American is apt to have a very hard time finding out which one of these "gods", if any, was the True God, and which were the false "gods". For they cannot all be true. One is true and the rest false, or they are all false.

There is something else wrong with the claims of these differing systems of religion—something which convinces me of the falsity of them all. Something which convinces me that one

system is copied after an older system, none of them having seen the actual truths of God, nor having had those truths revealed by any sort of revelation, divine or human. For none of these eleven systems of religion have been able to reveal Almighty God to man, their rather large claims notwithstanding. Nor is there a single priest, preacher, or rabbi on the face of the earth who can actually and literally demonstrate the Power of God here on the earth, stopping Adolf Hitler by that Supreme Power.

This, to me, is absolute proof that these eleven major systems of religion are only unprovable theories of God. They are "beliefs" about God. Nothing more nor less than that. Moreover, their inadequacy to manifest the powers of their respective "gods" in this period of world crisis, proves to me, at any rate, that none of these religious "faiths" is grounded in the truths of God. If any one of them were in actual touch with Almighty God, the Creator of this earth, its celestial sphere, and the human race, then that system of religion certainly should be able to draw upon the power of its "god" and, through that power, Hitler should be brought to his knees in a very short time.

But none of these systems of religion can do that. It would be foolish to expect them to with the philosophies they have advanced today. Here in America we have embraced the Christian religion—at least nominally, although there are only two out of every hundred Americans who see the inside of a church on Sunday. You can't say then, that America is a Christian nation. Nominally, perhaps, but in no other sense. Therefore, we must place the Christian theory of God in the same category as the other ten systems.

There are millions of Americans who are not in the slightest degree interested in the Christian "faith" or theory about God. And they are pretty good Americans at that. They are not all inside the penitentiaries. They are not all morons, neither are they all "crack-pots" as a writer in the American Mercury referred to them in a recent issue. (See the author's reply in the

American Mercury April 1941.) They are good Americans, the backbone of this Country. Evidently, regardless of the divine inspiration of the Christian scriptures and the Christian religion, it has not enough divine inspiration to appeal to more than two out of every hundred Americans. That, to me, is further proof of the fallacy of the Christian theory of Almighty God. When the actual truths of God are fully known, it will be discovered that God's immutable word is written on every page of nature. It was not revealed to a few in ages gone by. The truths of God are of such magnitude, that all who run may read. They may find these sublime truths without consulting or even believing in any theory of God advanced by any of the world's eleven major systems of religion.

The author is interested in one thing. He knows—for his common sense tells him—that Almighty God, the Creator of this universe and the human race, exists. He knows further, that if this be a fact, there must be some way for the human race to make a literal and vital contact with the Creator, and, through the Power of that contact, plus the Power which can come from it, such world disturbers as Hitler can be brought to their knees, and this quite speedily. He has written this book in order that men and women may know that God does exist, and that God can bring Hitler to his end, not through angels but through ordinary every-day Americans.

Surely the Power that created the human race is not going to let one little insignificant human being challenge God—is It? But that seems to be what is happening today. And the ludicrous thing about it all is that with eleven major systems of religion, and with one and a half billion followers, all these religions combined cannot do a thing towards either revealing God to humanity, or bringing Hitler to his knees. Yet both can be done.

It must be the true Power of the True God, though. No pseudo-god can do that. And regardless of how precious religious theories and traditions may be, if they cannot manifest the Power of God to bring Hitler to his knees, they are not

true religions. So I say, "pseudo-gods" cannot manifest the Power of the Creator; neither can "crucified gods" do that. For crucified gods are dead gods, and it will take the Power of a Living Spirit to bring Hitler to his doom. Humanity has had about thirty-five crucified gods offered to it in the past, and it has rejected every one of them, just as it has rejected the crucified god of the Christian. Only two out of every hundred of our population ever attend church.

Knowing what I do about religion as it exists on the earth today, I feel there is little likelihood of religion reversing itself in matters of "belief" and "tradition". Religious tradition, belief, and superstition shoot their roots down very deep, and the only way religion can be awakened from the terrible Rip Van Winkle into which it has fallen, is for someone else to bring to this earth the truths of God. When that happens, religion may awaken itself out of its traditional lethargy. If the foundations of its "faith" are challenged, it may show signs of life. The author hopes so.

But he cannot wait for that to happen. Times are too desperate. Hitler is having too much success. If the Christian, or any other system of religion is the only hope this world has, then I am afraid it has no hope at all. For none of these systems of religion have ever been able to reveal God to man in the past—and there is no time for them to try now. Neither their "gods" nor their "sacred writings" can stop Adolf Hitler. The True Spirit of God can. This Spirit, none of these so-called religions know anything about.

* * *

It may be that before this book sees the light of day, this fair land of ours will be suffering, bleeding, dying in the throes of the hell of war. That is not impossible. The author, as do all true Americans, hopes such a day never comes. But no one can say with certainty what the future holds for any of us. War is war. It is ruthless, damnable destruction. It is hell. Yet it may come to our shores. We may have to fight in order to protect

ourselves from aggression. If we do, misery, suffering and death, with diseases and pestilence will be the order of the day. The gruesome tragedies Europe has been witnessing for about two years may be repeated here. For we are up against ruthless foes. Bloodthirsty villains if ever this earth saw bloodthirsty villains. It may seem for a time as if they will win. Perhaps they will—who knows? Perhaps our American democratic way of life will go down before the mad forces of brute despots. Perhaps the spirit of wanton and ruthless murder will sweep everything before it. It cannot do that permanently, but it has done just that to date. And no one I know is capable of predicting what the future holds for us.

If days like these should come . . . if it seems that every last vestige of civilization is failing . . . if we see nothing but death, destruction, horror ahead, let our people take courage. Let them look up. For you may be sure of one thing; you may be sure that, regardless of the pseudo-gods offered to the world by its eleven major systems of religion—*THE TRUE SPIRIT WHICH IS GOD STILL LIVES AND STILL HOLDS THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT IN ITS HANDS*. And while no religion on the face of the earth has yet been able to bring God to man, this crisis will bring forth the man who will do that. It has to.

This is not a fight between Germany and England. It is not a fight between old world powers alone. If it were, the author would not be too much interested for Europe always had been a hot-bed of wars. Under normal circumstances I should say that, having started the war over there, they finish it over there. But this is a world revolution. It is a challenge to Almighty God and to every man who believes in the final triumph of right over wrong, and of God the Creator over Hitler the destroyer. Therefore, the author deems the time to be ripe to bring to men and women, not a church theory of God, but the actual truths and Power of God.

It must be self-evident to all capable of thinking, that if none of the earth's eleven systems of religion have been able

to reveal God to man, or to bring to this earth the truths of God, somewhere those *TRUTHS* must exist, and somewhere there must be a man or woman who has seen those truths. For this world revolution will do one thing, at least. It will produce someone who will discover who and what God is, and, more than that, who will show this world how the actual and literal Power of God may be used to bring Hitler, and other world-disturbers to their knees. The manifestation of the greatest degenerate the world has ever known will force the manifestation of the greatest Spiritual Power this world ever can know.

If Hitler had not manifested, religion and the world could have tobogganed along, perfectly satisfied with its theories of God. But now—well, men's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming to this earth. They are beginning to take religion seriously. They are beginning to ask themselves if there does not exist somewhere, a Power which can stop this mad debacle. And they rightfully ask this. For such a Power does exist, and it is perfectly natural for all men and women to look for the manifestation of that Power, when such a ghastly phenomenon as Hitler appears.

But it is quite evident that none of the world's religions can make known any spiritual power. They are too busily occupied telling the world that Almighty God was killed on a cross thousands of years ago. They are too busy sending missionaries into other lands, trying to have those of other religions exchange their beliefs for their belief. An impossible task by the way.

* * *

There are some things we may be sure of at this stage of the world's history. We may be sure that an intelligent controlling Spirit lives. It took an intelligence of more than human origin to create this vast scheme of things. If that Spirit of Creation lives, it does not live in "the heavens". According to Dr. Bannister, it lives where religion told us it did not live—in every

human soul. Religion has very faithfully taught that each of us was "born in sin and shapen in iniquity". Therefore, there can be none of the Spirit of Almighty God in us. Dr. Bannister does not agree with that fundamental of the Christian faith at all.

He seems to know that if the Power of the Spirit of God lives, that Spirit must manifest through human lives right here and now. And to give that Spirit to a chosen few, leaving the rest of us out in the cold, would be rather unjust. Moreover, it would handicap God. So, according to Dr. Bannister, that Spirit of God is a natural and automatic gift at birth. This being a fact, every one of us goes through life possessing in him- or herself, *THE VERY POWER THE CHURCHES HAVE DIRECTED US TO THE HEAVENS TO FIND*.

These religious organizations have told us, with a lot of arrogance but with no proof, that you and I must accept Almighty God at their hands. They have told us, also without proof, that unless you and I accept the conception of God they advance, we shall all lose our souls. Only those who have become "the faithful" shall ever know God, and even these good souls may not have that experience until after they have passed on, and successfully been "tried" before the "bar of God" for the deeds done in the body here on this earth. Dr. Bannister again disagrees.

He asks Americans to stop looking for God in the sky. He asks them to stop looking to any church for the sublime truths of God. Rather, he asks us all to look for God in the only place where we know the Spirit of God manifests—that is—in us. If no such Power as that exists, then, according to Dr. Bannister, regardless of who wins this present conflict, the earth will still remain Godless, for nothing will have been settled. It will only be a case of time until the winning nations begin to outbuild each other, and it will be the same thing all over again.

There can be no perfect civilization on this earth until man discovers who God is, and makes a re-alignment with God.

When God and man recognize each other, and live in each other, strikes, crime, murders, wars, and the rest of the hellish things which are plaguing humanity today, must disappear.

Religions of all kinds and sorts have had ample opportunity to prove their "beliefs" about God. They have all signally failed. They are even more impotent today than they have been in the past. The reason they are impotent is because they have not the true conception of God. Instead of telling men and women that the Power of Almighty God lives in them and they in it, with all the staggering Power that implies, they have sold the world a bill of goods which makes it mandatory that you and I go to these churches to find God.

They have blatantly told us, all eleven of them, that "there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we may be saved" other than the name of their crucified god. But Dr. Bannister has another answer, and you will see what happens on this earth when men and women have the actual truths of God presented to them.

One thing is certain—if Hitler is to be stopped, and if permanent peace is to be brought to this earth *IT WILL HAVE TO BE BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING ETERNAL GOD, OPERATING, NOT IN HEAVEN THROUGH "ANGELS", BUT ON THIS EARTH THROUGH HUMAN BEINGS, AVERAGE NORMAL AMERICANS LIKE YOU AND ME.* That Power is available now. It has always been available. It can be used to stop Hitler, Stalin, and whatever other despot may arise. When traditional, organized religion as we have it today is discarded, this earth and its inhabitants will find God. Not until. Thank God, traditional religion is fast passing out of the picture. In its place is rising a confidence in the Spirit of God in each of us. That confidence, plus the Power which is God, will solve this world's problems now, and will prevent any such world marauder as Hitler from raising his head again.

The Author.

Moscow, Idaho,
June 1, 1941.

GOD . . . AND DR. BANNISTER

CHAPTER ONE

NIGHT HAD FALLEN over San Francisco. A million shimmering lights glittered under the mellow glow of a crescent moon. Above, myriads of stars were peeping down at the fascinating scene below.

Market Street was jammed with the usual Sunday evening crowds. The theatres, night-clubs, restaurants, were throbbing with San Francisco's night life as only San Francisco knows how to live it.

On a hill above the city the Sunday evening service of All Souls Church was over. The more than two thousand worshippers were leaving the main auditorium of the city's wealthiest and most fashionable church.

As they went out into the night, the lights in the huge auditorium were, one after another, extinguished. It was almost dark inside now. The choir of one hundred and fifty voices, many of them paid, had left the choir loft behind the minister's rostrum. By now they were on their different ways. Some would go home. Some would go to a theatre. Others would hunt the relaxations and exhilaration of a night club. Like the congregation of this famous church, the choir singers were not exactly destitute. For All Souls was a very wealthy church; both its membership and its choir were chosen with care.

As the last notes of "O Star of Eve" died away among the echoes, Dr. Alfred Bowers, the talented young organist, gathered his music together and locked it safely in the music compartment which was at the side of the huge organ. Adjusting the pistons, tablets and couplers, he threw the switch which cut the giant motors. Then, locking the four manual console, he put the key in his pocket. Looking his beloved

instrument over to make sure that everything was all right, he left the more than one hundred sets of pipes to themselves. Next Sunday they would speak again.

Although only in his twenties, young Dr. Bowers was considered to be one of the most outstanding organ virtuosi in America. He had earned his Doctorate in Music at the famed Overland Conservatory of Music while only twenty-two. At twenty-seven he had arrived. Five years under the great Boyster had done their work well. All Souls paid him five thousand dollars a year to play the magnificent Skinner organ which, by the way, had been given to the church by a wealthy member of the congregation, a San Francisco banker.

A very warm personal friendship existed between Dr. Bowers and Howard Bannister, D.D., Ph.D., Litt.D. pastor of the famous church. They both lived on the Oakland side of the Bay and for several years Dr. Bannister had driven the young organist across the Bay Bridge with him, dropping him at his home.

As usual on Sunday evenings, after locking up his organ, Bowers made his way to the study of Dr. Bannister and from there they went across the Bay together in Bannister's Cadillac which was waiting for them at the curb, a liveried chauffeur on hand.

* * *

Howard Bannister had been pastor of All Souls Church since its inception. Brilliant of intellect, keen of mind, a handsome, earnest man, his reputation had gone far and wide. He was considered the most brilliant preacher in the United States. In addition to his work at All Souls, his weekly radio sermons over a large coast-to-coast network was the outstanding religious feature of the airways.

He was a little over six feet tall and weighed about two hundred pounds. His age was fifty-five although he looked nearer forty than fifty-five. His family consisted of his ten year old daughter, Margie, and an eighteen year old son,

Bruce, who was following in the footsteps of Dr. Bowers and studying pipe organ at the Overland Conservatory.

Bannister was passionately fond of his family. He lived for just two things. One was to make God a living reality to the world and the other was—his family. With him, church work was a passion. Paid a ten thousand dollar a year salary with a drawing account the same size, Bannister would not have hesitated to exchange the finery and prestige of All Souls for a waterfront mission job, if he thought by taking the waterfront job he could do more towards making God real to humanity.

For Bannister had come up the hard way. He was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. All he ever had was latent ability and a soul so deep that the follies and frailties of life made no impression on it. Personal aggrandisement and position meant nothing to Howard Bannister. Money meant nothing to him, either.

At the age of eight his mother had died. At ten, his father, a Bowery mission worker, had also passed on. Tuberculosis had taken them both. Laboring in the "vineyard of the Master" all hours of the day and night, plus insufficient food, had brought the elder Bannister and his wife to an early tomb. They had one son—Howard.

The passing of Howard's father and mother had left him alone on the streets of New York at the tender age of ten. He did not have a nickel in his pocket. Nor did he have one friend who could do very much for him.

For a few weeks after his father's death another mission worker, a friend of his father, had taken young Howard to live with him. But the added expense was too much so young Howard was informed that, much as it grieved his benefactor to do so, he would have to insist that young Howard go to work and make his own living.

The first job Bannister got was in a drug store in the Times Square Building. It happened like this: Tired, hungry, and about half sick, young Bannister, seeing the crowds eating

at the lunch counter of the famous drug store, sneaked in and sidled up to a seat at the end of the counter.

A freckled-faced "squirt" saw him and thinking him to be a typical Bowery bum, said, "What do you want, kid?"

Afraid—for he had never been in a drug store alone in his life, young Bannister said, "You wouldn't give a feller a glass of cold water for nothing, would you?"

"What's the matter, kid,—sick?"

Bannister had hesitated just a moment. "No,—I'm not sick—but I'm awful tired—and—I could eat if I had anything to eat. Guess the water will help some if you'll give me a glassful. I'd do that much for you if you needed it."

Looking him over, the soda-jerk said, "Okay, kid. Here you go—here's your water."

Young Bannister sat there drinking the water. A lull in business brought the soda-squirt back to the end of the counter where young Bannister was sitting on one of the high red stools.

"You don't look like a bum, kid. . . . What's your story?"

"My mother and dad died a coupla weeks ago, and that's all there is to it. I don't have any relatives or friends and I haven't been able to land a job yet."

"Well, that's too bad, kid. How old are you?" said the freckled one behind the counter.

"I'm ten. Say—that lady there—she's leaving the counter and—well—she's leaving half of her sandwich there. She aint going to eat it. . . . Don't suppose I could eat that, do ya?"

The soda jerker looked at him quizzingly. He did not know whether he was talking to a professional Bowery bum or not. Evidently he decided that he was not, for at this tender age, Bannister was outstandingly handsome. There was something in that face not seen too often. The high forehead, the look of submerged sorrow, as if he were hiding a secret grief—these, coupled with a personality which was magnetic, stood out even at ten.

"Guess ya can, kid. It'll only be thrown in the garbage can,

anyhow. We aint supposed to feed tramps here—this is a high class drug store—but, wait—I'll slip it to ya."

The half sandwich was "slipped" to young Howard Bannister and while he was eating that the soda-squirt was making him another one. This was followed by a cup of hot coffee.

Young Bannister's face beamed. He had not known kindness of this sort since his parents had died. It was something new to have to get out and rustle a living at the tender age of ten. Usually when he stuck around all he got was "getta hell outta here—we aint got no jobs fer kids—get out, you bum."

So treatment of this sort was something unusual. Also, it was very much appreciated. In fact, as a result of this chance meeting between young Bannister and the soda-jerker, a friendship which lasted years came into blossom. That night he took him home with him and the next day he had secured a job for him washing ice cream glasses in this same drug store.

We shall skip the intervening years which elapsed between that day at the drug store in Times Square and the Sunday night in San Francisco we are talking about.

Suffice it to say that young Bannister had tackled his fate with a will. He had determined to win. He had his own life to build. It was hard, of course, but there was only one alternative left him and he went after that with everything he had.

He worked. He worked hard. Most of the little money he earned he saved. He put himself through grade school by working at the drug store nights, and through high school by the same method. He stayed in that drug store several years.

The owner of the store, a wealthy Jew, took quite an interest in young Bannister and after he had graduated from high school, he loaned him enough money to study pharmacy at the New York College of Pharmacy. At the end of four years young Bannister had his degree of Ph.G. He was twenty then, having graduated from high school at the age of sixteen.

From that point on, Bannister had, by sheer dogged determination, forged his way to the top. Probably because his father was a minister, the yearning to preach came to him early. So he entered a theological seminary in New York.

At once it became evident that young Bannister was not the ordinary run of young man. He was too earnest. He talked too much about the sad condition of humanity. He kept alone, studying, every spare minute he could find.

Now—he was the world-famous Dr. Howard Bannister, pastor of the equally famous All Souls Church in San Francisco.

The chauffeur opened the car door at the approach of Bannister and Bowers. They got into the car and sank back among the luxurious cushions, all set for the drive across the Bay Bridge into Oakland.

"You look tired tonight, Dr. Bannister," said the young organist.

"I am tired, Alfred—too tired."

"Why don't you let up for a while? You're working entirely too hard. Matter of fact, Howard, I believe you're taking your work much too seriously. Why don't you take life a bit easier? You don't need to go every minute of the day. You don't need to tear yourself to bits preaching to these people. All they come to church for anyway is to see and hear you. They like the intelligent sermons you preach—they like to be members of fashionable All Souls. But I doubt if anything you can say to this bunch of hard-boiled buzzards sinks in very deep."

"I'm wondering," replied Bannister. "I'm wondering."

"Well, I don't think you need to. I know this crowd—well—not better than you do, but almost as well. All they are interested in is in listening to your brilliant sermons—but so far as God is concerned, well, they just don't seem to be interested."

"Alfred, do you believe that—truly?"

"I most certainly do. Take old Younger, the wealthy banker

who gave us the organ. That fellow makes his money by foreclosing mortgages. He's as cold-blooded as a mackerel. If you were to preach a sermon some Sunday morning against foreclosing mortgages, why, the very next day you'd hear about it. And if you kept it up, he'd get your job. All that fellow is interested in is money. Oh—he likes to sop his conscience by belonging to All Souls, but Dr. Bannister, believe me, he's a cold-blooded reptile if ever there was one."

Bannister sank deeper into the cushions, for Dr. Bowers was saying that which he had known for a long time. Too well he knew the sham and hypocrisy of All Souls Church. He knew as well as Dr. Bowers that this famous church would kick him out the very moment he began to hit at the personal lives of its members. And this he did not intend to do. For Dr. Bannister was interested in only one thing. He wanted to make God a living reality, not only to the members of All Souls Church, but to his radio audiences as well. Yes—he wanted to make God a living reality to everybody. And he was failing in his mission. He knew that.

For several years now Bannister had mulled over in his mind the suggestion that he resign from the church. What was he accomplishing for God? What did any member of his congregation know about God? All they did was to contribute handsomely to the support of All Souls—but so far as actually knowing anything about the Power of God—well, it was laughable to suppose that they did. Yet he—Bannister—was taking their money, living in affluence and comfort and, in the fifteen years of his ministry, not a single man or woman to his knowledge had had his or her life changed by the Power of God. And Bannister believed the Power of God to be the most potent thing in the world.

The limousine swung over the Bay Bridge and soon was on the Oakland side.

Giving the chauffeur orders to stop at the Bowers residence, Dr. Bannister sank once more down deep into the cushions,

after the organist had said a cheery, "Good-night, Doctor—better go fishing for a few weeks."

"All right, Alfred, I'll seriously consider it," he had replied.

Closing his eyes as the car sped on, he began to think back over the past years. His thoughts wandered back to the drug store in Times Square. He remembered his theological seminary days. He recalled how, on graduation day, the Deans of the College had called him into their office for a private talk with him. He loved that old theological school. He loved every moment he had spent in it.

How well he remembered that graduation conference. How well he remembered old Dr. Harris, a member of the famous Massey-Harris family. Old Dr. Stewart—and McNicol. They were wonderful days, those. And the final conference. It was held in the executive office of the seminary. All the Deans were there. The executive Board was there, for Bannister had made a record at that seminary. He had been loved by all. His deeply religious nature had won them. His innate and natural ability on the platform and in the pulpit had begun to manifest early. His love for God and humanity was unquestioned. In fact it was the most outstanding characteristic of young Bannister. He seemed to live for nothing else. His whole life seemed, in some mystical way, to be intertwined with the unknown and invisible life which must be God.

And Bannister knew that. Deep down in his nature was but one desire. He wanted to know the very fullness of the Power of God, perhaps not as the churches teach it, but as it actually exists. Then he wanted to see that Power manifested on this earth in the lives of all, to such a degree that wars, crime, immorality, social unrest and the like, would, through the omnipotent Power which is God, be forever banished.

And so, recognizing the depth of character in young Bannister, the Deans had decided to call him in for one final word of advice and perhaps comfort, before he went out into the world to "preach the gospel of Jesus Christ."

It was shortly after one o'clock of a sunny Monday after-

noon when he was told that he was wanted in the executive office. Hurrying down, he was rather nonplussed to find there, not only the Deans, but the entire teaching staff. In addition to these, the President of the Seminary was there. Seldom did he show up at the school, but here he was.

"Must be something important," thought young Bannister. "Maybe they have a church for me already."

On entering the conference it didn't take him long to find out why he had been called there.

"Howard," began Dr. Harris, "we have called you here before you leave to tell you how we feel about you. Every member of the faculty is vitally interested in you and your future. So much so that it was decided to call you before us for a final parting word of advice and cheer."

"Well, I certainly shall appreciate any advice you may have to give me," said Bannister.

"It is not so much a case of giving you advice, Howard, as it is a case of suggesting to you that you keep very humble before God. You are a full fledged D.D. now. Your whole life lies before you. We have watched you very carefully during your stay with us, and somehow or other, we feel that you should know exactly how we feel towards you."

Bannister knew that something interesting was coming, but what it was he could not for the life of him imagine. He had done his best here. His grades had been the highest ever obtained by any student of the Seminary.

"We feel, Dr. Bannister—all of us—that the Lord has a mighty work to do through you. We feel that God has chosen you to bring this world some great message. We do not know what that message is. We do know, however, or rather we feel that as a result of your life and ministry, this whole world will be drawn nearer to the Cross of Jesus Christ. So, believing this, we wanted to caution you a bit, and, now that you are leaving us for good, suggest that you keep very quiet and humble before God.

"Certainly, Dr. Bannister, this world needs a new revelation

from God. It needs the Power of God in it, and God knows it has very little of that now. Quite often when God is about to speak to the earth through some one He has chosen for such a work, that one does not know it. It may be that you do not recognize fully your power. Perhaps God, in His infinite wisdom, has withheld from you that fact that you are the one man we know who is best equipped to bring to this God-forsaken world the message it needs to bring it to God. And so, loving you as we do, we want to humbly suggest to you that you always hold the thought firmly in your mind that God, through you, is going to make a new revelation of His power to mankind. We firmly believe that. Never in the history of this Seminary have we been so impressed by any student as to call him here as we have called you."

Bannister's head drooped. Then it raised again.

"Dr. Harris—and gentlemen, all of whom I love with a very intense love, I appreciate the friendship and love on your part which has impressed you to call me into special conference with you. I shall think over carefully what you have said to me, for I, too, have known for some time that I was born for the express purpose of bringing to this world a truth concerning God which the world, yourselves included, has not even faintly suspected. This has been known to me since early childhood. Let me tell you a story, gentlemen:

"My father and mother, as you know, were earnest, honest workers for God in the hardest field of the world—the Bowery missions. As a result of their labors in the Bowery vineyard of the Master, they both died a premature death. My mother was one of the Godliest women this old world has ever known. Unfortunately, her light and her talents had to be hidden. They were hidden under the bushel of poverty. They were hidden under the bushel of circumstances. They were hidden under the bushel of ill-health.

"But poor though she was, ill though she was, thwarted through life as she was, that mother of mine knew God. To her, God was not some mythical abstract being living some-

where above the sky—God was a living reality. She loved God as few do today, even in this school of religion. She may not have known who and what God really is, but in her blind way she trusted and loved . . . well, let me say . . . the unknown God.

“Well, one day when I was about four years of age, maybe a bit younger, I was lying on my mattress on the floor of our tenement room, when there came to me one of the strangest experiences I have ever had. Lying there, there came to me what seemed to be the Spirit of God itself. ’Twas an experience I shall never forget. I would rather not go into that experience in detail. Suffice it to say that it seemed as if the heavens opened up.

“Going at once into the room where mother was, I related to her the beauty of this experience, remarking, ‘There is more to life than we see, Mamma—there is another world in this one—and that other world is the world where God lives’.

“Asking me to climb on her knee, and pressing her thin, worn face close to mine, she said, ‘Howard, some day God will reveal Himself to this world through you. I do not know when that day will be—but it will be, for I have known this ever since you came. When I gave you birth my duty to God and humanity was done. I don’t have many more years to last—this old tuberculosis has too good a hold on me—but after I’m gone, never forget these words of mine—*‘GOD WILL REVEAL HIMSELF TO THIS WORLD THROUGH YOU’*.”

There was a tense silence in the room after Howard Bannister made that statement. Every eye was on him.

Finally, old Dr. Stewart spoke up: “We are glad to hear you say that, Howard. We believe that experience was a direct visitation from God. We believe it corroborates what we feel, for we do feel that you have a mighty work to do for God and humanity. We all believe, as I said, that because of your ministry this world will be drawn closer to the Cross of Jesus Christ.”

The car came to a halt at a traffic signal in Richmond. Dr. Bannister opened his eyes, looked out through the car window, then closed them again and continued to reminisce.

Yes, he remembered well making that statement to his instructors in theological seminary. He remembered his reply to Dr. Stewart, too. He remembered the surge of spiritual Power which came to him, as, looking that group of earnest, tense men in the face, he said, "I don't know how close to the Cross of Jesus Christ I can draw this world. Nor am I particularly interested in that. I am, however, very much interested in making God a living reality to mankind. That is what I want to do and, God helping me, that is what I shall do. That is what I was born to do."

With eyes still closed he recalled the consternation that statement had caused.

"Well, Dr. Bannister—just what do you mean by that?" asked Dr. Imrie. "You don't mean to tell us that you can separate the Cross of Jesus Christ from God, do you?"

Bannister had thought quietly and earnestly before he answered that question. Then, all of the spirituality of his nature rising to the surface, he had replied: "Gentlemen—long before the Cross of Christ or the Christian religion was ever heard of, millions of souls inhabited this earth. The same Creator made them all. One was not more precious to that Creator than another. These souls must all come under the saving grace and Power of the same One God—the Cross of Jesus Christ and what you teach notwithstanding."

Then he had continued: "This is a Christian seminary. It teaches only the Christian conception of God. But—as I have said, long before either the Cross of Jesus Christ or Christianity were ever heard of, millions of human souls lived on this earth. They had their systems of religion. They had their crosses, too. The crucified gods that hung on them were just as precious to those nations and beliefs as your crucified God is to you. You will not attempt to tell me that the story of the

virgin birth of Jesus Christ is either original or unique, will you?"

Dr. Harris had been nonplussed. What strange ideas were these? Is this the man to whom they were all looking for a revelation of the Power of God? Is this the one in whom all their hopes lie? What strange words these were. Yet how true. For no one knew that Dr. Bannister was speaking the truth any more than these theologians did.

They knew that fifteen hundred years before the supposed time of Jesus Christ, another god, one Jeseus Chrishna had been born of a virgin called Mary. They, too, knew that the religion of the Hindoo taught that their crucified god had been born on December 25th, about thirty-five hundred years ago. They knew that the Holy Ghost was the father of the Hindoo "saviour" even as he was the father of Jesus Christ. Also they knew that Jeseus Chrishna, after a ministry of three years, was crucified on a cross. They knew that according to the traditions of the Hindoo, he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where he now sits at the right hand of God, his father.

They knew that Chrishna came to save the world from sin. They knew that every fundamental of the Christian religion existed fifteen hundred years before in the religion of the Hindoo. And they also knew that more than a score of "crucified gods" had, according to other religions, presented themselves at the bar of public opinion, as divinely conceived and born "saviours" of the world.

All these things these theological instructors knew through their studies of comparative religion. Of course, all of these prior "saviours" except their own were "heathen". Their divinity did not exist. They were all "pagan" gods. Yet the painful fact stared them in the face that stories of these gods did exist long before the time of their own Jesus Christ.

But to hear young Dr. Bannister state the cold hard facts at this time was something they had not bargained for. They were horrified. They were dumbfounded.

And then Dr. Bannister recalled, as he reclined deep into the cushions of the rapidly travelling Cadillac, his last word to his former instructors before excusing himself from the room. Oh yes, he remembered those words well!

"Gentlemen, I stand before you as a man who recognizes but one God. I am fully aware of the many theories and traditions recounted by many religions, of God. I am interested in all of them. I have studied them all very carefully. But I still recognize only one God, and that Great Spirit which created all men, still lives. That Great Spirit was never crucified on a cross by anyone. It lives. That God—that Great Spirit—I shall give my life to preaching. As I learn more about the Power of the Great Spirit of God, I shall teach it. If it fits in with the Christian theory of God, well and good. But if it does not fit in, well—I shall preach the Power of the Spirit of God without the Cross of Jesus Christ, for they may not be connected at all. They may have nothing in common."

Yes, that was what he had said. And all this was thirty years ago. Now, for fifteen years he had been the famous Dr. Bannister, the pastor of All Souls Church in San Francisco. Yes—he was known all over the world as the most powerful man in the ministry. He was a success. Yet, as the car drew into the Bannister driveway, he wondered.

CHAPTER TWO

REUBEN NORLING HAD BEEN CHAUFFEUR for Dr. Bannister for the past ten years. He probably knew the real Bannister better than most folks did. Bannister did not drive a car very much, and on the long trips which were necessary, Norling and he had become true friends.

For Bannister was a very human man. To him, all created beings were equal. One might be drawing a salary of ten, or perhaps a hundred thousand dollars a year, while the other might be working as chauffeur for the wealthier man—but that made no difference to Howard Bannister. He saw in every man the likeness of the Creator. He saw every man as the image of God. Money, position, political influence meant nothing to him at all. In fact, in his own church, Bannister knew men for whom he had little regard. They were wealthy, affluent, and used to the plaudits of men. But to Howard Bannister they were just what they were. And he knew what a good many of them really were.

Norling was, like Bannister, a human sort of fellow. Of Norwegian parentage, he was the steady plodding type. Yet he had a philosophy which was almost identical with Bannister's. Bannister's every wish seemed to be anticipated by Norling in his line of work as chauffeur. He idolized his employer.

"You won't need the car again tonight, Dr. Bannister, will you?" queried Norling as he threw the ignition switch and turned off the lights.

"I hope not, Rube. Never can tell, but I don't believe I'll have to go out again tonight."

"Dr. Bannister, that was some message you put across tonight, if you don't mind my saying so. Boy! I've heard you

preach many times, but tonight was a humdinger of a sermon. And the way those folks listened. You could have heard a pin drop."

"Well thanks, Rube. I didn't know you were in the church tonight," Bannister replied.

"Oh, I wasn't in the main auditorium. I was listening through the side door of your study. Usually I go and shoot a few games of pool while you are preaching, but tonight I thought I'd stay and listen to what you had to say. You know I don't have much use for religion," said the chauffeur.

"What's the matter—see too much of it?" asked Bannister.

"Oh—it isn't that so much—but I know a lot of people who make a big profession of religion and the more profession they make the less I want to have to do with them," said Reuben.

"That go for me, too?" asked Bannister.

"I should say not! You are one man who really believes what he preaches. Aint nobody can say you ever jipped 'em out of a nickel. No sir. I have no use for religion, but I like you because you're on the up and up. You live what you believe and if a man is honest in his religion, he can believe that the King of Norway is a green monkey as far as I'm concerned."

"Well, Rube, I'm not so sure that what I've been preaching to All Souls ever was true religion. I'm not so sure that there is any true religion in the world today anywhere," Bannister said.

"Don't look like it. My country don't exist any more, and fourteen other nations now have the hated Swastika flying over their capitols. If there is a God, why don't He do something about this mess? Why don't he stop Hitler—that's what I want to know?"

"That's what I would like to know, too, Reuben. Maybe this world hasn't had the true conception of God brought to it yet. Maybe what we now have masquerading as being of God is nothing of the sort. Maybe the whole Christian

religion and the rest of the systems of religion are but human ideas about God. Maybe we haven't discovered who and what God really is yet."

Reuben Norling thought. He said nothing for several seconds.

Then, "Dr. Bannister, I believe you have something there. There must be a God but maybe we have so much religion in the world that we haven't time to find out just where God is. Maybe we have too many churches, maybe too many religions—I don't know—but I think you've got something there, Doctor. Better not tell old Younger that, though."

Turning to Norling, quick as a flash, Bannister said, "Reuben, if I believed anything about God, do you think for a minute I wouldn't preach it regardless of what Younger or the rest of All Souls might think?"

A smile spread over the chauffeur's face. "That's what I know. And I know something else, too, Dr. Bannister."

"What else do you know, Reuben?"

"Well, I know that you don't believe all of what you are preaching."

This statement hurt Dr. Bannister. However, Reuben did not mean the statement to imply what it seemed to imply.

"You are wrong, Reuben. Do you mean to tell me that you think that Sunday after Sunday I'd get up in that pulpit and tell thousands of people something I didn't believe myself? Is that what you mean?"

"No, Dr. Bannister, that is not what I mean. Maybe I don't know how to say it like I should, but I mean that you are beginning to doubt the truth of the story you are preaching. I think for some time you have had your doubts of it. But you believe it or you would not preach it. Am I right?"

Dr. Bannister was deep in thought. Here was his chauffeur literally reading his mind. For Reuben had expressed exactly the innermost sentiments of Bannister's innermost thoughts. He had not fully made up his mind yet, but he was on the verge of making it up.

"Yes, I think you're right, Rube. And you may have to hunt for another job one of these days—I don't know. But turn out the garage lights and get to bed. See you in the morning."

Deep in thought Howard Bannister crossed the lawn, ascended the patio steps and entered his palatial home by the back door. The expensive Ispahan rug deadened the sound of his footsteps as he crossed the large living room into the smaller living room just beyond.

Seated in a comfortable armchair, his wife, Pearl Bannister, was awaiting his arrival, as usual. Almost to the minute every Sunday night she could count upon her husband to be home. She gave him the usual kiss and caress, after which Bannister threw his coat and hat on the floor. This was something he never did unless exceptionally tired or deep in thought. And tonight the coat, a heavy camel hair affair, and the hat went down in the middle of the floor.

Picking them up, Pearl Bannister gave him another kiss and hug and hung the coat and hat in the front porch where they belonged.

"Sit down, honey, and let me take your shoes off—I have some hot coffee awaiting you, and guess what sort of sandwiches."

Smiling in his unique manner, Bannister, kissing his wife once more, said, "Cold salmon on white bread with a little vinegar on them."

"How did you guess?"

Bannister smiled again. "Oh—you're a pretty good fellow, Pearl—not hard to guess what's in those sandwiches. Bet you a dollar the coffee's like water, though."

"Shame on you, Bannie," for that was Pearl Bannister's very pet name for her husband. "My coffee is always good, and you know it."

"Yes—good for nothing," said Bannister with a smile.

"Oh, you're hopeless," said Pearl. "I percked the coffee an extra long time tonight so you would like it."

"Yes, I know, but there's no use percking coffee a long time

if you don't have enough coffee in the percolator. But bring it in and we'll see whether I drink it or make some of my own."

"Where do you want it, honey? Will you sit at the dining room table, or would you rather sit in the big room and listen to the radio. Let's do that, shall we?"

"Okay. Bring it in the big room, but let's not turn on the radio. I'm a little bit tired tonight. Maybe we'll turn on the news at eleven o'clock. Winchell have much to say tonight?"

"He sure did. I don't know where he gets his information but he sure gets it."

"What did he have to say?"

"Oh—he told about a member of the Nazi party holding an office in the United States Military Intelligence Department—he even gave his name. How do you suppose those Nazi sympathizers get into such places as that?"

"Well, that's easy enough, I suppose. The government can't suspect everyone just because he is of German parentage. Some skunks will slip in, I guess, in spite of everything. I wish this war would stop," said Bannister, sinking into his favorite chair by the large French window.

Pearl Bannister pulled up a hassock and started to unlace Howard's shoes. This done, she put his slippers on and gave him a lounging jacket.

Mrs. Bannister was loved by all who knew her. Her husband had the knack of making many enemies. Many people were jealous of his success. But Mrs. Bannister, well, she just did not make enemies. Active in Bundles for Britain, a former Worthy Matron of the Order of Eastern Star and active in many other charitable and civic organizations, her name was hallowed and revered throughout the whole San Francisco region. She seldom attended church, however. Her religion was to do as much good as she could here and now among her own people. This done, she used to say, "I'm not afraid of anything the future has to offer after I die."

As she sat at her husband's feet, he let his hand drop on her

hair, fondling it. Then he closed his eyes, his thoughts reverting once more to his career to date.

"Usual crowds at church tonight, honey?" she asked.

"Yes, the usual crowds, the usual sermon, the usual collection, the usual singing and the usual failure of the pastor to make God real to that church."

"Now listen, honey," said Mrs. Bannister, "suppose we forget all about churches and sermons and just let's talk about ourselves for a change. Let's just be alone together. You can't carry the burdens of the whole world on your shoulders and there's no use your trying. You've done your part today and it has been a big part. You have preached two sermons in All Souls and have made two coast-to-coast addresses over the radio. What more one man can do I don't know."

Bannister smiled. "You're awfully sweet, Pearl. If it were not for you and little Marge and Bruce back in Overland, I wouldn't have much ambition to continue preaching at All Souls or anywhere else. For if ever there was a failure in the ministry, I am that failure. Oh yes—I know what you are going to say. I know that my reputation is nation-wide. I know that I am absolutely in earnest. I know that my soul bleeds for the millions of human beings who, at this very moment, are suffering frightful atrocities at the hands of their inhuman conquerors. I know all that. Yet—I am a failure—full and complete."

"Oh, you are not, and I don't like my Bannie to be talking like that. You can only do one man's work. You have preached twice today as I said, and every ounce of energy and power you possess has been put into those sermons—so don't try, honey dear, to bear the load of the whole world—you cannot do that."

"I could if I knew God," said Bannister. "Why listen, do you mean to tell me that the Infinite Power that created this world and the whole human race cannot manifest itself in this, the darkest hour of the world's history and stop this thing? Do you mean to tell me that if I could manifest the actual

Power of the Spirit which is God on this earth, this war could not be stopped by that Power?—of course it could.

“Do you know what is happening in Warsaw at this moment?—let me tell you. The Germans have taken one hundred blocks and have built a wall eight feet high around it. Into that ghetto, as they call it, they have driven over five hundred thousand Jews to live and die in horror and misery. And then, to make their sufferings more intense, and to make doubly sure that these poor devils do die, they have inoculated some of them with typhoid fever germs—live typhoid fever germs. And at this moment those poor Jews are dying like flies, while you and I sit here in ease and comfort. Do you mean to tell me there is no Power on this earth which can bring such hellish things to an end?”

“I know, honey. What you say is true, and I, too, am doing everything I can do to help. Yesterday we sent away over one hundred layettes to Bundles for Britain. Tomorrow, twenty-five ladies will be here in the playroom to cut up a lot more. I wish—oh, how I wish I knew the answer to it, honey. But I don’t. Anyway, I don’t want you to worry yourself to death over it. I still maintain that you have done your duty as you have seen it in conducting your radio hour and preaching two sermons today.

“That may be true, Pearl, but what actual good have those sermons done? How many men and women are there in America tonight who have found God—actually and literally found the Power of the Spirit of God as a result of my efforts today?”

“I see what you mean, Bannie—but I still don’t see how you are going to do much to help more than you are doing.”

“Perhaps not, but there’s something rotten in Denmark. This is Sunday night. Today in America more than one hundred thousand other ministers have, like I, preached two sermons. They, too, gave everything they have to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. They told their congregations of the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ. They hold up the Cross of Jesus

Christ as the panacea for this world's ills. One hundred thousand of them did this. Before the Revolution, and for one hundred and fifty years after, preachers have been holding up both the blood and the Cross of Jesus Christ to America. And look at the result! In New England alone right now there are over 800 closed churches. There are more than 7000 ordained ministers in that area and of that 7000 only 1000 believe in the authoritative, infallible Bible and in the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ. In addition to this, there are 10,000 villages in the United States without a church, and 30,000 villages without a resident pastor. In our own city of San Francisco there are more than three quarters of a million people who never see the inside of a church. In Los Angeles there are over a million. And so on throughout the whole of America. Only eight percent of our people attend church on Sunday morning and less than two percent on Sunday evening. What a record of shameful failure of the blood and the Cross of Jesus Christ—either that, or the failure can be laid at the door of the churches.”

Bannister paused a while deep in thought.

“And we call ourselves a Christian nation. We want to convert the world to a religion which boasts that record of failure. It is not consistent.”

It had been a long time since Pearl Bannister had seen Howard so worked up. She knew that for years he had been questioning the truth of the story of Jesus Christ. She also knew that when he became convinced of the untruth of that story, if he did, there would be fireworks in All Souls. Yet she stood one hundred percent behind him. She knew that his love for God and the world was so strong that he would willingly go to his death for his religious convictions. She knew something else. She knew that her husband, if convinced that the Christian theory of God was not true, would never rest until he found where the truth really existed.

Mrs. Bannister worshipped her husband. Standing as he did, head and shoulders above the average run of ministers, she knew, or she very strongly suspected that something was about

to break. For years now Howard Bannister had spent most of his time studying the origin of religions. He had the greatest library in America covering comparative religions. And Mrs. Bannister knew, perhaps better than Howard himself, that a crisis was fast approaching in his life and affairs. And she was happy over it. She had great faith in her husband.

Kissing his tired head, she said, "Honey, I know there is nothing in the Christian religion which can stop the horrible carnage in the world today, but do you know what the answer to the God proposition really is?"

Here was a direct challenge to Howard Bannister. A very direct question. Getting out of the chair, Bannister walked over to the mantelpiece over the fire and leaned his arm on it. He did this when deep in thought.

"Yes, Pearl, I think I know what the answer is. In fact, I'm sure I know. When I give it to the world it will stagger the Christian religion—it will shock the world—but it will bring Hitler and Mussolini to their knees, along with other would-be world mutilators. It will stop once and for all the preaching of false gods and false conceptions of the true God and, when the true revelation of God is finally known, God and man will live together on this earth. There will be a peace so secure and so beautifully normal that wars, pestilences, sufferings, strikes, injustices just simply cannot be. The reason they cannot be is because God—the Invisible Spirit of God—shall be known in every life for what that Great Spirit is. And neither the blood of Jesus Christ nor the Cross of Jesus Christ nor any of the world's score of crucified saviours shall have anything to do with that day of eternal peace."

There were several minutes silence in that large living room as Dr. Bannister made this statement. Then, from the bedroom at the top of the stairs which led up from the living room, came a child's voice:

"Is that you, Daddy? You come up and kiss me good-night."

Throwing the switch which lighted the light at the head of the stairs, Bannister went up to little Margie's bedroom.

"You little tramp—what are you doing wide awake at this time of night?"

Bannister dropped to his knees beside the bed and putting his left arm around the sweet little thing's neck and cuddling her as tight as he could, he smothered her with kisses which Margie returned. Passionately fond of this child was Bannister.

"Honey, you're the sweetest thing Daddy knows—kiss me."
She did.

"But, honey, why are you not asleep? It's after ten o'clock and you're supposed to be asleep a long time ago."

"I waited for you to come home, Daddy, so that you could kiss me good-night, and then Mamma and you began to talk—and I listened, Daddy—should I have?"

"Why of course you should have listened. Your Daddy will never have anything to say to Mom that he can't say to you."

"Daddy. . . ."

"What?"

"I went to Sunday School today. I sang in the children's choir."

"Fine. Did you have a good time?"

"I had a lot of fun with Mrs. Campbell, the teacher, Daddy. I don't think she likes me any more."

"Why doesn't she like you, Marge—what tricks have you been up to?"

"I wasn't up to any tricks, Daddy, but she called me a little heathen and said I ought to be ashamed of myself."

"Well, what brought that conversation on? You must have said something which led up to it, didn't you?"

"Well, Daddy—Mrs. Campbell was telling us a story in class. She said that a long time ago God was walking around on this earth. And, Daddy, she said one day He met a lot of hungry people—five thousand of them. They didn't have a thing to eat, Daddy, and do you know what God did?"

"What?" said Bannister.

"Well, Daddy, God got ahold of two loaves of bread and a few little fish, about as big as sardines, Daddy, and he broke

them up into so many pieces that all these five thousand people were filled up, and then, Daddy, after God had done that, they had a lot of baskets of bread and sardines left over—a lot more than they had to start with, Daddy.”

Bannister hugged the little thing tight to him and smothered her face with kisses once more.

“Gee! I love you, Daddy. You’re the very best Daddy in the world and Mom is the very best Mom. Daddy, I’m in love with you—you’re my only sweetheart—except Mamma—aren’t you, Daddy?”

“Well, I’d better be. But tell me some more about Mrs. Campbell. What happened then to make her call you a little heathen?”

“Oh that— Well, Daddy, she told about God doing that and I couldn’t see how even God could have more fishes and bread left than he started with, so I said to Mrs. Campbell, ‘Mrs. Campbell, did God really do that or are you spoofing me?’”

“What did she say then?”

“Well, Daddy, she said it was in the Bible and everything in the Bible is true and if the Bible said God did that, he did do it. And, Daddy, I said something then which she didn’t like.”

“What did you say, sweetheart?” asked Bannister.

“I said that if that was really true and God did that, I was going to send it in to Ripley.”

A sad smile stole over Dr. Bannister’s handsome face, as, kissing little Marge once more, he said, “Well, suppose you go to sleep now and we’ll talk about sending in that story to Bob Ripley tomorrow.”

“Okay, Daddy. Have you another kiss for me?”

“Yes—I have a million for you if you want them, but you should be asleep, so I’ll kiss you once more and then I’ll send Mom up and I want you to shut those little peepers and go to sleep.”

Pearl Bannister kissed little Marge good-night and Bannister

extinguished the stairs light, leaving their beautiful child to go to sleep alone.

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In order to give little Margie a better chance to go to sleep, Dr. and Mrs. Bannister removed the remains of their coffee and salmon sandwiches into the small living room where Dr. Bannister related to his wife the conversation about the two loaves and the five small fish. Many a sermon had Bannister preached from that subject. Yet he had never believed it. And as he studied more and deeper into the history and structure of the world's eleven living systems of religion the more convinced did he become that instead of originating in the Realm of the Spirit of God, they might very easily have originated in the minds of earnest religious promoters. He was not quite sure yet that this was so. He was, however, seriously considering this probability. He rather hoped it was true. For then he could actually go to work and discover who and what God really is and where the truth of God really lies. If the truths of God are not to be found or revealed in any of the world's great religions of today or of yesterday then they must lie in the future. And he, Bannister, wanted to be the man who would bring those truths to the world.

He knew that once the true Power of the living Spirit of God was thrown into play against the mad, confused conditions existing in this world today, a new day would most assuredly come in. Bannister saw no chance of anything offered to the world today as being of God, ever saving the world from itself. He knew that what this world needs, what it is crying for, is not the church—it is God.

Why, it was only yesterday when he was preparing his sermon in his church study that he had received through the mail news that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, dedicating a new addition to St. Pauls Cathedral, had thrown up his hands in horror at the present war and stated to the whole

world: "*CHRISTIANITY IS A BLOODY RELIGION—IT HAS FAILED.*"

This statement, he recalled was broadcast over the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company by John B. Kennedy. He had heard it at the time, for Kennedy, in commenting on the statement, had opined—"I should like to know when and where Christianity has ever been tried."

He remembered saying to Mrs. Bannister at the time that he could tell John B. Kennedy where Christianity had been tried. "It has been tried for two thousand years in every country on the civilized globe," he had told his wife, "and still it has failed."

Asking Mrs. Bannister, "How about going into the kitchen and making some good coffee," her husband relapsed into thought again.

When the coffee arrived they sat at the dining room table drinking it, and finishing the remainder of the sandwiches.

"Honey, why don't you and Dr. Bowers take a couple of weeks off and go up to Rocky Point and fish?" asked the ever-thoughtful Mrs. Bannister. "You and Alfred always have such a good time together, and you might as well take your vacation before the summer heat starts."

"I think you're right—that would be a good idea. Do you suppose it's too late to call him tonight?"

"Maybe you had better call him in the morning—he might be asleep. It's nearly eleven o'clock now."

"O.K. You remind me to call him first thing in the morning."

"First thing in the morning I'll get out your fishing tackle, clothes and the rest of that stuff you take with you and if Alf Bowers can go, the two of you can have a good rest and you can talk over together the problems which you have on your mind, for if I know you, Bannie, you'll get together with Bowers anyhow and, before you get through, this world will either have a new conception of God, or All Souls will have another preacher."

Smilingly Dr. Bannister assented.

"Remember the last time you got my fishing togs ready? I asked you if you were absolutely positive you had them all?"

"Now, why bring that up? Of course I remember it. You got up to Rocky Point with everything except your high boots. I still believe you lost them out of the car," said Mrs. Bannister.

"Well, maybe I did, but someone must have found them and brought them back to the house, for they were here when I returned—so answer that one."

So it was decided that Dr. Bannister should go a-fishing.

Many good men have done that. And more of the true facts of life have been discovered with a fishing-pole in the hand than with a Bible—at least so said Bannister on his way down to Rocky Point the next day with Dr. Bowers, the organist.

CHAPTER THREE

BANNISTER SLEPT FITFULLY THAT NIGHT. Usually a sound sleeper, for some reason sleep did not come as quickly as it usually did. Perhaps the excitement about going to Rocky Point may have had something to do with it. At any rate, at five-thirty he was lying in bed awake.

Dr. Bannister had a combination bedroom-study on the ground floor of his home, just off the small living room and under the room where little Margie slept. As he lay there thinking, he heard two little feet paddling downstairs. They came across the small living room and stopped at his study-bedroom door. Then two little eyes peeked in to see if her Daddy was awake or asleep.

Seeing that he was wide awake, those two little feet, with the rest of little Margie, crept into bed beside her Daddy. This was almost a daily performance if her Daddy was awake, and he usually was, for he looked forward to these little love-fests with his ten-year-old daughter with as much anticipation as she did.

Hugging her Daddy, and smothering him with kisses and "big loves", Margie put her arms around his neck and crooked her knees up against her little body.

"Let's count pigs, Daddy," she said.

"Okay, but remember—the two big pigs are yours but the little pigs are all mine."

"No, the little pigs are mine and the big pigs are yours, Daddy."

Margie had a habit of hiding one little pig between the others and when her Daddy could only find four pigs on each foot, she was very happy and said, "One pig got lost, Daddy."

So the game of "pigs" started. Reaching down, Dr. Bannister caught little Margie's left foot.

"One—two—three—four—why, there's only four pigs on this foot! Where did the other one go to?"

"Count them again, Daddy."

"Okay. One—two—three—four—five—then over to the other foot—six—seven—eight—nine—ten. They're all here. Ten little pigs. The two big ones are yours and the eight little ones mine—is that it?"

Counting pigs continued for about ten minutes, and then:

"Tell me the story about the little man in the cocoanut, Daddy, will you? Pretty please."

"Well, listen, honey—I've told you that story about a thousand times. Why don't you see if you can tell it to me?"

"Okay, Daddy. I'll tell it to you. I don't want you to go fishing, Daddy."

"Never mind the fishing. Tell me the story about the little man in the cocoanut."

"All right, Daddy. Once upon a time there was a little man who lived in a cocoanut. This little man was about as big as my thumb. He lived in the middle of a big forest and in one end of his little cocoanut he had a little round door. The cocoanut had two rooms. One was a bedroom and had in it a little bed about two inches long. Then in the other room was a little kitchen, with a little chair, and teensy tiny little knives and forks. The little man had a little bitty stove and he cooked all his meals on it. He had lived in the cocoanut in the big forest a long, long time, Daddy.

"One day there was a great big black bear walking through the forest looking for something to eat. Soon he spied the cocoanut which had the little man inside it. Picking it up, he saw the little man eating his breakfast.

"'Hey, little man, you come out of there. I want to eat you up,' said the big black bear. 'I won't come out of here and you can't get in here,' said the little man.

"'Okay, then, I'll go away and get a big rock and I'll break

open the cocoanut and then when you run out, I'll catch you and eat you up,' said the big black bear, and he went away to find a big rock.

"While he was gone, the little man went out of the cocoanut and climbed a tree which stood just close by. Finally the little man saw the big black bear coming back again. 'Now I'll get you, little man,' said the big black bear, as he brought down the rock, smashing the cocoanut to pieces. But when he had broken the cocoanut open there wasn't any little man inside.

"Looking around, the bear scratched his head and said, 'Now I wonder where that little man went to.'

"Suddenly he heard the little man laughing at him from the top of a big pine tree that stood hard by.

"'Oh, there you are, little man,' said the big black bear. 'But I can climb a tree, too, so I'm coming up to catch you and then I'll eat you up.'

"Then the little man began to be afraid as he saw the big black bear climbing up the big tall tree. But there was a little blue-bird sitting away out on the end of a limb, so the little man went up to the blue-bird and said, 'Little blue-bird, there is a big black bear coming up the tree after me—he's going to eat me up—won't you fly away with me, please?'

"'Why of course, I'll fly away with you,' said the blue-bird. 'Just climb on my back and put your arms around my neck and hang on.'

"So the little man put his arms tight around the neck of the blue-bird and soon was flying away to another forest where he found another cocoanut and there he lived happy ever after."

"Did I tell that good, Daddy?" said little Margie.

"You certainly did, honey. You told it just as good as I can. But what do you say if you get up and get dressed and get the coffee on and the waffle iron heated so that Mom will have a surprise when she gets up?"

"Okay, Daddy."

And with that, and after giving her Daddy another kiss and hug, little Margie scrambled out of her Daddy's bed and upstairs to dress.

Soon Mrs. Bannister came downstairs and giving her husband the usual morning kiss and embrace, she said, "Don't forget to call Dr. Bowers, honey—remember—you're going to Rocky Point."

Returning the kiss and embrace, Dr. Bannister said, "All right. I'll call him after I have shaved and eaten. Margie has the coffee made already and the waffle iron hot. We'll have good strong coffee for a change this morning."

"Oh, you! I make good coffee, too," said Pearl Bannister.

"Well, maybe you call it good," said Dr. Bannister in good natured badinage.

"Now, Daddy, you stop arguing with Mamma," said little Marge, whereupon her Daddy lifted her high over his head and kissing her, said, "You little tramp, I'll fight with my own wife if I want to—you get out in the kitchen and help your Mom get breakfast."

"Okay, Daddy," and away into the kitchen she went.

Breakfast over, Mrs. Bannister went into the playroom and began to get her husband's fishing tackle together.

"Hadn't you better wait until I find out whether Dr. Bowers can go?"

"Oh, he can go—he wouldn't put off a trip to Rocky Point with you for a million dollars. But hadn't you better call him now—he should be up by this time?"

Bannister went to the desk phone in his bedroom-study and, lifting the telephone from its cradle called Dr. Bowers' number.

The call was soon completed and Dr. Bowers personally answered the telephone.

"This is Howard Bannister speaking. I'm all set for a couple of weeks fishing at Rocky Point. How would you like to join me, Alfred?"

"I'd like nothing better. Matter of fact, I'm all packed up

and waiting for you," replied Dr. Bowers over the phone.

"What do you mean you're all packed up and waiting for me—how come?"

"Well, you see, Howard, your wife and my wife evidently have had their heads together. And your wife told my wife and my wife told your wife that they each thought their husbands should spend a couple of weeks fishing at Rocky Point and, knowing how diplomatic and successful your wife is, I'm already packed. When do we leave?"

"Well, I'll be smothered! And I never even suspected anything like that going on. However—I can be on the road in an hour. I'll call for you and we'll leave from your house. I think I'll take the Cad and Rube can come along and do some fishing himself. The Missus loves to drive her car. Oh yes, tell Mrs. Bowers she has one up on me now, but tell her I'll even the score before long."

"What's that?" said Bannister in response to something Dr. Bowers said—"The women are always two jumps ahead of the men? Well, maybe—but we couldn't get along without them. All right, Alfred—see you in about an hour."

Mrs. Bannister was standing in the doorway of her husband's room, a big smile on her face. She was happy that her husband was going fishing for a couple of weeks.

"Think you're smart, don't you?" said Dr. Bannister as he gave her a dozen kisses. "Fixing this thing up in advance. Oh well, I'm glad you did, for I'm awfully tired."

"I know you are, honey. And I want you to go down there and if you can forget about All Souls Church it will do you good. Do your thinking. And, remember, your best works have been written at Rocky Point. I'll call you up every night and be sure you relax—won't you?"

"I'll do the best I can. I want to get this thing which is haunting me straightened out. Either God lives in this world now, as the most dynamic spiritual Power the world has ever known, or there is no God. And I am going to find the answer. I do not believe that Almighty God created this uni-

verse and then is allowing it to be turned over to Adolf Hitler or any other murdering despot. I believe God exists, Pearl, but I believe that religion—yes, religion, has made God of no effect through its traditions. I believe God can be found and the Power of God, I believe, can be called upon and used in this, the darkest hour humanity has ever seen. And if God can be found and I suspect He can, I'll find out just where God is to be found."

"You mean that you believe God exists as a dynamic Power entirely outside of anything the churches teach?" asked Mrs. Bannister.

"That is exactly what I mean," her husband replied. "God can't do anything else than exist here and now and it is perfectly obvious that if God does exist here and now the churches have not the slightest knowledge of that fact. The Blood or the Cross of Jesus Christ may be fine theories for the Christian church, but somehow or other I don't believe, after two thousand years of absolute failure, the Christian or any other religion has anything in it which can cope with world conditions today. It is going to take the actual Power of God, the Creator, to stop mad-man Hitler and his ilk. And let me tell you something else, too . . . if God exists and if God can so manifest his Power that peace can be brought to this earth, then every minister in the land is under a moral obligation to throw overboard the traditions of his church if needs be, in order that he might seek the true facts of God. That is what I am going to Rocky Point to do. A very much changed Howard Bannister may return from Rocky Point."

"Well, honey, I believe if any man can revolutionize religion you can. Not that you possess more ability than other ministers do, but the Spirit of God has always been a very vital part of your makeup. I wish you God-speed and good luck. I'll call Reuben and have him bring the Cadillac to the front door driveway and load it up."

A few minutes later the Cadillac was loaded and after kissing his wife and little Marge good-bye, Dr. Bannister, dressed

in old fishing clothes, was on his way to pick up his friend, Dr. Bowers.

They made a good team. The one was young, brilliant and a very firm believer in God. Like Bannister, he questioned all church theology—but he did have a supreme confidence in the actual existence of God here and now, right on this earth. This trip to Rocky Point was bound to bring forth material results which might very easily swing the world, not closer to the Cross of Jesus Christ, but closer to God.

One hour later, Dr. Bowers safely aboard, the big car was swinging through Pinole, then over the Carquinez Bridge and on to Fairfield. From there they took the Valley Highway through Corning and other towns along that highway, stopping at Redding for the night. It would have been an easy drive to have made Rocky Point that night, for it is only about four hundred fifty-six miles from Oakland.

This, however, was a restful pleasure trip and Dr. Bannister in his present frame of mind was not the one to go rushing madly through the cities, driving the whole distance in one day. He preferred to take it easy, making the trip in two days, instead of one.

After a good night's rest at the Redding Hotel and an equally good breakfast in the hotel coffee shop, Reuben having serviced the car, the trio started for Rocky Point early next morning.

Their route lay through Dunsmuir, Weed and finally Klamath Falls where they stayed overnight at the Willard Hotel. That night they visited Mrs. Bannister's sister and her husband who lived in the old Devitt homestead on Wilmer Avenue. Barney, as Mrs. Bannister's brother-in-law was called, was a prominent banker in that city. His wife was two years older than Mrs. Bannister.

After dinner at the old Devitt home, Barney invited the vacationing trio to a plunge in the swimming pool, and, after that, a game of tennis on the newly constructed court.

Reuben had taken the car to a service station for gasoline

and oil and, the evening being quite warm and pleasant, Barney, Hazel, his wife, and Dr. Bowers were sitting in the front yard of the Barnemann home. Dr. Bannister was in the house playing with Millie. Soon he appeared and took his place on the lawn with the rest of the party.

"What do you think about this war, Howard?" asked Barney.

"Howard doesn't want to talk war, Barney. He's on a vacation," said Hazel. "He preaches about war and religion every Sunday. Can't you give him a rest for a while?"

"Well, I only asked him what he thought about it. I'll bet he has ideas that I would like to listen to, and by golly, I'll bet he'll talk about it. How about it, Howard?"

"Well, the problem is complex, certainly. There seems to be no way out for us. We're something like Bowers was a moment ago when he dived from the springboard over at the far end of the tank. We haven't hit the water yet—we're not wet, but we have gone beyond the possibility of getting back onto the springboard. In other words, war seems to be inevitable for these United States of ours."

"Well, don't you think war would be right? Don't you think we ought to go to war to help Great Britain stop Hitler?" asked Hazel.

"Well, that's a question. I'm wondering if war ever can be right. I'm wondering if it ever can be right to use the same methods to stop a world disturber that he uses. For instance—Hitler is conquering Europe by brute force alone. He has built more flame-throwers, more Stuka dive-bombers, more submarines, and more tanks than the rest of the world combined has built. And he is using them with deadly effect. The rest of the world has desired and still desires to live in peace, the one nation with the other. And then, there comes into the picture a mad-man. There can be no question about Hitler being obsessed with an insane desire for world domination. But the point I would like have made clear is this—'can war

ever be right'? If it is wrong for Hitler to brutally murder his fellow human being by the atrocious methods he is using, can it be right for peace-loving nations to use the same methods to bring him to his knees?"

"Well, Howard, what other methods would you suggest using?" asked Barney. "Are there any other more effective methods—don't you think brute force should be met and conquered by brute force?"

"I'd hate to think that, Barney. If that should be a fact, and if Hitler can build bombers, flame-throwers, tanks and submarines at a greater rate of speed than the rest of the world can build them, then it is a simple mathematical problem that he will conquer the world. That mad-man has prepared long and well. He may conquer the world—no man alive can say with absolute assurance that he won't. The vicissitudes of war are very uncertain. Certain it is that no power or combination of powers to date has been able to stop him and the war is more than two years old now. Of course, if this world knows no power higher than the power of brute force, then by all means let us get into this war against Hitler and let us get in now. What I'm wondering, though, is, does there exist or does there not exist any power greater than the power of the bomb, the bullet, or the deadly torpedo. That is what I would like to know."

"Well, Howard, this world down through the ages never has known a power which can stop aggression, only the power of a greater aggressor," said Barney.

"No, there may be such a power, but certainly this world knows nothing about it," said Mrs. Barnemann. "Do you know of such a power, Howard?"

"Well, I'm not committing myself now. All I am saying is that if no higher power than the power of the bomber, the tank, the flame-thrower and the submarine exists, then this world is in an awful shape. Personally, I believe that there does exist a far greater power than brute force. But I'm just

talking among the family now, and not for publication. When I get ready to call the attention of the world to whatever greater power may be discovered, I'll let you know."

"Dr. Bannister, may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, Dr. Bowers—what is it?"

"Well, I can't conceive of Hitler getting away with what he is doing, at all. I believe the power of right is greater than the power of might. Hitler doesn't think so. He believes that might is all-powerful, but I think he is wrong."

"The theory that right is greater than might is a very nice platitude—but a very unsafe one, unless right is transformed into action. In other words, it would be the height of foolishness to rest the future of America on such a platitude if there were no medium through which what we call right can manifest. Do you see what I mean? The mere statement that in some way, somehow, at some time or other, right will bring might to its end, is a very unsafe stand to take. Until right has a medium through which it can manifest, and until and unless the superior power of the right is actually and literally thrown, in an active way, against the less potent and inferior power of might—do you see what I'm driving at?"

"Certainly we do. But how can such an ethereal intangible thing as 'right' be thrown against the physical thing called 'might'? What do you think about that, Howard?"

"Hazel—listen to me. Brute force is the manifestation of a human power and a human power alone. The power of right did not make those damnable tanks, nor can it manifest through them. This whole war is a materialistic manifestation of human power—the so-called power of might. Now then, where is the man or the organization which can throw against this material physical force a higher and therefore, a stronger force? And more than that—where is the evidence that a stronger power than brute force exists? I have been preaching to possibly the world's largest radio audience and certainly one of the largest audiences in any church in America, and I'm frank to admit to you that after fifteen years of this

preaching business I have yet to see the first faint manifestation of any power superior to the power of material force. I'm not saying that a higher power does not exist. I say it does. But I also say that I have never seen any actual manifestations of any such power, nor do I know of any preacher who has."

Barney pulled out and loaded his pipe.

Then, in his inimitable slow way he said, "Of course, Howard, we all know that religion is the bunk—if that's what you are talking about. No one but a sap pays any attention to a preacher—present company excluded, of course."

"I understand perfectly, Barney, and I agree with you. Religion—or what is masquerading as religion today—is the bunk, as you put it. There are eleven major systems of religion operating on this earth today. They have one billion, four hundred and sixty-seven million followers. They have a dozen different Bibles and this world has had a score of 'gods' who came down from heaven to save the world by the avenue of the cross. . . . And yet, not a single member of any of the world's eleven living religions—not a single priest, preacher or rabbi, can demonstrate any higher power than the physical material power of brute force. And you can put them all together and still they cannot do it."

"You mean to tell me that there were other gods which were supposed to be crucified before Jesus Christ?" asked Hazel.

"Of course. There were about thirty-five of them, according to religious tradition. As a matter of fact, the whole Christian story of Jesus Christ and every fundamental of the Christian religion existed in the religion of the Hindoo, fifteen hundred years before either Christ or the Christian religion were ever heard of.

"Virgin birth, crucifixion, atonement, resurrection, baptism—all these things are of heathen origin. Certainly there is nothing original, true, or unique about Christianity. And, more than that, if Christianity contained anything more than tradi-

tion, if it contained the slightest iota of Spiritual Power, is not this the time to use it?

"I repeat to you, Hazel, that if there exists no power which comes from a realm higher than the human realm, this world is hopelessly lost, and you and I had better get ready for the worst. Even if Hitler should be brought to his knees—what would that settle? We probably would have to fight to get rid of the domination of England.

"No—this business of meeting brute force with brute force is all right if no greater force is known. And that's exactly the condition of this world today."

Barney sat there puffing on his pipe.

Then, turning to his brother-in-law, he said, "I don't want to hurt your feelings, Howard, but you're a humdinger of a Methodist preacher!"

"That may be so, Barney—at least I'm honest. And how long I shall be a Methodist preacher is a question. I'm up here to think this whole matter through. . . . If it should be that I decide the whole structure of Christianity and the rest of the major systems of religion are humbugs, believe you me I'll tell the world that."

"I'll bet you will, and no foolin'," came back Barney.

Silence prevailed for a while.

Hazel went into the house and put Millie and Jack, the younger son, to bed, returning almost at once. She did not want to miss one word of this interesting discussion.

After she had returned, Dr. Bowers asked Dr. Bannister this question:

"Is there not a way out of this ghastly orgy of bloody murder without the use of the same horrible weapons Hitler is using?"

"Yes, Alf, there is a way out. There is always a way out of every problem which has ever confronted the world or any of its inhabitants. Listen to me for a moment—and I'm talking just between us, now. . . . Forget Howard Bannister,

the preacher, and listen to Howard Bannister, the fisherman . . . maybe I'll get a few big ones this trip."

At this point Barney suggested that the party adjourn into the house where the conversation could be continued.

They were all seated before the fire when Dr. Bannister again started the conversation.

"As I was saying,—there is a right way to solve every problem. It makes no difference whether it be mending a dress, digging a sewer, making a pie—there is a right way.

"One thing is necessary, though. One must be in earnest in his attempt to find the right way. You can't give the measles to anyone unless you have them yourself. What you say must be felt in your very soul—and in your search for the right way to solve any of life's problems, the way to solve them will become apparent. So let's not forget that, too—the right way will manifest itself. If sincerity of purpose and earnestness is manifest, the right way or the right solution will manifest itself automatically.

"There is another thought you fellows might get and that is that every problem has within itself its own solution. This applies to every problem. Barney should know that—he has had lots of problems and I'll wager that he has discovered this to be a fact. Every problem, even this ghastly war problem has, in itself, its own solution.

"Now let's go a little farther along this line of thought.

"We have seen so far that there is a right way. We saw next that the right way will manifest itself. Then, we said, every problem has in itself its own solution. Now, the fourth thought I want you to get is this:—the right way is always the best way. Remember that—the right way to solve any problem is always the best way. It is the quickest way, the most efficient way, and it will be found to be the most economical way. It may not be the easiest way, but the right way always is the best way.

"Then there is just one more thought along this line I should like you to understand. That is, man never creates the

right way—he merely discovers it. The right way is always self-existent with the problem.

“You will recall that some years ago the residents of Menlo Park tried to run Thomas Edison out of that city. They said he was crazy because he had a light in a bottle and did not use either coal oil or wick to get that light. So he must be crazy, they said.

“Now Edison did not create the electric light—he only discovered it. The principles of electric light existed long before Edison was born. He merely discovered those principles.

“But the world will never go back to tallow candles. It has found the electric light. When the need of the age was for electric light, a man by the name of Edison discovered it.

“This world is now confused. It is weary of war. It is sad. It is suffering as it has never suffered before. And there is nothing any system of theology can do about it. Therefore, and mark me well—some man will arise who will discover the solution to this war problem. He will discover that problem in the right way. And the right way will manifest itself. For, in the problem of this world calamity, right at the very heart of it, lies the answer. And that answer is the right answer. And man must, at this dark stage of human suffering, discover the answer to that problem. This will be done. Every religious tradition the world has ever known may have to be thrown out of the window first, but the actual truths of God, which contain the answer to every problem, will very shortly be discovered.

“These fair United States of ours may have to go through a period of intense suffering before the answer to this horror of war becomes known, but the day will come in which this land will be so in earnest to find the true answer that, even though every system of religion on the face of the earth has to be discredited, the right way will be found.

“I’m not preaching now, Barney. I’m merely thinking out loud. Something may come of it—who knows?

“This war is not an accident. As a matter of fact it had to

be. This old world has been without the Power of God since it was created. It has had systems of religion, many of them, and it still has them. But this world has never known God and with the Power of God absolutely undiscovered, of course this war had to come. Sooner or later some man had to manifest who believed that by brute force alone he could conquer the world. This is because there is none of the Spirit of God in the world. What the man's name is, or who he may be is quite beside the point. He might just as easily have been Herr von Beerkeg or the Count of Spaghetti-macaroni. The identity of the man means nothing at all. What I am trying to say is that in a Godless world such as this, it was inevitable that some man should manifest who would seek to defy God and rule the world without God.

"What a mistake that man is making will become evident before this world war is over. There must come, however, the actual and literal Power of God. This Power will have to supplant the religious theories and traditions of God rampant in the earth today. For one thing is quite sure. This world does not know God. It never has known God because no man has yet discovered who and what God is. That problem will have to be solved soon. If it is not, Hitler will rule the world.

"What we call religion, with all due respect to it, is as powerless to stop crime, war, murder, and so on, as a wax bill is on a woodpecker. Let me repeat, Barney, what I am convinced is the truth—all we have on this earth today are systems of religion. They are all man-made or church-made. Not one of them has even the faintest conception of the Power of God. They are nothing more nor less than old traditions trying vainly to answer the problems that confront this sorry world today. And they cannot do this . . . they have no power with which they can do it. Tradition won't help . . . church theories won't help. It will take the absolute, vital, living transcendent Power which is God. You see what I mean?"

"Sure do, Howard, but I'm afraid you have your work cut out if you're going to oppose organized religion."

"Barney, I'm not going to oppose organized religion. I am, however, going to tell the American people and the whole world for that matter, the truth about what organized religion really is. In addition to that, I'm going to demonstrate the Power of God in human lives on this earth. And then, at the proper moment, I'm going to get together a group of people who believe that God exists here and now and together we are going to use the Power of God against Hitler and we are going to bring him to his knees . . . do you think that can be done?"

"Well, if anyone can do it, Howard, you can. And I sure hope you succeed. I think you're on the right track. Say, Howard, I sure was interested in what you said about Thomas Edison. I didn't know they called him crazy."

"Well, they did, Hazel, and that was only history repeating itself. Why, do you know that school children on their way to school were made to detour round the block in which Edison lived? They said he was in tune with the devil and might snatch these little children and take them with him to hell. Yes. And let me tell you something else—a big New York newspaper sent a reporter to Menlo Park to interview this mad-man who had a light in a bottle without coal oil or tallow or wick. Well, after the interview, this reporter was sold on the idea that Edison really had something. So he returned to New York and wrote a feature article about his interview. He made the statement in that article that it wouldn't be very long now until the whole state of New York could have all the light it wanted, merely by pushing a button. The newspaper fired him for writing the story."

"Well, I'll be doggoned!" said Barney. "What do you know about that?"

"As I said, though, that was only history repeating itself. Whenever a man makes a new discovery, whether in the realm

of science or religion, that man will be ridiculed, persecuted and perhaps murdered . . . many of them have been.

"And the strange thing about that is this:—if the discovery is made in the realm of religion, the church, the institution which claims to represent God on this earth, is the very institution which does the persecuting. This, of course, is absolute proof that its own theories of God cannot be true. If they were, it certainly would not be afraid of a new discovery just because someone else made it. But if they know that their traditions and theories won't stand the light of an investigation, why of course they object. But the man who is in earnest in his efforts to find the real truths of God does not need to fear the persecutions of anyone. If his discoveries be of God nothing anyone can do can hinder them. If they be not of God they will fall by the weight of their own error, just as religion is falling today.

"The other day I heard a radio dispatch from Rome stating that, according to the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, the priests had gone out and sprinkled every apartment house in Rome with holy water, whatever that may be. Then, a little later, another bunch of priests went out and took up a collection from these apartment house owners. Now that may all be in accordance with the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, but I fail to see the connection between that performance and stopping Hitler by the Power of God. If it was a good thing to sprinkle these apartment houses with water, holy or unholy, then why not have these priests go out to the city water supply, mumble some Latin jargon over it and then call out the fire department and have it squirt water over every building in the city? Nothing wrong with the logic in that, is there? Water is water. It came direct from the Creator of this universe millions and millions of years ago. And the saying of anything over that water does not make it either holy or unholy. It is H_2O and all the priests in the world cannot change that chemical combination, can they?"

"They sure can't," said Bowers. "But, of course, that is only Roman Catholic tradition, as you know."

"That may be. It is. But the Pope of Rome says he is the only one authorized to act and teach for God. I heard that statement made direct from Rome not so long ago. Now if that utterance is true, then why cannot the Pope, through the Power of God, bring Hitler to his knees? He can't, and you know he can't. The whole thing is a rotten religious superstition, masquerading as an instrument of God. And as long as that sort of thing exists, and as long as supposedly intelligent men and women believe such tommy-rot, they cannot possibly know God. You see, they are worshipping an idol. And the Christian church is the organization which has provided that idol—you see what I mean?"

This was a kind of talk they had not been used to. Yet everyone of them instinctively knew it was true.

Continuing, Howard Bannister said:—

"In the year 1564 another 'unorthodox' was born in Pisa, Italy. Entering the University of Pisa in 1581, he was two years later struck with the fact that the oscillations of a pendulum seemed to be accomplished in equal time. About this time he invented a hydrostatic balance and wrote a treatise on the specific gravity of solid bodies. These achievements won for him the appointment of professor of mathematics in the University of Pisa, where he propounded the novel theorem that all falling bodies, great or small, descend with equal velocity. He proved its correctness by several experiments made from the summit of the leaning Tower of Pisa. He was, therefore, 'unorthodox' and by his 'heretical imaginations' incurred the wrath of the Aristotelians. He was forced to resign his chair at Pisa and returned to Florence in 1591.

"In the following year he was nominated to the chair of mathematics in the University of Padua, where his lectures attracted crowds of pupils from all parts of Europe. Here he taught and worked from 1592 until 1610. Then he began a series of astronomical investigations, all of which tended to

convince him still more of the correctness of the Copernican heliocentric theory of the heavens. He concluded that the moon, instead of being a self-luminous and perfectly smooth sphere, owed her illumination to reflection and that she presented an unequal surface, diversified by valleys and mountains.

"The Milky Way he pronounced to be a path of trackless stars, countless in number, yet each separate.

"He also advocated the theory, since proven true, that the earth revolves around the sun. But this was contrary to 'orthodoxy' so this 'unorthodox doubter' was hauled before the ecclesiastical authorities. He was questioned at length on his statement that the earth revolves around the sun. He stood fast and defended his theory. But 'holy hands' pointed to their 'bible'. They stopped at the place where it states that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and tried to convince Galileo that 'holy writ' said the sun moved or Joshua would not have been commanded to make it stand still.

"Then, as usual with the 'unorthodox', followed persecution and incarceration in prison. The 'holy fathers' of the church commanded him to abjure and recant his scientific creed which, they said, 'is contrary to holy writ'. Threatened with death, Galileo, then an old man, made a verbal recantation, but as he was leaving this 'holy inquisition' he muttered, 'But the earth does move round the sun just the same'.

"As a result of the independent thinking and the 'unorthodoxy' of Galileo, we have the telescope which has borne out the 'theories' of this 'heretic'.

"In 1462 another 'unorthodox' was born. Also in Italy. Savonarola, a reformer of the orthodox, began his public ministry in 1482, creating much attention on account of his brutal frankness in dealing with the superstitions of the Roman Catholic Church of which he was a member.

"In 1493 a reform on the Dominican Order in Tuscany was proposed under his auspices and was approved by the Pope, Savonarola, being the first named vicar-general. In the mean-

time, the violence of his denunciations against the church increased and the displeasure of the 'holy men of God' was incurred. He was cited in 1495 to answer a charge of heresy. He was thus 'unorthodox'. He did not believe what the crowd believed, choosing to think and reason for himself, as every man under God's heaven should do.

"Then bribery was tried in an effort to restrain Savonarola from fighting for the God-inspired truths he knew were truths. The 'church' offered him a cardinal's hat if he would only remain 'orthodox' and not 'doubt', but the hat was refused, Savonarola choosing to refuse to follow the dictates of the 'holy men' and the 'holy church'.

"Instead, he chose to examine the foundation of the 'faith'. He chose to follow the heavenly Light he had seen, even though it led him away from the flesh-pots of contentment, through the dead sea of his cherished hopes, and over the arid desert of disappointment. He chose to follow, though sick at heart, as all 'unorthodox pioneers' get, that Light, even though his friends forsook him and his enemies made war upon him. He, being truly a 'doubter', chose to fight through famines of doubt and pestilences of despair.

"Carefully, cheerfully, did Savonarola follow the light of his own reason, for he knew that only thus could he reach the promised land of truth. Then came the end. The bitter end. On May 23rd, 1498, with Brothers Domenico and Silvestro, as a reward for his 'heresy', his 'unorthodoxy', his 'doubting', Savonarola was half strangled by the Roman Catholic church, and in that half-strangled condition, was burned alive at the stake. But he reached the pinnacle. There, high up where all can see, *TRUTH*, as Savonarola saw it, ever blazes forth. But he paid the price of his 'unorthodoxy'.

"About four hundred years ago, John Calvin, the founder of what is now known as Presbyterianism, ordered brutally put to death one Dr. Michael Servetus for making a public statement of mathematics, the truth of which every school-boy knows today.

"Calvinism claimed that three can be one and one can be three. The most obtuse scholar knows full well that three cannot be one nor can one be three. But the holy hands of Calvin searched the 'scriptures' and there they found that, according to those 'scriptures', Almighty God, the infinite Creator of this universe, was three and one both at the same time. Regardless of the correctness of the assertion, regardless of its scientific truth or error, the 'scriptures' stated that three could be one and one could be three.

"So sure was Dr. Servetus that three could not be one, and one could not be three, that he wrote a treatise against this impossible theory of God. Then, once more, 'holy hands' were laid upon Dr. Servetus and his life, too, was declared forfeit because he had chosen to disagree with the 'orthodox'.

"They burned him alive, in the name of God, I suppose, at the stake, on orders of John Calvin, the founder of Presbyterianism.

"Later a monument was erected to Servetus. But no number of monuments could cause the life-blood to flow once more through his veins. No amount of sorrow could restore that God-illuminated intellect, killed because, illumined by the True Light which is ever-existent, he followed that Light. His name is written in gold in history's scroll of martyrs who gave their lives for the *TRUTH*."

* * *

The lights of the Cadillac were visible through the window and the horn honked.

"Well, guess we'll be going, Barney and Hazel—see you before we leave. If you get a chance, come up to Rocky Point and we'll see what we can do."

CHAPTER FOUR

ROCKY POINT IS KNOWN to fishermen all over America. Situated on the west side of Klamath Lake, about thirty miles from Klamath Falls, its sheer beauty of natural environment stuns one when first seen. The road leading to the Point is a mountain trail, hardly worth the name road. It winds and meanders through tall yellow pines. The whole area is one of indescribable beauty.

The Point itself is a beauty spot. From the first faintest glow of the morn until late eve, the air is literally filled with the sounds of wild life. The United States Biological Survey says there are more different kinds of wild bird life at Rocky Point than at any other place in the United States.

It's a sort of a cove, back a little ways from the Lake itself. A sheltered inlet, I suppose one would call it. Its shores are dotted with summer cabins and the verdure is magnificent. Quaking aspens, shimmering willows, pines, spruce, mesquite—in fact, a variety of natural splendor hard to describe.

There are about sixteen cabins there, a general store which is also the Post Office. A few fox farms surround the Point, the main one being run by Jack Fallon, a one hundred percent Irishman, down to the last brogue.

For several years Dr. Bannister and Alfred Bowers had spent their summer vacation in this spot of unmatched beauty. They occupied the cabin on the hill. There was always a mad scramble for that cabin, for it is the only cabin with running water and toilet facilities in it. It also boasts a mosquito gun, a very necessary implement of protection. Mosquitoes there are about three feet long—or they seem that long, sometimes.

The cabins and the store and dining room are in a little hollow among the pines and directly on the shores of the

inlet. A boat-house is there and boats, bait, fishing tackle may be either bought or rented. Nels Nelson and Reuben Norling soon became fast friends, both being Scandinavians. One a Swede and the other a Norwegian.

They were joking one day with Dr. Bannister on the wharf.

"Well, that's a funny thing—a Swede and a Norwegian chinning together like old friends," said Bannister.

"Yah," said Nels, the Swede boatman, "Ay tank Ay talk wit Norwegian ef nobody see me—can't be too particular out in the sticks. Yah."

Turning to him, Reuben said in perfect Norwegian slang, "Yah, now that we lost our contry, we get all the Swedes and make Norwegians out of dem."

It was good natured repartee and it kept up the whole two weeks the party was there.

Art Devitt, Mrs. Bannister's brother, was manager of Rocky Point. He had held that position for more than twenty years and was nearly as famous a landmark as Rocky Point itself.

Art came out to greet the new arrivals.

They shook hands all around.

"Cabin on the hill ready, Art?" asked Bannister.

"All ready, Bannie. Got your wire yesterday. I've got a cabin for Norling next door to Nels—they might want to discuss Hitler of an evening."

This brought a smile from Reuben, who said, "Well, I don't mind too much living in the next cabin to a Swede, just so long as you don't ask me to sleep with one."

Then he got busy carrying the grips into the cabin on the hill.

Art followed them in.

"Doc Himon's coming up next month, Howard. Have you see him lately?"

"Yes, he was at All Souls with his wife a few Sundays ago . . . told me he'd be here a bit later. Said he was going to spend the summer in Medford on the pear orchard."

"I like Doc Himon. He was a good friend of the Devitt family, certainly."

"How are Bobbie and little Alfred, Art?"

"Just fine, Howard. Winnie, too—she's fine. She went to Klamath Falls this morning to get some grub to feed youse guys—she knows your appetites."

"I thought we passed her on the road. Some lady waved at us, but it was so dusty we couldn't recognize her. Are they catching many, Art?"

"Well, there were about forty groups up here Sunday and they all caught the limit."

"What are they using, Art?" asked Dr. Bowers.

"Oh, some use a Doc Shelton, some an Andy Reeker, and some a Wilson Wobbler. Don't seem to make much difference what you use, Doc. If the fish are biting, they're biting, and if they're not biting, they're not biting, and all hell won't make 'em bite when they don't want to," said Art knowingly.

"You always seem to get your share, though, Howard. Let's see, how many times did you make the board last year—three, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Art. I made the 'big fish' board three times and the year before last I made the record catch of the season. You were with me. Remember that?"

"Sure do, Bannie. Twenty-seven inches long and weighed seventeen pounds. Took us about an hour to get that son-of-a-gun into the boat."

"He sure put up a fight. Jack Fallon still round here, Art?"

"Yes, Jack's still here. Fox pelts are low and Jack's sort of down in the mouth. He says that the fox business won't be any good till the war's over and the Lord only knows when that will be. Says women aren't buying luxuries these days."

"Well, that's too bad for Jack. Maybe he'll have to go to work if the fox business blows up. He's a heck of a fine fellow, though, Jack Fallon is. I've always liked him."

"I think there's some mail for you over at the store. Shall I send Bobbie over with it?"

"No, Art, we'll get it after a while—nothing important, I guess. Very few people know where I am and I want to forget

preaching and everything else while I'm up here—just want to think, Art—think. Maybe I can think out a solution to this war proposition.”

“Well, by gad, Howard, it's about time someone got down to brass tacks. If this guy, Hitler, aint stopped and stopped soon, he'll be over here polluting these lake trout and I'd hate to see that happen. He sure is a genius, though—fourteen countries he's got already, and it don't look like he's going to be stopped right away. Damned if I know what'll happen, Howard—don't look too good.”

“Well, I wouldn't worry too much if I were you, Art. This isn't the first time some mad-man has attempted to take the running of this universe out of the hands of the Creator. He'll come to his end, and perhaps in a most unexpected manner. Take that as the truth. We may have to go through hell and high water first, but Hitler has the seeds of destruction in his own philosophy. He may raise Cain for a while—in fact, he is doing just that, but, Art, the philosophy of conquest by the sword usually ends in the destruction of the would-be conqueror by the sword. It always has worked out that way and perhaps it will again.”

“Well, but Doc,” said Art Devitt, “there never was a man who has made as successful an attempt to rule the world as Hitler, was there?”

“Oh lots of them, Art. Got a minute, or are you in a terrible hurry?”

“Lots of time, Howard. Nels is at the store gabbing with Rube. I sure would like to get your reaction to this mess. Say—last Sunday your radio hour was a peach. You didn't mind telling the truth that day. Boy! I said to Winnie, ‘I'll bet the Bishop gets after Howard for that sermon’.”

Bannister smiled.

“Art, the Bishop doesn't mean very much to me. Fortunately, I'm not interested in either the Bishop or my Board of Trustees. I'll preach the truth as I see it and if the Bishop or the Board of Trustees don't like it, they can get someone

else. There's altogether too much crucifying of the truth these days and I'll never do it, Art. Only the truth can save this God-forsaken world from destruction—and no one seems to know what truth really is."

"Tell me about those other Hitlers, Howard—that is, if you feel like talking."

"Well, Art, this state of world affairs is not new. Its ruthlessness and brutality have never before been witnessed so far as we have history. But a study of the history of the past few thousands of years discloses that in this world calamity, history is but repeating itself. The instruments of destruction are far more perfect now than they ever were. Human beings can be slaughtered faster now than in any other age. But the spirit of destruction and personal power behind this mad scene is not new. It is something this world has witnessed many times before.

"Go back, if you will, to ancient Chaldea, supposedly about thirty-eight hundred years before the time of the Christian era. There came one Sargon of the Arcadians, a Semitic king of Agade, one of the early cities of that day. He was the first organizer of the people who inhabited the Chaldean plains.

"While not in an accepted sense a warrior, he did subdue the people and bring into existence a rule of authority. His rule of authority. He has been called the Chaldean Solomon. He had dreams of world conquest.

"About 2290 B.C. there came a king named Kudur-Nakhunta. He overran Chaldea, took all the cities founded by Sargon and his successors. From the temples he bore off in triumph to his palace, Susa, the statutes of the Chaldean gods, and set up a dynasty which was known as the Elamite dynasty.

"Then, in about 625 B.C., came one Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, whose oppressive wars rendered Babylon the scourge of the ancient world. Jerusalem, the traditional city of many systems of religion, was taken and wrecked. Vessels of silver and gold were stripped from the temples and carried away to Babylon. Then the temples were burned.

"We see here, then, away back in history, the same consuming spirit of destruction before which now, we of the 'civilized' portion of this world stand aghast and in horror.

"After having subdued Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar pushed on and subdued and besieged the ancient city of Tyre, whose investment had been commenced many years before. Christians can look at Ezekiel 29; 18, and there they will read, 'Every head was made bald, every shoulder was peeled'. The siege of Tyre lasted some fourteen years, and the authority of Nebuchadnezzar was unchallenged in the Mediterranean, where the present conflict seems also to be centering.

"War after war bathed these lands of Chaldea and the Mediterranean area with blood. Then came another would-be world conqueror. His name was Alexander. It would be beside the point, Art, to give you in detail the conquests of this pseudo-Hitler. Suffice it to say that his ambitions then were equally as great as are the ambitions of the present German monstrosity.

"Alexander started in young, for he was only twenty years of age when he ascended his father's throne. He was somewhat jealous of his conquering father, for he said, when news of his father's victories came to him, 'Friends, my father will possess himself of everything and leave nothing for us'.

"The difference between these past would-be conquerors and despots is nil. The present monster, Hitler, intends to conquer the entire world. They did, too, only the world as they knew it was not as large as the world we know. The intent was the same. Their ambitions were the same. The same spirit of hate, war, death, and destruction was deeply imbedded in their natures.

"After conquering Egypt, Alexander turned his avaricious eyes to the Persian capital. He received offers of 'appeasement' from King Darius, to which he replied, 'There cannot be two suns in the same heaven'. So, pushing on, he crossed the Euphrates and the Tigris with little opposition. On the plains of Arbela, however, he found Darius with a huge army. This

battle was one of the most decisive in history. It marked the end of a long struggle between the East and the West, between Persia and Greece, and prepared the way for Hellenic civilization over all Western Asia.

"Then to India went Alexander. With the countries north of the Kush subdued and settled, Alexander crossed the mountains again and led his army down upon the rich and crowded plains of India. This was about 325 B.C.

"I shall omit further conquests of this despot, Alexander, for, like his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, he came to his end. All that can be said of his conquests is that they, to fill an insane and inhuman desire for world power, bathed the earth in blood, misery, horror and destruction.

"The same mad desires are doing the same thing today. Ever since the human race began, history reveals one mad conquest for world domination after another. They all left a trail of human blood behind them. They all tried to conquer the world. And they all failed, exactly as Hitler will fail. However, they all did what Hitler is doing—they counted human life as of little cost in order to prosecute their mad campaigns and satisfy their lust for personal power and dominion.

"Then came Charlemagne. This fellow reigned for about half a century and his entire regime was filled with military expeditions and conquests. So extended were the boundaries of his dominions that at his death they embraced the larger part of Western Europe. He made fifty-two campaigns, the chief of which were against the Lombards, the Saracens and the Saxons. He crossed the Pyrenees and succeeded in wresting from the Moslems all the northeastern corner of the peninsula.

"There was one event of real moment in the career of Charlemagne. Its influence upon succeeding affairs was very great. Pope Leo the Third, having called upon Charlemagne for aid against a hostile faction in Rome, the king soon appeared in person at the capital and punished summarily the disturbers of the peace of the church. Here we have the

Roman Pope calling in a despotic leader to help in subduing those who did not feel like agreeing with the religion of the Pope.

"It is pertinent to these statements of mine to note that religion, in some form or other, was at the very core of every set of circumstances which surrounded every would-be 'world-dictator'. It was the cause of the recent Spanish revolution. It is the cause of the present struggle now going on throughout the world. Religion has always been in the very middle of every major world calamity we have record of.

"Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, recently proposed a prayer for all Germans.

"Listen to this: *'ALMIGHTY GOD: YOU GAVE US THE FUEHRER. YOU BLESSED HIS BATTLES WITH VAST VICTORY. YOU GAVE HIM POWER TO CREATE AND DEFEND A NEW, GREAT, FREE GERMANY. NOW GIVE US POWER TO HELP HIM TO THE LIMIT OF OUR ABILITIES BY FIGHTING AND WORKING FOR AN EVERLASTING AND BEAUTIFUL GERMANY AND GRANT THAT WE MAY BE WORTHY OF YOUR BLESSINGS.'*

"Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Cyrus, Napoleon, Charlemagne, Ghenghis Khan, and Hitler—they all have called upon God to sustain and give them victory. Those who believe not in conquest by the sword, also call upon God to stop the wars. Those who are fighting oppression and aggression, they, too, call upon God for help. Thus, we have religion at the core of all earth's mad conquests. We have the Roman Pope calling on a despot for the use of his arms.

"Remember Julius Caesar and his conquests of Gaul and Britain. He, too, revolved in his mind plans for seizing supreme world power. Beyond the Alps he saw the Gallic and Germanic tribes in restless movement. He saw there a grand theatre for his military exploits which, he thought, would give him prestige and glory.

"In his campaigns in Gaul, Caesar had subjugated three

hundred tribes and captured eight hundred cities. In addition to that, he had murdered over one million human beings—one-third of the entire population of that country. He had taken another one-third prisoner. *'LET THE ALPS NOW SINK'*, exclaimed Cicero, *'the gods raised them to shelter Italy from the barbarians; they are now no longer needed.'*

"The most important result of the Gallic wars was the Romanizing of Gaul. The conquered country was opened to Roman traders and settlers who carried with them the language, customs and arts of Italy. (An interesting side-light on Italy at the present time is the fact that the present Pope, according to an Associated Press dispatch, filed recently, called upon his followers to stand behind old Musso and his armies. This once more demonstrates religion in the very midst of the present catastrophe in Europe. Rudolf Hess giving the German people a prayer to pray for their victory and the Pope of Rome calling upon his followers to stand by old 'back-stabber' Mussolini.)

"Art, let us look briefly at the military despotism of Napoleon. This is more recent. About 1796 to 1810 A.D. Napoleon was master of France. The first French Republic was at an end. What we know as the French revolution was over. History was then made. This surprising career of Napoleon, the sun of which rose so brightly at Austerlitz and set forever at Waterloo.

"One long bloody reign of conquest and terror. The same insane ambition for world power. The same ruthless disregard for human life. (It was ended and he was defeated by a snowflake.)

"Neither Austria nor England would acknowledge the government of the First Consul as legitimate. In their view Napoleon was a young upstart. He was a fortunate usurper. The throne of France belonged, *BY VIRTUE OF DIVINE RIGHT*, to the House of Bourbon. (Here we see 'divinity' or 'God' entering the picture again.)

"So Napoleon mustered his soldiers. His plan was to deal

Austria, his worst continental enemy, a double blow. A large army was collected on the Rhine for an invasion of Germany. This was intrusted to Moreau. Another, intended to operate against the Austrians in Italy, was gathered at the foot of the Alps. Napoleon himself assumed command of this latter force.

"In the spring of 1800 Napoleon made his memorable passage of the Alps and astonished the Austrian generals by suddenly appearing with an army of forty thousand men on the plains of Italy. Upon the renowned field of Marengo, the Austrian army, which outnumbered that of the French three to one, was completely overwhelmed and Italy lay for a second time at the feet of Napoleon. This on June the 14th, 1800.

"In 1802 Napoleon was made Consul of France for life. This, as a reward for his vast services to France and also that he might put his magnificent schemes of reform (a new order in Europe) into effect. He was also given the right to name his successor. Hitler has that same right.

"All was not easy sailing for despot Napoleon, however. From his coronation in 1804 until his final and inevitable downfall in 1815, a tremendous struggle went on almost without intermission. It was a war of the giants. Europe was shaken from end to end by such armies as the world had not seen to date, or since the days of Xerxes.

"Napoleon, whose hands were upheld by a score of distinguished generals and marshals, performed the miracle of genius. His brilliant achievements still dazzle, while they amaze the whole world.

"Recently Adolf went to the tomb of Napoleon and ordered the casket to be tilted so that all may see it from the surrounding balcony. Perhaps Adolf was thinking of the day, soon to come, when he, too, shall lie cold and clammy under the sod. Unquestionably a big memorial tomb will be erected to 'honor' his name. But, inevitably, the moving finger of time and God writes and then moves on. As Gray wrote: 'The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power and all that beauty, all

that wealth 'ere gave, await alike the inevitable hour; the paths of glory [?] lead but to the grave'.

"It is pertinent here, Art, to note that Napoleon, too, called upon God Almighty to give him assistance in his despotic, devilish, cruel and brutal performances. And this brings us religion once more at the very core of the Napoleonic wars, in fact, of the whole life of Napoleon.

"His was a life, like Hitler's, which believed that God Almighty was the impelling power, the strength-giver in his mad, inhuman destruction of an empire and of countless thousands of human souls. Religion again in the midst of war.

"Perhaps the greatest despot of them all up to the present time was Ghenghis Khan. He held more of what he conquered than did the rest of his ilk. He was the arch-murderer of all murderers. Had he had the implements of warfare with their diabolical skill, that are being used today, he would have conquered the then known world.

"He was born in the year 1156. His real name was Temujin, and he was a fierce and utterly untamed Tartar. He was chief of the Chinese Tartars. 'Universal Sovereign' he was called. At the head of vast armies made up of murderous Turanian hordes, he traversed with the sword and torch a great part of Asia. Unquestionably he was the greatest scourge ever inflicted upon the human race. (The present one excepted.)

"It is estimated that his enormous empire was built up at a cost of fifty thousand cities and towns and five million lives—a greater destruction, probably, then resulted from all the Crusades.

"But, with unerring surety, he came to his end and was planted below the surface of the earth in due time. Better had he not been born. But he had successors who still further embraced, enlarged and strengthened his territory and monarchy, so that it finally embraced the best part of Asia and a considerable portion of Europe as well.

"The empire founded by Ghenghis Khan, Art, soon fell into disorder.

"But it was restored later by Tammerlane, or Timour the Lame, about 1336 A.D. This tyrant, with his wild Mongolian hordes traversed anew almost all the countries made desolate by the bloody marches of his predecessors. The route of these barbarians was everywhere marked by ruined fields, human destruction and misery, just as the barbarian of today is leaving in his wake.

"The only difference between Hitler and these other world despots lies in the fact that the instruments of murder are so much more horrible now than they ever were. The human race might very easily be destroyed, Art. Or, shall I say the peace-loving peoples may be.

"The only point I am trying to make here, Art, is that as far back as we have any history, there has always been some mad-man to arise who believed he could conquer the world by brute force. Never, however, has this world faced a more dangerous crisis than it is facing now. I don't know, Art, but I believe there is a solution. I believe the manifestation of Hitler with the present danger to freedom-loving men and women will automatically force a manifestation of a greater spiritual power than this world has known to date. I see no hope otherwise. I cannot see any single nation, or any combination of nations beating the huge military machine Hitler has built. Yet I believe he can be brought to his end without the firing of a single American shot, or the shedding of the blood of one American boy."

This interesting discussion was ended by the ringing of the dinner bell.

"Jesus Christopher!" said Art. "Noon already—have we been here gabbing two hours? Well, I'll be a son-of-a-gun!"

After a wash, the two San Francisco guests filed into the dining room which is perched upon a rocky knoll, or point, directly over the water. Few meals are as tasty as those served at Rocky Point and all hands fell to with a gusto which bespake good appetites to say the least.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS THE END OF THE MEAL, Art came out and sat at the table with his brother-in-law and Dr. Bowers. Putting his arm affectionately round the shoulders of Dr. Bannister, he said, "Going out fishing this afternoon, Howard, or do you want to sleep for a while?"

"Well, it's a beautiful day, not too hot. I believe we'll go out and see what luck—what do you say, Alfred?"

Being perfectly agreeable to Dr. Bowers, Art said, "Okay, then. Nels will have your boat ready. Same one you always use. Got a new Seahorse motor in it this year. Had it all painted up, too. I'll go down and tell him to get an extra gallon of gas, a gaff-hook and some new plugs I want you to try out."

"Okay. We'll be right down as soon as we go to the cabin and get our poles. I believe I'll stick by the Andy Reeker—always have pretty good luck with that, Art. That was the lure you and I were using when we took that big one a couple of years ago."

"I like the Wilson Wobbler," said Bowers. "It gets all twisted up every once in a while, but I seem to have more luck with that than with any other lure."

"What are the new plugs you want me to try, Art?" said Bannister.

"Oh, they's some sort of shindig the bait company wants me to try out. Looks like a frog—has luminous paint on it. There was a preacher here from Modesto last week and he had some pretty good luck with them. You don't have to use them, though, not if you don't want to. As I said in the cabin, if the fish are biting, they're biting, and if they're not biting,

they're not biting, and when they ain't biting you can use all the lure you want to and still they won't bite."

Getting their poles, spinners, et cetera, together, Bannister and Bowers made their way down to the dock. Nels already had the boat's motor warming up and had an extra gallon of gas in the rear compartment on the right of the boat. On the left was another compartment where the fish were placed—if they caught any.

"Ay tank maybe you get some purty good fissing today, Howard," said the inimitable Nels. "It ain't too hot and it ain't too cold and if you go up by the mouth of Crystal Creek, Ay tank maybe you do purty good—some purty big fiss been coming out of there last few days. But you know this lake as well as I know 'em, guess Ay don'd need to tell you where to go. All set?— Okay, sit down and I'll give you a shove."

They began to let out their one hundred and fifty feet of line as they passed the old spring and pump-house. Before they had been gone ten minutes Dr. Bowers felt a good big tug at his line.

Stopping the motor, Bannister reeled in his line. He was too good a fisherman to tell Bowers how to handle his catch. Only novices do that.

As the big fish flipped itself out of the water, Bowers began to reel it in.

"Sure is a big fellow, this one," he said. "Boy! look at the scrap he's putting up. Guess I'll give him some more line—play him along for a while. Boy! look at the size of that fish, will you? He'll sure go on the board. Wouldn't I like to get a bigger fish than the one you caught a few years ago—maybe my luck's good—maybe this fellow will weigh more than yours did."

Bannister was very happy that Bowers had had the first strike. He was always happy when the other fellow caught the fish. Some years before he had brought another friend to Rocky Point, one Joe Zeb. So excited did Joe get when he had a strike that he lost every fish that got on the hook. He had

not learned the secret of a taut line and playing the fish. He said, when Bannister told him to let the line go but keep it taut, "To heck with that—I came down here to get a fish into the boat, not let them get away from it."

Bowers played his catch skillfully, while Bannister sat by the motor smiling. He liked his little joke as well as anyone did. As the fish was pulled closer to the little green boat, his smile became broader.

Seeing him smiling, Bowers said, "What's the joke, Doc? What are you smiling at?"

"Oh, nothing. But wait until you get that fish up to the boat. I think you'll find it's a German Brown."

"A German Brown?" said Bowers. "What's a German Brown?"

"You'll see when you get him in," said Howard Bannister.

"But I want to know now—looks to me like about a fifteen pound lake trout."

Bannister continued to smile.

"See those big fins on him? Well, that brands him as a German Brown—a sucker, in other words."

Finally the fish was brought alongside, and it was, as Bannister had said, a sucker.

Chagrined, Bowers said, "What shall I do with that thing?"

"Only one thing to do, Alfred—throw it away. Then watch what happens."

Two pelicans were sailing majestically over the boat. Those birds knew what sort of a catch Bowers had made. They knew he would throw it away, too. So they manoeuvred to be in the best position to grab the German Brown as soon as its captor had thrown it back into the lake.

Sure enough, they both made a mad dash for the sucker and one of them caught it. Throwing his huge bill straight into the air, he tussled with the German Brown until finally he had squeezed it into his capacious stomach.

"Boy! look at that," Bowers was astonished. "How do you suppose he got away with that. And it's alive in his stomach."

I'd rather him have that thing in his stomach than have it in mine."

"That fish was dead a long time before it reached the pelican's stomach, Alfred. Did you see him toss it into the air and catch it again?"

"Yes, I saw him do that."

"Well, when that fish hit his bill it was a dead sucker the moment the pelican's jaws clamped down on it. Wonderfully strong a pelican's bill is, Alf," said Bannister.

"Well," continued Bannister, "I'll start the motor and we'll go round by Harriman Creek and see what luck we have there. You can be letting your line out again. There are not many of those suckers in these waters. Once in a while you snag one, but not very often."

Both lines were now out and the Seahorse was throttled down as slow as it would go.

The mouth of Harriman Creek usually gives up a fish or two and it was not long until Bannister had hooked a dandy. Then he circled round once more and Bowers hooked one. So they decided to fish round the mouth of Harriman Creek until they had caught their limit. This was soon accomplished, so both lines were reeled in.

"What do you say if we go up to the mouth of Crystal Creek and lie down in the boat and just rest?" said Bowers.

"I have a better idea than that," said Bannister. "Let's go right up the Creek and anchor among the water lilies and just loaf. This is the most beautiful day I have ever seen at Rocky Point."

The little boat chugged its way to Crystal Creek. Not a wave was on the lake. It was as still as the proverbial glass. Pelican Mountain and Mount Pitt, together with the foliage on the shore of the lake, were mirrored most beautifully in the water. A haven of rest if there ever was one.

Pulling his pipe from his pocket, Bowers said, "Believe I'll smoke for a while—that is, if you don't object."

"Go ahead," said Bannister. "I like the smell of tobacco

smoke. Don't ever use it myself but I sure like to be in a crowd which does. There's something soothing to the smell of a good pipe burning."

"You know, Howard, I was very much interested in what you were saying at Barney's last night. And I heartily agree with you. I don't believe this world has ever known the true Power of God Almighty, but I do believe that whatever manifestation of that Power the world is to receive will come and should come through the church, don't you?"

"No, Alf, I don't. When the staggering Power of the Spirit of God is brought to this world, it will not be brought through a dead organization. Nor will that Power have either the time or the inclination to revitalize a dead church. It will have a more important work to do. That Power will be manifested on this earth by one man, who, through sweat and blood has tackled the God proposition and has found the correct answer to it. And that answer does exist. Remember what I said—there is a solution to every problem, and the solution to that problem lies right in the middle of the problem? Remember—I said the correct solution would manifest itself? Well, it will. The manifestation of Adolf Hitler on this earth will automatically call for some man who will, in opposition to Hitler, manifest the only Power which can stop Hitler.

"That Power is the Spirit of God."

"But, Howard—do you really think the Christian Church is as dead as you make it out to be?"

"I think it's deader—if anything can be more dead than death itself. Listen to me, Alfred, while I give you a few facts:

"You know, I've been keeping a file on church losses and it will amaze you when I give you just a little bit of the picture. Read this clipping."

Pulling the clipping which had just come to him in the mail from his pocket, Bannister handed it to Bowers.

Here is the clipping. It was taken from the Oregon Journal of May the first, 1941. This year.

**"BANKERS TAKE SEATTLE CHURCH
MORTGAGE IS FORECLOSED**

SEATTLE, May 1 (AP) The largest Episcopal church on the Western slope north of San Francisco—St. Marks cathedral—was dark today and its congregation made plans to hold services next Sunday on the lawn of Volunteer city park from a portable altar, weather permitting, or in a nearby school. The stately edifice passed into the hands of St. Louis bankers last night when church officials admitted they could find no means to meet payments on a \$266,316 mortgage, a year overdue.

The Rev. Dr. John D. McLauchlan, dean, turned over the church keys to a representative of the mortgage holder with one request, that the choir be permitted to hold one last rehearsal tonight. The request was readily granted.

The bankers' action in claiming the church structure leaves the Rev. S. Arthur Huston, bishop of the diocese of Olympia, without a cathedral. He is expected to designate one of the other Episcopal churches in this area as a pro-cathedral.

Representatives of the bankers indicate they are hopeful some means will yet be found whereby the congregation can regain its church."

Bowers took the clipping and read it interestedly. Then he handed it back to Bannister who put it back in his pocket.

"Now let me ask you, Alf, how much of the Spirit of God do you think is in that Seattle church? It can't even demonstrate enough of the Power of God to pay its bills, let alone bring to this earth knowledge of the Power that can stop Hitler. You see, Alf, my contention is that all systems of religion today are just that. They are all founded on the superstitions and traditions of the past. Their promoters live in the past—thousands of years ago. They look to the past for their inspiration, exactly where we are looking today for our inspiration. And I don't believe we can do that. The manifestation of Hitler calls for the manifestation of the

Power of God, the only Power which can stop Hitler—and no church which is so dead that it has to be sold for a mortgage is qualified to teach anything to anyone concerning the Power which created this universe and man. It took some Power to do that, Bowers—yet here is this Seattle church, claiming to represent Almighty God—sold for a mortgage. Don't tell me there is any of God in that.

"But that isn't all. Let me tell you some more, then you'll see why I am taking the stand I am beginning to take. Never heard me talk like this before, did you? Now listen, Alf:

"On October, the 25th, 1939, the Right Reverend Bishop Tucker, primate of the Protestant Episcopal church in America, issued a frank warning that unless the Christian church developed 'an enthusiasm for its work comparable to that of Soviet Russia or warring Japan, *THE CHRISTIAN CAUSE MAY FAIL AND PASS OUT OF EXISTENCE.*'

"A student of history, the bishop from Virginia pointed to the downfall of religions in the past as part of his warning to the Christian church today. 'These dead religions', he said, 'have died because they lacked enthusiasm and aggressive programs of expansion; because *THEY DID NOT MEET THE EMERGENCIES OF AGES JUST SUCH AS THE PRESENT.*'

"'The enthusiasm of the world today lies largely outside the sphere of organized religion', asserted Bishop Tucker in what was considered his keynote message to the Protestant Episcopal church throughout the world. 'There is much less interest and enthusiasm in the Christian cause than in many secular causes'.

"This statement by the head of a great Protestant denomination bears me out in my claims that the 'God' of Protestantism and Catholicism is *NOT THE CREATOR OF THIS UNIVERSE.* It is another sort of a 'god'. And the world today is witnessing the result of the operations of the organizations which have followed after this 'strange god'.

"This is a very frank warning, Alfred. It should be heeded.

I hope it will be. We can put a hundred thousand men and women into a football stadium any time there is a game of national importance. Let the churches try to do that.

"But let any church come to this world with the simple plain revolutionary Power of the Spirit of God and you won't be able to keep the people away from *THAT* message. It will draw millions, not a few hundred thousands.

"You cannot, however, interest thinking Americans by asking them to 'eat the flesh and drink the blood of a dead god'. They cannot be interested in any system of theology which predicates its whole structure on the 'death of the just for the unjust'.

"Man did not ask to be put on this earth. If man is inherently bad, which I do not admit, *IT IS GOD'S FAULT—NOT MAN'S*. Even the famous wholesale drowning was not enough to make man 'good'. All man needs to make him 'good' is the truth about God. That truth no church has brought to the earth yet. Not even All Souls church of which I am the pastor.

"Recently, Bishop J. Ralph Magee, of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), made this statement in Minneapolis while addressing a Methodist convention. The Bishop was trying to combat the slump in Sunday School attendance. He said that during the past year the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) *LOST TWO THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND SEVEN HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND, TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHOLARS*.

"The Bishop said that the cause of this slump was late hours on Saturday night, the automobile, and 'other interests'. This, then, is an admission by another church leader that an automobile, late hours, 'other interests', have more pulling power over the people than has God Almighty.

"This is but one more piece of evidence that the 'God' of the Methodist *CANNOT BE THE GOD OF THIS UNIVERSE*. A cursory investigation among church literature re-

veals this same story told in every denomination. Yet they wonder why the world will not listen to their message. They cannot understand why the world does not run to accept the immutable truths and Power of Almighty God, the Great Spirit of Creation, as taught by the Methodist church.

"If the message brought to the world by the Methodist, or any other church, was true, this world would run to receive it. Never has the desire for God been so insistent in the hearts and minds of people as it is today. They attend these churches. They find out just what they have to offer and, using their God-inspired reason, they are not interested.

"Vox Populi is always Vox Dei, because man is a creation of God. More of this line of thought later. Just let me say that this world does not want the church—it wants God.

"Dr. Jean S. Milner is pastor of the Second Presbyterian church in Indianapolis. That is Henry Ward Beecher's old church. Recently Dr. Milner wrote a book. The book was published by Bobbs-Merrill Company. The title of the book is '*THE SKY IS RED*'. The closing paragraph of this book is very pertinent to what I am saying. In fact, it expresses the very same sentiments I express here. Coming from such a prominent churchman, we should pay attention to it. It adds up beautifully with the statements I am making here to you. My claim is that Almighty God has nothing whatsoever to do with Jesus Christ, whom the Christian church claims was Almighty God in person.

"I am endeavoring to clearly and intelligently prove that the 'God' of the Christian church is not only not Almighty God, but, even if he was, is utterly impotent to step into this world's troubled picture and bring peace. This, of course, because the entire Christian story is but pagan mythology, tradition and superstition.

"Alfred, let me give you irrefutable evidence that the Christian church itself repeatedly makes the statement that the whole structure is dying, impotent and powerless. If its claims to divinity of birth and origin are true and if the institution

really is 'the body of God', as it claims, it could be neither dying, impotent, nor powerless. These continued admissions of failure by church leaders are the strongest sort of evidence that the whole theory of God advanced by them cannot be true.

"Where God is there is *LIFE*. Where God is, there is *ACTION*. Where God is, there is *PEACE*. Where God is, there is *UNITY*. Where God is, there is *SUCCESS IN EVERY ENDEAVOR*. The Christian church with its continued calamitous cry of failure offers the best evidence obtainable that its 'God' cannot possibly be Almighty God, Founder and Creator of this universe and all that the universe contains. Let us see; first, in passing let me state that I am only showing these statements of church leaders in order to help the Christian church find God.

"If these moans of failure, impotence and near-death came alone from me, they might not mean too much. But when the heads of religious organizations themselves openly publish such statements as I am telling you about, then they stand condemned out of their own mouths. No further condemnation is necessary or pertinent. Here is what Dr. Milner has to say in the closing of his very good book:

"WE ARE LIVING IN ONE OF THOSE RARE PERIODS OF TIME FROM WHICH GREATNESS CAN EMERGE THROUGH THE RENEWAL OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT BY A MORE VITAL CONTACT WITH THE GREAT SPIRIT. SUCH MOMENTS, SO PREGNANT WITH TREMENDOUS POSSIBILITIES, ARE NOT OFTEN VOUCHSAFED TO MAN. A SWEEPING MOVEMENT UPWARD TOWARD THE BUILDING OF THE WORLD OF OUR DREAMS—OR—A SPIRAL DOWNWARD TOWARD DISASTER, SEEMS TO LIE JUST BEYOND THE BORDERS OF OUR DAY. ONE CANNOT VIEW WITH SERENITY THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR FAILING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS

SUPREME MOMENT IN TIME. OUT OF SUCH PERIOD MAGNIFICENCE COMES. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS AN OPPORTUNITY NOW, WHICH, IF SHE LETS SLIP THROUGH HER HANDS, SHE MAY NEVER HAVE AGAIN. SHE MUST PROVE HERSELF WORTHY OF THE LEADERSHIP DEMANDED OF HER. SHE WILL SERVE THE WORLD WITH CHRISTIAN GREATNESS OR BE REPUDIATED BY IT. THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST (there he means the Spirit of God) WILL NOT LEAVE THE EARTH, BUT HIS SPIRIT WILL LIVE IN INSTITUTIONS OTHER THAN OUR OWN.'

"Seldom is such a dynamic statement published by a churchman as prominent as Dr. Milner. Yet we shall see that not only the Presbyterian church, but every other church in this fair land is having the same experience of defeat. They are all earnest. They try, yet they know not what is wrong. But the world knows. It knows that the philosophy of God which the Christian church has embraced is not interesting enough to warrant a second thought.

"The Christian church can tell men and women of this thinking age that Jesus Christ was killed on a cross for their sins till it is black in the face. It does this. Yet the attitude of the general public seems to be: 'Well, maybe so, brother, but I'm not interested'.

"A few months ago in Kansas City, Dr. William A. Eddy, president of Hobart and William Smith colleges, made the following statement to an Episcopal convention:

"CHRISTIANS ARE SCATTERED. WE ARE LOST AND DESPISED, WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT IS GIVEN OVER ENTIRELY TO POWER. AND WE MUST PROVE THAT WE STAND FOR STRENGTH AND NOT FOR WEAKNESS. BEING A CHRISTIAN TODAY CALLS FOR MARTYRDOM IN A DAY WHEN NATURALISM AND NATIONALISM ARE

THE EXCLUSIVE RELIGIONS OF THE BRUTALITARIANS WHO HAVE ALL BUT CONQUERED THE MODERN WORLD. THE CHURCH IS ACTUALLY NO BETTER OFF IN 1940 THAN IT WAS IN 40 A.D.'

"It begins to add up. These statements, and I could quote hundreds of them, are a definite signpost pointing to the fact that at last, at long last, the day of pseudo-religions and false gods is passing. Of course, those of us who are having a definite part in that passing realize to the full the responsibility which is ours.

"Alfred, to bring to this earth a True God, when millions believe, or say they believe in a false god, is quite a responsibility. Personally, and regardless of how successful my efforts may be, there will always be a definite sadness in my life. I suppose there should be joy. But there is not. I realize, of course, the full import of the results of this new conception of God on the world. Yet, to tear from human beings their religious idols, even when one knows those idols are ruining them and bringing destruction and abomination to the nation, is a heartbreaking thing to do.

"Yet I shall do it when I return to San Francisco.

"You may say: 'Well, but Dr. Bannister, why don't you let people keep their religion as they believe it and then add to it the good things you have to offer'? That would be well and good if the world was not in as desperate a condition as it is. So dangerous is the condition of this world and so much human blood is being ruthlessly spilt that I cannot compromise with erroneous teachings and preachments of God. I would not if I could. I am not so constituted. I have compromised now for too long.

"I realize as well as anyone the danger that exists. I know as well as anyone what the false 'gods' of antiquity have done to the human race. I also know that as men and women exchange their false 'gods' for the True Spirit of God as that

Great Spirit exists, their lives are changed. Instead of weak puny things, hoping against hope to find God after they die, up in the sky somewhere, they can turn into dynamic, thrilling personalities, throbbing with the Power of the Spirit of God. That, I think, is far better than to live a life of 'martyrdom' as Dr. Eddy suggests.

"There never was any need for any to be a 'martyr' for God. That is part of the pagan philosophy on which all the world's great religions are founded. The only thing necessary to bring peace, happiness, joy and love to this earth is to know the true conception of God. When the churches know this, if they ever do, the glory of the Spirit of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But that condition can never exist until we have found God, and the sublime truths God Almighty stands for.

"Crucifying a man who was supposed to be God on a cross, while the theory and the relating of it may be impressive, does not contain in itself sufficient Power to rid this world of wars and crime. Religious tradition, that is all it is. It is not an experience. The Christian says he goes through an experience called 'conversion'. That is, Christians used to call it that. But you hear little of 'conversion' any more.

"Whenever a man or an organization is in tune with the Spirit of God, that's an experience. It is not a mere repetition of a story which has been handed down from father to son for hundreds of years, without proof. It is a thrilling dynamic experience in the life. It is Power. It is Peace. It is Love. It is Joy. It is God Almighty in the human life. And when that happens nationally and internationally you may imagine what a wonderful place this earth will be. That day is coming. It will come perhaps sooner than we realize.

"Dr. Eddy evidently does not want that day to come, unless his system of religion predominates. Well, under no system of religion I know anything about *COULD* such a day come. You see, Bowers, under the Christian philosophy, unless we repeat certain articles of 'faith' or 'belief', we are all lost.

Only the very few who 'believe' in Jesus Christ are to be rescued.

"Whether the story of Jesus Christ is true or whether it is false does not seem to be taken into consideration by Dr. Eddy and the rest of the preachers and priests. 'That's my story and I'm going to stick to it' seems to be the order of the day in religion.

"It was inevitable, though, that someone should come along sooner or later who seriously questioned the truth of that story. I don't believe there is a man or woman alive who has tried to find God in the church harder than I have. But I failed after many years of honest effort. Yet I knew the Creator of this earth and man must exist. So, naturally, I have turned elsewhere. And now that I am totally discarding everything Christianity or any other religion has to offer, I am finding God.

"This is what I'm going to tell All Souls when I get back.

"The experience I sought for so long and so vainly in the church and through the church god is coming to me from an entirely different direction. And none may say my life will not be completely transformed and revitalized now that the Spirit of God has come into it. This little life is too well known throughout the world for people not to recognize the change.

"Dr. Eddy states that we are living in a world that is given over entirely to power. Well what greater Power can there be in life than the Power of the Spirit which is God? And it is true, Dr. Eddy realizes that there is no power in anything his system of theology teaches. It is here I make my point. If there is no power in any system of religion, regardless of what it may be called, that system of religion is not teaching God. It may be teaching its own conception of God, but it most certainly is not teaching the God who created this universe and the human race. For it took a REAL power to do that.

"In the moment Dr. Eddy and the rest of the followers say

'Good-bye, Jesus', they will find God. But so long as they choose to look upon 'the man Jesus Christ' as Almighty God, then by no possibility can they find God. For Jesus Christ and Almighty God are two different things. One is the true Spirit which created this universe and all that is therein. The other is but a figment of the religious imaginations and traditions of dark age priests and preachers. The crucifixion theory was born in paganism and is still believed by both pagan and Christian alike.

"The American people should know that by this time. Certainly they have seen Christianity in operation. Certainly they see world conditions today. And just as certainly must they know that there is none of Almighty God in either church or world. The only logical thing then is to examine the theory of God brought to us by religious organizations. This it has been my duty to do. As a result of those examinations, I must pronounce the theory entirely false. All Christianity is, is a copy of far older systems of religion which, of course, the Christian church calls 'pagan'.

"Do you follow me, Bowers?"

"I certainly do."

"This is a fact. It may be denied and will be denied by churchmen, but it remains a fact, nevertheless. This fundamental discovery, of course, led to the discovery of the True Spirit of God, which Spirit the Christian church never has known, it having been occupied quite fully with its own 'crucified god', Jesus Christ.

"From this hypothesis we have progressed until we are in a position to bring to this world, not a theory of God, but the actual Power of God. That is what the world is waiting for. That is what the church is supposed to do, but cannot do simply because, instead of having knowledge of Almighty God, all it has is a tradition and an oft-repeated tradition of God killed on a cross. In the case of the Christian, the god was called Jesus Christ. In the case of the Hindoo, he was called Chrishna. And so on. Thirty-two 'crucified gods' have

been offered to the world by various systems of religion and the world has rejected them all, just as it has rejected Jesus Christ and the Christian religion. With the total rejection, this world will find *GOD*.

"I'll talk to you some more about these crucified gods before we leave Rocky Point, Alf. Now let's continue:

"Speaking in Philadelphia on September the 16th, 1940, Dr. Jacques Maritan, of the Catholic Institute of Paris, said:

*"THE VERY IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN STATE
APPEARS TODAY AS SOMETHING VERY REMOTE*

"I might ask why? Why, if all the Power of Almighty God is in the Catholic Church, as it claims, why is the prospect so remote? Surely the Roman Catholic church cannot have the wrong God, can it? It certainly makes extravagant claims for itself. It tells the world that its Pope is the Vice-Regent of God. It tells the world that no one can ever know anything about God except that knowledge be gained through the ministrings of the Catholic Church itself. It says Protestantism is 'heretic'.

"In my possession is a letter from a Catholic professor on the staff of San Francisco University. He states in that letter that 'Protestantism is a branch fallen off the tree—it is dead'. That's not speaking too well for Catholicism, for Protestantism is a direct child of Catholicism.

"At the same Philadelphia conference on the same date, the Right Reverend Edward E. L. Strider, Episcopal coadjutor of West Virginia, said:

*"THE CHURCH MUST FACE THE REAL ISSUES OF
LIFE, AND MAKE A PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE IN
THE LIVES OF MEN AND WOMEN AND CHIL-
DREN OR IT IS DOOMED TO BECOME A DIS-
APPEARING AFFAIR."*

"He said further:

“THE CHURCH MUST BECOME A SOCIAL INSTITUTION WORKING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD HERE AND NOW.”

“But how can the Christian Church make a practical difference in the lives of men and women with the ‘god’ it has now? It takes real Power to change human lives. The story of God Almighty killed on a cross two thousand years ago won’t do it, impressive as that story may be. *IT WILL TAKE THE LIVING, ACTUAL, VITAL, EVER-PRESENT POWER OF GOD ALMIGHTY TO CHANGE HUMAN LIVES.*

“No one knows better than the Christian church the failure which has attended its efforts to transform lives and make God real to the world. This it has never been able to do. It wonders why. And I think it suspects the truth. But it is not ready to say ‘good-bye’ to Jesus Christ and accept, in His place, the Power of the Spirit of God. Until it is ready to do this, it will be a ‘disappearing thing’.

“I shall try to save it, Bowers.

“In October, 1940, the Southern California-Arizona Methodist conference, by a vote of two hundred fifty-five to one hundred fifteen, adopted a resolution which reads in part:

“THAT WE DISCIPLINE OURSELVES IN THE REALIZATION OF WORLD COMMUNITY AND REGARD NOBODY AS ALIENS BUT EVERYBODY AS BROTHERS, SO THAT, IN THE EVENT OF INVASION, WE CAN TREAT THE INVADERS AS BROTHERS AND NOT ENEMIES.”

“This sounds to me something like Fifth Column activities. Yet this resolution was passed by the Methodist church.

“Let me here give you a few figures on our Methodist church. They add up with other things I’ll tell you about later. The same story can be told by all our churches.

“I have in my church study, the sad record of the failure of the Methodist church in 1940. This record shows the financial loss, the membership loss, and the figures are quite

startling. One would think that if Almighty God were in the great Methodist church such a record as that could never have been written.

"Summarizing a three year survey of three hundred thirty-three American cities in the United States, Dr. Edward Thorndyke, in March, 1940, rated 'civic godliness' as being far from 'civic goodness'. The noted psychiatrist of Columbia University said that in cities where the general goodness of life for good people is highest there were many artists, engineers, musical teachers, but relatively few clergymen.

"'Church-membership', he wrote in his book *'YOUR CITY'*, 'is in inverse ratio to the rating of communities for the general goodness of life. Unless the better communities under-report their church membership, or the worse communities over-report theirs, we must suspect that the churches are *CLUBS OF ESTIMABLE PEOPLE AND MAINTAINERS OF TRADITIONAL RITES AND CEREMONIES, RATHER THAN POWERFUL FORCES FOR HUMAN BETTERMENT*'.

"Evidently, according to Dr. Thorndyke's experiences and investigations, the 'abundant life' *IS NOT IN THE CHURCH MEMBERS*.

"It should be, certainly. If these good folks know all about God, if they know so much about Almighty God that they freely tell others that 'there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we may be saved', certainly, with that assurance of the Power of God in them, they should live the 'abundant life'. But the facts prove the contrary is true. Their religion is but an old heathen tradition told again.

"On February the 8th, 1940, in Chicago, the existence of hell as a real place was denied by sixty of each one hundred Protestant ministers in answer to a Northwestern University School of Education questionnaire that disclosed many modifications of religious beliefs. 'There is no devil' said fifty-four percent of these ministers. Five hundred ministers answered the circular and only forty-eight percent said they would

teach junior high school pupils that Judgment Day is really coming. The existence of 'heaven' was denied by forty-one percent of their number, while thirty-eight percent said 'judgment day will never come to pass'. Only nineteen percent believe that God keeps a record of our bad deeds in a big book in the sky, while eighty-one percent disagreed. The deity of Jesus Christ was upheld by only twenty-six percent. Think of that! Only twenty-six percent! So don't blame me if I challenge my own church.

"I believe this to be definite and tangible evidence that priests and ministers who teach the Christian religion do not believe it themselves. They are, therefore, hypocrites if they teach it. Why they stay in the ministry, I don't know. What I'm doing in the ministry, myself, I don't know.

"The significant thing about this is that it absolutely corroborates my contention that the Christian bible most certainly is *NOT* the divinely inspired word of God, neither is the Christian religion, which teaches Jesus Christ as God Almighty, a true religion.

"Church of all sorts and beliefs are honeycombed with priests and preachers who certainly do not believe the doctrines they are teaching and preaching. A few months ago I was having lunch with a rather prominent Roman Catholic. It was Friday, but he ate ham and eggs, nevertheless. Our conversation was of the failure of the church to cope with conditions in the world today.

"I called attention to the appalling loss of church membership in the Roman Catholic church to which my friend replied, 'Oh yes, Doctor, I know—but all denominations are losing. But we did have a hell of a good time while the going was good'.

"One incident like the above in itself proves nothing. But the overwhelming mass of evidence available forces me to two conclusions. First:—The entire story of the Christian bible is a work of man, absolutely without 'divine inspiration' in it. Second:—The 'god' of the Christian church is not the God

who created this universe, but is an old mythical pagan god, copied from another and far older pagan 'god'.

"As a matter of fact, the whole structure of Christianity is built upon a false god. A god who never did exist, save in the imaginings of old superstitious church 'fathers'. Herein lies the shameful hypocrisy and failure of all churches of all denominations. They have a false God. Their 'god' is Jesus Christ. But no god who was born through the womb of another man's wife two thousand years ago is quite big enough to bring peace to this world. Such a character may satisfy the churches; indeed it does. But it will not satisfy a searching critical world.

"And from now on, Dr. Bowers, it won't satisfy me. I'm finding the truth. Soon the world will find that same truth.

"I could give you similar quotations and instances for a month, Alf, but I have told you enough to demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt that there can be no power of any sort, let alone the Power of the Spirit of God, in any system of religion on this earth. If there were, it could be demonstrated. But no church can do that."

"Are you going to tell All Souls these things when you return?"

"I'm going to tell my people more than that when I return. Alfred, *HOWARD BANNISTER IS BEING REBORN!* For the first time in his life he is discovering who and what God is and more than that, he has the answer to the whole God proposition. What will happen in San Francisco when I return may make history. I believe I can start a movement, either in the church or out of the church, which will bring Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Matsuoka to their knees so fast it will stagger humanity. I should like to do that inside the church. But if, as I suspect, the church will have nothing to do with any religion which is not based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then I shall do it outside of the church, but I shall do it."

* * *

The shadows were beginning to fall on Crystal Creek.

"Let's stroll slowly back and fish our way to the Point," said Bannister as he started the motor.

Lines were thrown out and a couple more fish were caught, even though they had their suspected limit. They had no scales, however, on which to weigh the fish they had taken, so they cannot be blamed for catching a couple more.

On arriving at the dock, lines were reeled in and Nels made the boat fast. They went to the cabin and washed for supper—a supper they could and would enjoy.

CHAPTER SIX

AFTER SUPPER THAT SAME EVENING, the group of fishermen made their way to the little store and post office. There they lied about the fish they had caught in days gone by and they lied some more about the size of those which they didn't get.

Our two friends had come in with eight fine specimens averaging in weight about seven pounds each. They had been given to Nels who would smoke them in the smokehouse later that evening.

The Johnstones had dropped in for their mail and the Harris boys were there, also. 'Twas a good natured bunch of fellows. Jack Fallon, the fox man, had dropped in for a couple of loaves of bread and the mail.

Spotting Dr. Bannister he shook hands with him.

"Well, now, Howard, sure and it's good to me Irish eyes to have them looking on ye again—how long is it that ye arr a-goin' to be shtaying with us this thrip?"

"Well, Jack, it's awfully nice to see you again. I guess maybe we'll stay the full two weeks, that is, providing those foxes of yours don't make so much racket that we have to move."

"Niver ye be minding about those foxes of mine, Howard. If ye could keep quiet as long as me foxes do, I'll be thinking ye wouldn't be doin' so much harrm as ye arr afther a-doin'. I heeard ye over the raddio-machine lasht Sunday, and be-gorra I ralely belave ye arr coming to your sinses. Ye sure arr puttin' out some common sinse talks ivery onct in a while—not often, mind ye, but jusht onct—maybe twict in a while."

"Well, Jack, I don't believe that there is anything I could say which could have much effect on a hard-boiled Mick like you," returned Bannister.

"No, Howard, sure and I don't belave there is that—maybe

yez moight thry yer luck on me foxes some time. But all joking aside, Dochter, things don't look so good, do they?"

"No, Jack, they don't. But cheer up, it's always darkest just before the dawn, you know. And there will be a dawn. Don't forget that."

"Well, I wisht that dawn would shtart in a-shinin' pretty fasht, if it don't the fox businessh will be on the bum for shure."

"Well, if that happens, Jack, I'll see if we can't find you a job driving taxi in San Francisco."

Jack laughed.

"Shure, and itsh foine I would loike dhrivin' a taxi in San Francisco. It's all I can do to pilot me boat a couple of miles down to Rocky Point."

"Did you have anny luck today, Howard?" asked Fallon.

"We got eight nice ones, Jack, if you call that luck."

"Shure and it musht of been luck if ye caught that many—Oi think maybe Alf Bowers musht have done the catching."

"I'm pretty good on German Browns," said Dr. Bowers.

"Oh . . . he's pretty good on German Brown!" laughed Jack Fallon. "Takes a damned good man to catch a German Brown—why thim things ish the foinesht kind of fish—what did ye do with it—throw it back into the wather agin?"

And so the good natured bandinage continued.

Bannister bought a round of drinks, beer for some of them and orange crush for Bowers and himself.

Little Alfred was the center of attraction until Winnie arrived from Klamath Falls. Then both kiddies were hustled off to bed.

Bannister and Bowers left the store and took a seat on a bench outside before the huge open fireplace where more fish stories have been told than perhaps any other place on earth.

Queenie, the Point's Chesapeake, seemed to remember Howard Bannister. She brought pine cones and laid them at his

feet, saying as plainly as if she could talk:—"You throw it and I'll go get it."

Bannister and Bowers threw the pine cones until Queenie was tired and sat down by the end of a bench. The mosquitoes were not out in full force, yet, but they would be before long.

Our two characters swapped yarns with the boys in front of the fire for perhaps an hour, then took themselves off to their cabin on the hill, after bidding everyone a cheery "Good-night."

Queenie followed them up the hill to the cabin and was rewarded by a gum drop which she ate ravenously, begging for more. Bannister lighted the stove and removed his coat and flannel shirt.

"Guess I'll read for a while, Alfred. What do you want to do . . . go to sleep, or read?"

"Maybe I'll think a bit, Howard. You certainly have given me something to think about since we left San Francisco Monday morning. I did not have the slightest idea your mind was running along these channels. I knew something was wrong with you. I knew you were not satisfied, and I knew also that you really wanted to do something to help bring peace to this war-torn world. But I did not suspect you were looking for the answer in religion—or in finding fault with religion."

"Alfred," replied Bannister, "you saw that dog, Queenie?"

"Queenie—the dog—why, of course, I saw Queenie. What are you getting at?"

"Did you notice how many legs Queenie had?"

Dr. Bowers was silent. He did not understand the question nor did he surmise what Bannister might be driving at. He did know, however, that Bannister had a very graphic manner of driving home a point when he wanted to.

"Did you ask me how many legs Queenie had?"

"I did," replied Bannister. "How many legs has any dog? Let me put it that way."

"Well, I don't know exactly what you are driving at—but I'll bite. Every dog has four legs."

"Correct as can be. Every dog has four legs."

"Well—so what? Spit it out. There's something on your mind," said Bowers.

"I was just thinking, Alfred. Do you know that the reason there are four Gospels in the Christian Bible is because animals have four legs?"

"Oh come now, Howard, you're not going to ask me to believe that there are four Gospels in the Bible because animals have four legs?"

"That's exactly what I am telling you and I think you will believe me when I make that statement."

"But that seems incredible. Here I've been believing for years that the Christian Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, absolutely true from cover to cover and now you come along and tell me that there are four Gospels in the Bible because animals have four legs. What sort of talk is that?"

"Pretty good sort of talk, Alfred. It happens to be true."

"Do you mean to tell me that the reason there are four Gospels in the Testament is because animals have four legs? Can you prove that?"

"If I couldn't prove that statement you know I should never make it, don't you?"

"I surely do. But four Gospels in the New Testament because animals have four legs—it seems preposterous."

"Well, it's not preposterous at all, Alf. The preposterous thing about it is that so few people have taken the trouble to investigate and find out for themselves what the Bible is and especially what it is not. That's one thing I never have been able to understand. And yet, that is the reason so many people belong to churches today. They have taken what priests and preachers have told them as being absolutely true. They have not taken the trouble to find out for themselves.

"For instance, did you ever hear a minister tell you, or anyone else, that there are four Gospels in the Christian Bible

because animals have four legs? Of course you didn't. But it is a fact, nevertheless. If the clergy had been honest with the people who have trusted them so fully the answer to the God proposition would have been discovered a long time ago. As it is, we are confused. The whole world is floundering about in a maze of religious theories and teachings, and while this world is hungry for God, not a single religious organization can tell the world what God is, where God is, or how the Power of God can be used against Hitler. Those are the questions the world is asking the church. But it asks in vain. The church never has been honest with the people. And until it is, it will never be able to lead the people. Now to come back to the statement that there are four Gospels because animals have four legs."

"Yes, please tell me about that, for if that statement is true, you certainly have stumbled onto something," said Bowers.

"First, let me ask you another question. Let me ask you how many corners this earth has?"

"How many corners the earth has? Well, it hasn't any corners, it's supposed to be round, is it not?"

"It is round. It has no corners, although as late as four hundred years ago everybody thought it had four corners.

"Now, we'll come back to your question about the four legs of animals . . . and, remember, there are many more things I shall perhaps say to you later, after you have recovered from the shock of what I am about to say to you."

"Well, does anyone else besides you know the truth about why the four Gospels are in the Bible—do the rest of the ministers know it is because animals have four legs?"

"They know if they have been in earnest about finding the truth. Of course, if they have chosen to blindly believe what their denominational theological seminary has told them to believe as the truth, then, of course, they may not know it. But the record is there. It can be read by anyone who cares to read it.

"Now let me tell you how it happens that there are only

four Gospels in the Christian Bible. It happened like this. You will recall that until about four hundred years ago there was no Protestant Church. It was all Catholic. Martin Luther, when he tacked his resignation from the Catholic Church on that famous door, started the Reformation. That was the birth of Protestantism. In the year 1545 A.D., not four hundred years ago yet, certain anonymous writings began to appear, always in the hands of monks or priests of the Roman Catholic church.

"No one knew who wrote these writings, nor does anyone know where they came from. They are perfectly anonymous. Their authors are positively unknown.

"I should have told you that these anonymous writings appeared over a period of years. They did not all appear in the year 1545 A.D. But in that year, Irenaeus, who was the Catholic Bishop of Lyons, decided that these anonymous writings should be put into the canon of divinely inspired scripture—namely, the Christian Bible.

"But there were too many of these writings to put them all in. And again, some of these writings were so absolutely foolish that they were left out on account of the impossibility of their contents. However, Irenaeus called in one hundred and eighty priests and bishops of the Catholic church.

"These priests and bishops were called together for the express purpose of voting on the admission of a part of these documents of absolutely unknown origin into what they called 'The Sacred Canon of Scripture'.

"Well, that was quite a gathering. The report I have on it says that most of them got drunk. Fist fights were the order of the day. When the conference got too hot, Irenaeus called it to order, and insisted that a vote be taken on which of the thirty or more anonymous writings should be made the 'Word of God'.

"This is what he said in favor of only allowing four of these anonymous writings to be voted into 'The Sacred Canon of Scripture'—'Animals have four legs, the earth has four corners,

and there are four great winds—so we must have four Gospels—no more and no less, and if any man believe not these Gospels, let him be accursed.' In other words, let him be damned.

"And, Alfred, believe it or not, that is how the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, containing exclusively the story of Jesus Christ, came to be in the Christian Bible. Their titles were added later by the Roman church. But in attributing these Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Catholics drew upon their imaginations for these writings were completely anonymous."

Dr. Bowers was absolutely stunned. Yet he knew that Bannister would not make a statement like that unless he had absolute proof of the truth of the statement. He sat there in silence.

Finally he broke that silence with this remark:

"Well, Howard, does not that make the foundation of the story of Jesus Christ a vote of the Roman Catholic bishops and priests instead of divine inspiration?"

"It makes it just that, Alf. The whole story, therefore, rests on thin air and is completely a product of one hundred and eighty Roman Catholic bishops and priests. Most certainly Almighty God had nothing to do with that story. Moreover, if any church tells people that the story of Jesus Christ and Him crucified has any connection with Almighty God, that church lies."

"Well then, the whole Christian theory of God, insofar as it attempts to claim Jesus Christ as God, is utterly and entirely false—is that it?"

"That is exactly the truth—and that is what I am going to tell All Souls when I return."

There is no question but what Dr. Bowers was profoundly impressed. He had never heard this even intimated before. Yet he knew that Bannister knew whereof he spoke. He knew something else—he knew that if the story of Jesus Christ was not of God, the whole Christian structure crumbles and the truth must be looked for somewhere else. It must be noted

here that Dr. Bannister did not say that everything Christianity teaches is false. What he did say, and what he did prove was that any attempt to connect Almighty God with the story of Jesus Christ is fruitless and valueless. What Bannister was trying to put over to Bowers was the fact that if the Christian church would divest itself of the impossible story of Jesus Christ, it would then be in a position to bring to the world the actual truths of God. So long as Jesus Christ is worshipped as God, it was Bannister's contention that the actual truths of God could not be brought to the world by the Christian church.

In other words, the whole world could go down under Hitler and the Christian church could be absolutely powerless to hinder. That was Bannister's theory.

"Well, what about the rest of the Bible?" asked Bowers.

"There is nothing in the Old Testament which bears the slightest evidence of having been written by Almighty God. That Old Testament, incidentally, is more recent than the New. This world has a very wrong conception of all bibles . . . and there are many of them. The Christian Bible, of course, is sacred to the Christian only. But it means nothing at all to the Hindoo. He thinks, with very good grounds, that his bible, which by far antedates the Christian Bible, is the only true Word of God. He claims, and can prove, by the way, that the Hindoo bibles form the basis for the Christian Bible.

"Listen to me, Alfred, every great religion has its sacred book or books, which its adherents consider of more than human origin and authority. The Brahman has his Vedas; the Buddhist his Tripitaka; the Parsee his Avesta; the Moham-medan his Koran; the Hebrew his Scriptures, and the Christian his Bible.

"On these sacred books the followers of these various religions build their beliefs; by them they form their creeds; from them they draw their inspiration. In many respects all these sacred books are much alike. They all contain the high-

est ideals, the purest morals, and the sublimest conceptions of God and man that were known among the people with whom these sacred writings originated. Likewise, all of them contain much more that is neither edifying nor inspiring.

"Living in a land of Bibles we should know something about the origin and reputed authority of this sacred book. Not only should we know what the Bible says, but we should know what the Bible is if we are to know why we believe what we believe.

"Concerning the Bible, its origin and teachings, there are two extreme views. There is the belief held by a great majority of Christians that in some miraculous, indescribable, unknowable way, God wrote the Bible, or caused it to be written. To them it is a sacred revelation to be read, but not to be questioned, a book to be believed, but not to be analyzed.

"Like a fond, indulgent mother, who can see no evil in her erring son, they close their eyes to those parts of the Bible which are degrading to man and a blasphemy to God. They judge the whole book from cover to cover to be absolutely and literally the direct and infallible Word of God. With them, when science and the Bible conflict, science is wrong; when human experience and the Bible disagree, human experience stands for naught; when reason and the Bible are opposed, reason must go.

"Then there is another class. They know the history of the Bible. They see the many absurdities and contradictions in its pages. They hear how the laws of nature are set aside at the request of human beings. They read how the sun in his eternal rounds of night and day was even stopped at the command of Joshua that the Chosen People might have more time to complete their bloody slaughter. They read in the Twenty-first and Twenty-second chapters of Deuteronomy that it was God's command that a disobedient son and a fallen woman should be stoned to death. In the Thirteenth chapter they read: 'If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy daughter,

or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, shall entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . thou shall surely kill him: thine hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death.'

"In the Sixth chapter of Second Samuel they read how the law of the Lord was kept in an ark which no man dare touch, and how once when the ark was being moved on an ox-cart, the oxen stumbled and the driver, Uzzah, put forth his hand to steady the ark, lest it fall. 'And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error and he died by the ark of God.'

"Again they read in First Samuel, the Sixth chapter, how the people of Bethshemesh were curious concerning the ark and looked inside it. For this the Lord 'smote of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah, he smote of the people seventy men and fifty thousand men'.

"This class reads these and hundreds of similar passages in the Bible and their sense of justice and humanity cries out against attributing such outrages to God. They judge the whole by that which is bad and declare the Bible to be the work of men and bad men, at that, who are trying to shoulder the responsibility of their crimes and meanness upon an unprotesting God.

"Neither of these conceptions of the Bible are acceptable to the scientific mind, for neither of them are justified by the evidence concerning it. But there is a conception of the Bible which does no violence to truth, to reason, or to the fundamental teachings of any true religion. This true and rational conception, which is slowly but surely supplanting the old superstitious belief, is arrived at by a study of the origin, growth and character of the Bible.

"When one affirms that to be true which is contrary to reason and human experience, he must offer positive evidence of the truth of his claim before rational men are expected to believe. If such evidence cannot be produced, then the claim falls without being refuted.

"For example, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, says that an angel appeared to him and told him to dig in the earth at a certain place. He says he did as commanded and found a book with gold leaves, on which were writings in an unknown tongue. With the book was a pair of spectacles, by using which he was able to read and translate the writings into English. As evidence of the truth of this wonderful story, he offers us the translation he made which is called the Book of Mormon.

"Do you believe this story? I do not. We are under no obligation to believe it. Joseph Smith has offered no reliable evidence of this wonderful tale and as his story is contrary to reason and human experience, we must refuse to consider the matter seriously. We are not called upon to disprove the miraculous origin of this Mormon bible. The Mormons must prove it.

"The same holds good with reference to the Christian Bible. When anyone affirms that it is of more than human origin and authority, we are not called upon to disprove their claim, but they must offer some positive evidence of the truth of their assertion. This they try to avoid by endeavoring to shift the burden of proof upon the disbeliever. To do this, they assert that ancient traditions and beliefs must be accepted as true unless disproven. The assumption that the antiquity of a tradition or belief is evidence of its truthfulness holds good only when such traditions and beliefs are not contrary to reason and human experience.

"If ancient traditions are to be accepted as true regardless of their character or source, then we must accept the sacred writings of the Brahmans, the Buddhists, the Parsees and many others whose traditions of superhuman origin are far more ancient than those of the Christian Bible. No, the burden of proof cannot be shifted to the disbeliever.

"Let us examine some of the other evidence offered and see if it is sufficient to establish a belief in the extraordinary claims that are made for the Bible.

"First, we are told that the Bible itself claims to be of more than human origin. This is a mistake. Nowhere does the Bible claim to be the Word of God. There are certain passages in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, which do claim to be the direct Word of God, though these passages are comparatively few. But unless offered some reasonably certain evidence that God really did say these things to these men, we must refuse to accept these passages as literally true.

"We refuse to believe that God spoke to Joseph Smith, to Buddha and to others and we can do no less with Moses, Aaron or Isaiah; for there is no more evidence of the one than the other.

"The closing verses of Revelation are often quoted by superficial readers as a Bible declaration that the entire Bible is the infallible and unchanging Word of God. The Revised Version reads: 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man adds unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which were written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book'. A careful reading of these verses will show that they refer only to the book of Revelation and not to the entire sixty-six books of the Bible. Nor could these passages mean otherwise, for the Bible, as we know it, was not in existence when the book of Revelation was written.

"Again, it is claimed that the Bible must be of more than human origin because it is more profound, more beautiful and more inspiring than other books.

"Even if this claim of superior excellence were true, it would certainly not imply that the whole or any part of the Bible is the superhuman Word of God. No other dramatist ever wrote as did Shakespeare; no other poet ever wrote like Homer; no other orator spoke like Demosthenes. Were these men and their works, therefore, more than human? No. Supe-

rior excellence cannot be accepted as evidence of superhuman origin.

"Then, too, there is much in the Bible that is far from beautiful and inspiring. Take the book of Esther—it is but a tale of vice and drunken debauchery; of crime and murder. Nowhere does the name of God appear in the whole book. In it there is but one decent character and she receives no word of commendation from the writer, but is rather condemned.

"If the beauty and spirituality of some of the Bible passages indicate that they are of God, then the book of Esther and some of the other Old Testament passages would just as truly indicate that they are of the devil.

"Another bit of testimony offered as to the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible is that certain Bible characters prophesied or foretold certain events.

"Even if these reputed prophecies were genuine, it would only indicate that those who made them were good judges of the trend of human events or that they had extraordinary powers of intuition. A few such prophecies would certainly not indicate that all the books of the Bible are of superhuman origin and authority. Reputed prophecies of future events which later came true are found in other books, both sacred and profane, yet these books are not on that account regarded as of other than human origin.

"The last evidence offered as to the superhuman origin and character of the Bible is what is called the evidence of the spirit or spiritual insight. This so-called evidence is said to be a sort of spiritual consciousness, which some believers claim assures them that the Bible is the Word of God. This same sort of evidence is offered by many as proof of other creeds and doctrines. The average mortal can see little difference between this spiritual insight and an ordinary belief based on desire and imagination. Spiritual insight as reliable evidence is open to two serious objections. First, it is evidence which those of us not so gifted cannot verify, so it can be no evidence to us. Second, those gifted with spiritual insight do

not always agree in their testimony. They disagree among themselves concerning matters where a little common sense and reason and a little less spiritual insight would have caused them to differ less. When those gifted with spiritual insight cannot agree, ordinary mortals had best follow the dictates of their reason.

"There has never been, nor can there be any evidence offered for the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible but what would apply equally well to other so-called sacred books.

"If we accept the Bible as of human origin and authority, we will expect it to partake of the natures of the men who wrote it. We can then overlook the mistakes and excuse the human weakness portrayed in the book. But if we accept the Bible as a superhuman revelation from God, we must expect it to be of the nature of God, perfect in every detail, free from errors and contradictions, and infallible in every subject of which it treats. That the Bible does not measure up to this divine standard of perfection is well known to every Bible scholar. Time will not permit my citing the numerous mistakes and contradictions which are so prominent in the Bible. Voltaire, Paine, Ingersoll and other writers have long emphasized these imperfections. One writer has compiled a whole book of Bible contradictions.

"Christian Bible scholars in general have now come to know and admit these errors and contradictions. Dr. Briggs, Professor of Theology in the Union Theological Seminary in New York, some years ago, in his famous inaugural address said:

"It has been taught in recent years and is still taught by some theologians that one proved error destroys the authority of the Scriptures. I shall venture to affirm that, so far as I can see, there are errors in the Scriptures that no one has been able to explain away; and the theory that they are not in the original text is sheer assumption upon which no mind can rest with certainty. If such errors destroy the authority of the

Bible, it is already destroyed for historians. Men cannot shut their eyes to truth and facts. But on what authority do these theologians drive men from the Bible by their theory of inerrancy? The Bible itself nowhere makes this claim. It is a ghost of modern evangelicalism to frighten children.'

"For this statement Dr. Briggs was condemned by the Presbyterian Church and excluded from fellowship.

"Dr. Gladden, a profound Bible scholar of the Congregational church, says that the Bible is not infallible in the sense in which it is popularly supposed to be. In it, he says, 'human ignorance and error have been suffered to mingle with the stream of living water throughout all its course; if our assurance of salvation was made to depend upon our knowledge that every word in the Bible was of divine origin our hope of eternal life would be altogether insecure.'

"He further says that the Bible is not infallible scientifically. It is not infallible historically. It is not infallible morally. And he says, 'The attempt of any intelligent man to maintain the theoretical and ideal infallibility of all parts of the writings is a criminal blunder.'

"Likewise, the evidence of science is opposed to the infallibility of the Bible. This evidence may be summed up in the words of Professor Huxley, who said that the order of generation as demonstrated by geology cannot be harmonized with the process of creation as told in Genesis, even though the seven days of creation be considered as seven indefinite periods of time.

"But the greatest of all testimony against the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible is the history of the evolution of the book itself and the formation of the canon. The canon is those books which constitute the Bible.

"The Old Testament is a collection of thirty-nine books, written by various authors during a period of about one thousand years. The Hebrews divided it into three divisions. The first division was called The Law. It consisted of the first five books of the Bible. These five books contain the early tradi-

tions, history and the laws of the Hebrew people up to about 1400 B.C.

"The second division of the Old Testament they called The Prophets. It included twenty-three books. Generally speaking, these twenty-three books are the records of the traditions, history, and customs of the Hebrew people from where The Law leaves off, or from about 1400 B.C., to about 400 B.C.

"The third group of the Hebrew Scriptures was called The Writings. It consisted of eleven books of a varied character, such as Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Esther and others. The Jews held The Law in high esteem. It was regarded by them as more sacred and authoritative than The Prophets, while The Prophets were held as more sacred than The Writings. In fact, The Writings can hardly be said to have been regarded as sacred at all.

"Before the Babylonian captivity, the Hebrews appear to have had little knowledge or reverence for those records which later came to be regarded as sacred. Just what part of them were in existence at that time is not agreed upon by Bible scholars. It is generally conceded, however, that at least the Ten Commandments and perhaps a part of Deuteronomy were written and were in the hands of the priests. When the people returned from the Babylonian captivity about 536 B.C. and began to build again their temples and renew their national life, a new reverence for ancient traditions and laws seems to have been kindled among them.

"In the fifth century B.C., Ezra, the scribe, and Nehemiah came from Babylon to Jerusalem and brought with them a certain Book of The Law. This book was doubtless substantially the same as we know it today. When, where and by whom it was written is unknown. That it was not written by Moses, to whom it is generally attributed, is conceded by most Bible scholars.

"About 444 B.C., Ezra and Nehemiah called the people together and read to them this new Book of The Law and bound the people by a solemn covenant to accept and henceforth

obey it. The Encyclopedia Biblica, which represents the consensus of opinion of Bible scholarship, says this event took place somewhat earlier than 400 B.C. and that by 400 B.C. the canonization of The Law was completed.

"Dr. Davidson, who was probably the greatest authority on this subject, says that the public authority which Ezra conferred upon The Law was the first step in the formation of the Bible canon. In other words, about 400 B.C., the people under the direction of Ezra, had decided that this Book of The Law was of more than human origin and authority. By what reason or spiritual insight they came to this conclusion, we are not informed, but this event marked the beginning of the Bible.

"At this date most of the other books of the Old Testament were in existence, but they had not yet been gathered together, nor were they then regarded as other than human documents. With a sacred book or Bible once adopted, it was but a matter of time until other writings were also adopted as sacred. By about 200 B.C. the twenty-three books which are grouped together as The Prophets, were accepted as sacred by the Jews and were added to the canon. During the next century, or by about 100 B.C., the third division of the Old Testament, called The Writings, was also canonized and so became a part of the sacred writings, or the Word of God.

"After the canonization of The Law, there was a complete and final estrangement between the Jews and the Samaritans. So, while both of these people accepted The Law as the Word of God, the Samaritans never accepted The Prophets or The Writings, which the Jews later added to the canon of the Scriptures. The Sadducees, too, are said to have accepted only The Law, though positive evidence of this is wanting.

"These additions to the Scriptures were not made by the unanimous consent of the Jews. Some of these books were regarded by many of the Palestine Jews as sacred, but their right to this distinction was hotly disputed by others. On this subject, the scholarly Professor Davidson says: 'The canon

(of the Old Testament) was not considered to be closed in the first century before, and the first century after Christ. There were doubts about some portions. The Book of Ezekiel gave offense because some of the statements seemed to contradict The Law. Doubts about some of the others were of a more serious nature—about Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, Esther and Proverbs. The first were impugned because it had contradictory passages and a heretical tendency; the second, because of its worldliness and sensual tone; Esther, for its want of religiousness; and Proverbs on account of its inconsistencies.’

“It was not until about 90 A.D. that a Jewish synod finally decreed that The Writings were the Word of God. They were accepted then, not unanimously, but by a majority vote.

“Practically all the Old Testament was originally in the Hebrew language, a language which for centuries had been falling into disuse. At the time of Jesus, Aramaic was the language of the masses and Greek the language of the educated. Naturally, there was a demand for the Hebrew Scriptures in the Greek language. By the second century B.C. they were translated, probably by some of the Alexandrian Jews. To this Greek translation there were added fourteen other books and supplements by the translators. These additions were originally written in Greek and were not accepted as sacred by most of the Palestine Jews, although they were thus regarded by the translators.

“This Greek translation, which was called the Septuagint, was the version most in use during the time of Jesus and was doubtless the text from which he and his disciples quoted.

“Thus, at the time of Jesus, there were three different sacred Scriptures: 1.—The Samaritan Scriptures, consisting only of The Law; 2.—The Hebrew Scriptures, consisting of The Law, the Prophets and The Writings; and 3.—The Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, consisting of The Law, the Prophets, The Writings and fourteen other books and supplements.

“The history of the twenty-seven books that constitute the New Testament is somewhat more definite than that of the

Old Testament. After the death of Jesus, certain documents began to appear among the Christians. The first of these were letters or epistles written by Paul to some of the churches which he had organized and which needed his encouragement and advice. Later other letters or epistles by other early Christian writers came into circulation. Still later, various gospels or short sketches of the life of Jesus and his disciples were written.

"These early writings were very numerous. During the first two centuries A.D. more than forty gospels were in use and a much larger number of acts, epistles and revelations. We have records of more than one hundred and thirty of these, many of which were regarded as sacred in the early church. Some were in the hands of one bishop or church and some were in the possession of another.

"From this great number probably running into the hundreds, the twenty-seven books which now form the New Testament were selected. This process of selection was slow and occasioned much difference of opinion and not a little hard feeling.

"The final collection of these writings of which we have a record was made by one Marcion, a heretic, about 145 A.D. His canon consisted of ten of the Epistles of Paul and one gospel or story of Jesus. This gospel was not one of the Four Gospels as we know them. I have already explained where they came from.

"It was said by one of olden times: 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.' This bit of good advice is no less appropriate now than it was nineteen hundred years ago when Paul, its reputed author, addressed it to the Thessalonians. Had he told us by what process we should 'prove all things', by what means we are to know what 'is good', what a lot of bad mistakes his followers might have avoided. Perhaps he did not think it necessary to give explicit directions as to so simple a proposition. Perhaps he thought that all rational beings would know that to prove anything requires the exercise of

their reason, that faculty which entitles them to be called rational.

"Simple as seems the proposition that we should investigate or prove all things by the process of reasoning and that we should accept, believe or hold fast only that which to us seems good or true, yet there are many who in laying the foundation for their belief would assign to this faculty of the human mind a role of only secondary importance. Especially is this true in religion in which many would place authority above reason, forgetting that without reason there can be no authority.

"One who would found his beliefs on authority must first determine what to him shall be authority. To do this, he must exercise his reason. If the authority to be followed be a religious one, then he must choose between the Christian Bible, the Mohammedan Koran, the Buddhist Tripitaka, the Brahman Vedas and other so-called books or authorities. To 'prove' these authorities and determine to which one he will 'hold fast' he must depend upon his reason. He may consciously or unconsciously reason that his ancestors, his friends and his countrymen have for generations accepted the Bible as authority and, therefore, that it must be the authority. Or he may carefully read, study and compare all these sacred books and then, by a more complex process of reasoning, may decide to accept the Bible or some other book; or he may reject all of them.

"If he should accept the Bible as authority, then by further reasoning, he must determine which of the various versions of the book he will follow. In the same way, he must decide if this authority is fallible or infallible; whether it is an authority on all subjects, or only on certain subjects. By some process of reasoning, he must reconcile or explain away all the apparent contradictions in this authoritative book; and by reasoning he must determine the meaning of every sentence in the book.

"Back of every decision, back of every belief is some kind

of reasoning, either conscious or unconscious, simple or complex, logical or illogical. No authority can be authority to anyone until it has been accepted as such by that higher authority, his reason—that authority which to each individual is superior to all others. However crude, imperfect or unreliable that higher authority may be, it is always the court of last resort.

“As has been so ably pointed out by others, if a superhuman revelation has ever really been given to man, it could be such a revelation only to those who were the direct recipients of it. To all others it is merely a human revelation, a matter of human testimony. If gods or angels really did talk to Mohammed, their message was a superhuman revelation only to him. To all others it is but a human revelation from Mohammed. The truth or falsity of this revelation, each person must determine for himself by using his reason.

“When it is claimed that any person whomsoever is or has been in more direct communication with the Infinite than that possible to ordinary mortals, and when it is claimed that such person has received a revelation from such source, the evidence of such claim should be examined by each individual in the light of reason, and by that light must each determine for himself if he will or will not accept the claim as true. It matters not if the claimant be a Moses or a Mohammed, a Joshua or a Joseph Smith; the claim of each should be subjected to the same scrutiny. Only thus can we hope to learn the truth. Likewise, if we assume to have unusual or more direct influence with the Supreme Ruler than that possessed by humanity in general, these claims, too, must be judged in the light of reason. It matters not if the claimant be a fortune-telling mendicant, who for the price of a meal will agree to change the decrees of fate, or if he be an infallible pope, who, for other considerations, will presume to influence the destiny of the soul of man; all such claims must be tried alike before the bar of reason.

“Even beliefs that are founded on the testimony of others

are really based on reason; for we must always use our reason to determine the value of testimony. Hence, in the last analysis, belief is always based on reason. A belief based on insufficient or illogical reasoning we call prejudice or credulity. One based on unconscious reasoning by a specialized process we call instinct. When we can demonstrate a belief to be true, then it becomes knowledge or human experience.

"As rational beings, we may be justified in believing or accepting as true certain theories which as yet we cannot demonstrate. Reasoning from the things we know, or from those we think we know, we may come to believe that there is that in man which survives after the change we call death—a something we call the soul. We can not demonstrate this to be true and thus class it with facts, but as the belief does not contradict human experience or knowledge, we are justified in holding such belief if it does no violence to our reason.

"Naturally, human beliefs will vary much, because human ability to reason logically varies much and because the premises from which we start vary much. But as unreliable as is human reason, and as uncertain as are the beliefs it leads us to, it is the only evidence we have of those things of which we cannot know. When we stray from the beaten path of knowledge, reason is our safest guide; on the shoreless ocean of speculation, reason is our surest compass.

"How irrational then must be any belief based on authority. How unjust any creed which would make reason subservient to revelation. How absurd any plan of salvation which demands of all human beings a definite and uniform belief about things unknown and unknowable.

"Imagine, if possible, an all-wise, all-just God creating man, endowing him with reason to guide him, and then damning him because that reason led him astray. If we must use our reason whether we will or not, and if reason is our safest guide in dealing with the unknown, why try to lay it aside? Why not follow where it leads, especially in dealing with such important subjects as God, the Bible, and religion?

"In the light of reason, let us examine the foundation of our faith. Let us 'prove' our beliefs and 'hold fast' only that which is good—that which will stand the test of reason or experience. Let us follow this heavenly light through, although it leads us away from the flesh-pots of contentment, through the dead sea of our cherished hopes, over the arid desert of disappointment. Aye, let us follow though our friends forsake us and our enemies make war upon us, and though famines of doubt and pestilences of despair make us to grow sick at heart, carefully, cheerfully, let us follow the light of reason, for only thus may we hope to reach the promised land of truth."

It was well past midnight when Bannister and Bowers retired for the night. Once a conversation started, Bannister hated to leave it until he had completely made his point.

In Dr. Bowers he had a listener to whom he could unburden his soul, for Bowers and Bannister were very close to each other.

Finally, the lights in the cabin were extinguished. Sleep came to the two tired fishermen, a sleep undisturbed by dreams, for both were beautifully, naturally tired.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AFTER ENJOYING A RESTFUL NIGHT'S SLEEP such as only the fresh thin air of Rocky Point can bring, Bannister and Bowers were awakened next morning by the ringing of the breakfast bell. This bell, hanging outside the kitchen at the north end of the long dining room, was formerly used on one of the logging locomotives which used to zig-zag up and down Pelican Mountain when the Pelican Bay Logging Company of Klamath Falls was logging off that mountain.

A shave, shower and a hasty dress, and the two San Francisco fishermen were in the dining room eating a breakfast which consisted of orange juice, ham and eggs, hot cakes and coffee, as only Winnie, the cook, could make them. Not satisfied with two helpings, our friends sent the hot cake plates back to the kitchen three times. Such is the effect of Rocky Point on the appetite.

Dr. Bowers had asked for the use of the Cadillac, with Rube. The Professor of Organ at the Overland Conservatory was giving a recital in the Civic Auditorium in Portland and Bowers was anxious to see and hear his old instructor once more.

Howard Bannister readily loaned the car and the chauffeur and decided to spend the day in quiet thought at the Point.

Bannister had important decisions to make. He was about to throw over the teachings of a lifetime. He was about to deny the very fundamentals of the Christian religion, and, indeed, other systems of religion. He was sure of his ground or he would not have made the choice he had made. For the choice was already made.

Yet he wanted to be alone with himself and his Creator. He wanted to think. Surely, in such indescribably beautiful

surroundings God would speak to him. Surely here, of all places, the Spirit of God could and would commune with the spirit of Howard Bannister, showing him very plainly the way to take. Yet he felt that he wanted to talk to someone. He wanted to confide in someone who knew and understood him.

With Bowers away to Portland, he was wondering if there was not someone else with whom he could discuss the pertinent and epoch-making step he had decided to take. Whom could he get?

The question answered itself.

After Dr. Bowers and Rube had left the Point for the Dallas-California Highway and Portland, Art came to the cabin with the suggestion that his brother-in-law and he go out on the lake for an hour or so.

"Don't want to fish," said Art, "just want to talk a bit with you, and 'Seahorse around'," as he put it.

"Nothing I would like better, Art—you and I have had some good old talks on this lake, haven't we?"

"We sure have, Howard, and I don't get a chance to see you or Pearl only when you come up here and you didn't bring her this year, did you?"

"No. Sort of wanted to be alone to do a lot of thinking and a bit of fishing, Art."

"When do you want to go, Howard? I have to fill the gas tank at the electric plant and then I'll be ready any time."

The electric light system at Rocky Point is run by a gasoline engine. When a switch anywhere in the system is turned on, it automatically starts the generator. When the last switch is turned off at night, the generator stops. An automatic affair.

"Go ahead and fill the tank, Art. I'll be waiting for you on the dock. Maybe you'd better take the tackle along—might get a notion to fish."

"Okay, Bannie. I'll be there pronto."

Walking to the Post Office to get whatever mail there might be there, Bannister found three letters awaiting him. One was

from Mrs. Bannister, another from little Marge and the third was from a clipping bureau he subscribed to. Sort of liked to keep abreast of the times in the field of religion.

Then he made his way down the rickety walk to the dock where the ever-faithful Nels had the motor of the kicker turning over.

"Well, you lost your Norwegian pardner, Nels. How are you going to get along without a Norwegian around?" said Bannister.

"Vell—Ay got you round yet, Howard. Ay tank you make purty good Norwayian yerself—only ting Ay don't lak about you is you don'd drink whiskey."

"Well, Nels . . . even if I did, I wouldn't have much chance with you round here, would I?"

"Not ef Ay got to 'em first, you vouldn't."

"Nels, you're hopeless," said Bannister.

"You not take your line and plugs with you, Doc? You not going to catch some fiss?"

"Not today, Nels. Art and I are just going to drift around the Lake and take in the scenery. Art is bringing some tackle down, though. If a fish comes too close we might take a notion to snag him."

"Done purty good sence you come up this time, Doc. Looks lak vind him come up—maybe not—see dem clouds over dere—dot look like vind—but maybe not."

Art finally arrived and the couple swung away from the dock. Nels' foot gave them the initial shove.

"Which way, Howard?"

"Don't care, Art. Anywhere you want to go. I'll do the steering and you be the engineer."

"What about Odessa Creek, Howard? It's beautiful this early in the year."

"Okay, Art. I think Odessa Creek is absolutely the most beautiful spot in these United States, bar none."

"Well, I knew it was a favorite of yours. That's the reason I suggested it."

"Okay, big boy. Odessa Creek it is," said Bannister, swinging the boat's nose in the direction of the creek.

Odessa Creek really is beautiful. It was used by the Pelican Bay Company years ago to float logs down to the main part of Klamath Lake, but Pelican Mountain has been logged off and the creek has not been used for logging for almost twenty years.

Odessa Creek is about two miles long and say fifty feet wide. Weeping willows line every foot of the banks on each side. Bird life in such profusion that it is impossible to name the different kinds of birds, which make their habitat up Odessa Creek. Shrieking kern, hundreds of shitespokes, eagrets, pelicans, seagulls, wild geese—these, and hundreds of other species of wild life flood the entire creek with a melody of song heard no other place in America.

There are no words in any man's vocabulary which can adequately describe the sheer natural beauty of that entire area. It is a United States Government game preserve and fishing is the only sport allowed. In the fall, however, wild geese and ducks may be legally hunted in season. Just a beautiful spot. It shows what God Almighty can do if left alone without man to interfere.

It takes perhaps an hour to reach the creek from Rocky Point and not a word was spoken by either Art or Bannister on that trip to the mouth of the creek, for Art is just as great a nature-lover as his brother-in-law. They both drank in the glory of that morning.

At last the mouth of the creek was reached and Bannister steered the boat into it. As they slowly headed into the creek, a trout, about a six-pounder, threw himself clear of the water.

"See that fellow?" asked Art. "Maybe we better get the line out."

"Oh, let's not fish, Art. Let's just take in nature. Suppose we go up as far as the old skidway, tie up the boat and sit under the willows on the bank? How about that—does it appeal to you?"

"Sure does, boy. I get doggoned tired of selling bread, beer and Coca-cola all day long and listening to a lot of lies about fishing. Seems good, Howard, to get away from it all every once in a while."

"It's always good to get away alone, Art, regardless of what one's work is. When one is alone, he can at least absorb his own thoughts without the thoughts of others being intruded. And, you know, Art, if we can get alone with our thoughts regularly, and if we can be in earnest, those thoughts of ours invariably will lead us to the Author of all thought. I'm not preaching to you. You know me better than that. But I'm talking common sense. The trouble with this world today is that man has not yet learned the secret of thinking God out."

"He hasn't learned the secret of thinking anything out, Howard—it's all bluff—life is a great big bluff. The one who can get the advantage over the other fellow—well, he's the smart guy—ain't that so?"

"That may have been life, Art, but it is not going to be life from now on. This world is standing on the verge of the most momentous religious discovery it has ever made."

By this time the pair had reached the old skidway where they tied up the little green flat-bottomed fishing boat. Then, spreading their handkerchiefs on the ground under them, they sat down.

"What did you mean, Howard, by that statement that the world is on the verge of making the greatest discovery it has ever made? What discovery do you mean?"

"Well, I mean this, Art—I mean that this world is finally going to find out exactly who and what God is. Not only that, it is going to find out where God is, which is much more important—don't you think?"

"I don't quite get you Howard. Do you mean that there's going to be a big church revival?"

"No. Far from that, Art. There is going to be the greatest spiritual awakening this world has ever known—but it cannot be a church revival."

"How come? Isn't the church the only organization that is supposed to know anything about God?"

"That is what the churches claim, Art. But the staggering thing about this spiritual awakening is the fact that it will come to this world, not through believing anything the churches teach, but by denying most everything they have taught. In other words, the world has looked to the church for the truths of God. It has not been given those truths. And the reason it has not been given those truths is because no church on the face of the earth knows what the truths of God really are. Not a single one of them."

"You mean to say that all this dope the churches put out about Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary and Heaven and Hell and the crucifixion and the resurrection are not true? You mean that God cannot be revealed to man through that stuff?"

"That's it, Art. And for that reason the spiritual illumination this world is shortly to see will be such a shock to what calls itself religion that it will hide its head in shame at the senseless, impotent theories it has attributed to Almighty God."

"Well, that is something! But, Howard, if God is not known to the churches and if this dope they have been handing out is not true, and no one believes it is, where will God be found and what sort of a demonstration is this world about to witness?"

"You'll probably read about that in the papers, Art, after I have returned to San Francisco. I'm staking my reputation on the existence of the Great Spirit—God—entirely outside of what religion teaches. I'll stake my very life on that. Yes, I'll go farther than that—I'll give to this world such a demonstration of spiritual Power that the world will never again believe what any church teaches. Either the churches will throw away their traditions and their superstitions and find God, or they will be wiped out here in America, as Hitler has wiped them out in Europe."

"You figure Hitler can come over here and take us?"

"I don't know what Hitler can do, Art, and neither does anyone else. What his true strength is, no one knows. We know that he has not been stopped yet. It's quite possible that if he succeeds in breaking Great Britain we shall fall, too. I shouldn't say that, though, Art. Let me say it this way. Suppose for the sake of argument, Hitler does drop the British Empire. Suppose England goes down, and suppose, for the sake of argument only, that he starts his shenanigan against the United States. And suppose further that he gets the French fleet, the Russian fleet, the Italian fleet, and suppose the little yellow men in the Pacific join hands with him also. Do you think the United States can beat that combination?"

"Now don't get me wrong, Art. What I am trying to say is—it is not without the realm of possibility that Hitler and his allies may take everything in sight. There exists no known power on this earth in the Christian religion or in any other religion which can bring him to his knees, if Britain and the United States should be defeated. And if no such power exists, and it does not exist, either one of two things must happen. Either the United States goes down to serfdom like Czechoslovakia and fourteen other nations have, or else the United States will have to discover another Power which Americans can use and against which Adolf Hitler cannot possibly stand."

"In other words, Howard, you claim that it will take the Power of God to stop Hitler if England and America can't stop him, and you claim that no church and no known religion can demonstrate the Power of God on the earth—is that it?"

"That's exactly it, Art."

"I think you're right. As I see it, preachers are the most useless parasites in the world today. They mean all right, but I just hate to see them come round. They're always begging for this and begging for that. It's always 'gimme' and I hate to see them come to Rocky Point. Oh—they're not all that way

—I have known some damned fine fellows who were preachers—but most of them are not worth powder enough to blow them to hell.”

“Well, I wouldn’t say that, Art. Suppose you put it this way . . . suppose you say that they are absolutely honest when they advocate their theories of God but are quite mistaken in those theories? Wouldn’t that sound better?”

“Put it any way you like—you know what I mean.”

“Yes, I know what you mean, Art, and it’s a pity that what you have said is true. Instead of religion being the Power that can save this world and stop Hitler, religion as we know it is hiding its head, folding its tent and, like the Arabs, stealing away from the fight. God is at the very core of this brutal fight, for it will be the Power of God which will stop Hitler. I don’t believe any other power can. And yet the church, the very organization which claims to be representing God is the most impotent thing I have ever seen.

“Take our own Methodist church. I heard a Methodist preacher say from his pulpit recently—‘We didn’t start this war and we are not going to fight it—if any member of this congregation wants to get out of military service, let him see me after the sermon.’”

“A guy like that ought to be put in the first line trenches, Doc.”

“I agree with you, Art. If the United States is not worth fighting for it is not worth living in and if I had my way that Methodist preacher and every other one like him would be put on a boat and shipped to Germany. Maybe he’d like that for a change.”

“Well, Howard, what I don’t understand is why such a monster as Hitler should be allowed by God to throw this world into such a chaos—are you sure there’s a God?”

“Yes, I’m very sure, Art. Never was as sure in my life as I have been since coming here to Rocky Point this year.”

“Well, there may be—but I’ll be dogged if I see why such

awful sufferings are allowed. What's the matter with God? Where is God? Why doesn't God make himself known if there is a God?"

"Art, it takes a crisis to solve many problems. Only when we are up against a real crisis do we get scared enough to even think about God. It might very easily be that it has taken the present crisis to revolutionize religion, or rather what we have been asked by the church to accept as religion. It may have been necessary for Hitler to have been allowed to manifest his hellish power in order that the truths of God may be manifested to the world.

"I believe that the manifestation of Adolf Hitler, the very essence of everything brutal, ghastly and wrong, will make possible the manifestation of the only Power that can not only eliminate Hitler and all he stands for, but can bring to the whole world, at long last, permanent surcease from the horrors of war and, what is much more important, the actual truth of who, what and where God really is. This world has never been free from war. It has never been free from hate. There has been one economic upset after another. God has never been known on this earth in spite of the fact that there are eleven major systems of religion operating on the earth. Let's look at those systems of religion for a minute, Art, shall we?"

"Go right ahead, boy. I feel I'm fortunate to get a couple of hours alone with you, Howard."

"Well, Art, don't look to me for too much. As Howard Bannister, I don't amount to a thing. But as Howard Bannister, plus the Power of the Spirit of God, I can do a whole lot towards bringing to this world the true manifestation of the true God."

"If anyone can, you can, Howard. What were you going to say about there being eleven systems of religion?"

"Oh yes. Well, here they are, and please try to get the world picture of religion as it exists, Art. Don't look from the inside of one religion out, considering the rest all wrong but yours. If you do, you won't get what I'm driving at. I want

to look at religion as a whole as it exists on the earth today.”

“Well, Doc, I thought the Christian religion was the only true religion—how come there is more than one religion true?”

“There isn’t, Art. The words ‘Christian religion’ mean only that those who belong to that religion believe that Jesus Christ was Almighty God. They don’t know that he was—they can’t prove that he was, and that’s the reason it is called the Christian ‘faith’. It is purely and simply a ‘faith’ that Jesus Christ was Almighty God. It’s a ‘belief’ that Jesus Christ was Almighty God—and that’s all it is. Of course, every system of religion believes it is the only true religion. The Christian religion calls the other ten big religions ‘heathen’ and they in turn look upon the Christian religion as a ‘heathen’ religion. But, Art—none of them know. Not one of them can prove the truth of their ‘faith’ nor can they give a reason for it. They just simply believe it and the reason they believe it is because their fathers believed it before them. It’s a tradition, Art.

“Take your family. They’re all Masons and Eastern Stars. That means your parents were Masons. In any event, they were members of the Christian ‘faith’. Now take Jack Fallon. He was born and raised a Catholic and his people before him were Catholics. Had Jack been born a Hindoo, he would have an entirely different ‘faith’. He would think that Chrishna was Almighty God. And so it goes. The one point I want you to understand is that every system of religion on the earth is nothing more nor less than a ‘faith’ or a ‘belief’ that a certain *man* was Almighty God.

“As a matter of fact, neither Jesus Christ, nor Buddha, nor Chrishna, nor Mohammed, nor Prometheus nor any of the rest of the world’s ‘crucified gods’ actually was God Almighty. They couldn’t have been. For the Creator of this universe is an invisible powerful creative spirit. At no time has anyone ever seen God. These old pagans who promoted the Christian religion and the rest of the religions couldn’t just imagine God being a spiritual, invisible Power. They had to have a

god they could see. And the churches of the early days, to promote their different systems of religion, told those poor saps that they would go to hell to roast and frizzle and fry through all eternity if they didn't believe what their priests or preachers told them to believe.

"Art, inversely to the remoteness of time has been man's ascent toward the temple of knowledge. Truth has made its ingress into the human mind in the ratio by which man has attained the capacity to receive and appreciate it. Hence, as we tread back the meandering pathway of human history, every step in the receding process brings us to a lower plane of intelligence and a state of mind more thoroughly encrusted with ignorance and superstition. It is, therefore, no source of surprise to learn, when we take a survey of the world two or three thousand years in the past, that every religious writer of that era committed errors on every subject involving a scientific principle which employed his pen.

"Hence, the Bible, or sacred book, to which he was a contributor, is now found to bear the mark of human imperfection. For the temple of knowledge was but partially reared and its chambers but dimly lighted up. The intellectual brain was in a dark, feeble and dormant condition. Hence, the moral and religious feelings were drifted about without a pilot on the turbulent waves of superstition and finally stranded on the shoals of bigotry.

"The Christian Bible, like other bibles, having been written in an age when science was but budding into life, and philosophy had attained but a feeble growth, should be expected to teach many things incompatible with the principles of modern science. And, accordingly it is found to contain, like other bibles, numerous statements so obviously at war with present established scientific truths that almost any schoolboy at the present day can demonstrate their falsity.

"Now, you're beginning to see, I hope, just what I am driving at. Every system of religion on the earth today is only a 'belief' that a certain man, who may or may not have lived,

was Almighty God and that every bible is the divinely inspired Word of God. Now, let me tell you something. Every one of these human conceptions of God is absolutely and utterly false. Every last one of them."

"You include the Christian system of religion, too?"

"I mean the Christian religion, too, Art, for had there been no Hindoo religion there could not have been a Christian religion. The Christian religion is copied, fundamental for fundamental, from the religion of the Hindoo. That religion went back and it copied its religion from the old Egyptians. Why, Art—religions were born in Arabia by the dozen. And they advocated the craziest things to scare people into believing them. Their bibles are a conglomeration of impossible theories and traditions which are an insult to God, not a credit to Him. And now, at this critical moment in world affairs, this world will have brought to it the actual and literal truths of God. These truths will blast out of existence every man-made and every church-made system of religion on the face of the earth. But—they will disclose Almighty God and His Power to humanity and when that happens you just watch America throw the Power of the True Spirit of God against Adolf Hitler. Boy! He won't last long when this world finds out who God really is."

"And you think you have the answer to that, Howard?"

"I don't think, Art. I know. I've been watching the Spirit of God at work in certain lives ever since I went to All Souls as its pastor. Art—I know."

"By God, Howard, I think you know what you're talking about. But ain't you going to have a helluva time bucking all the rest of the churches?"

"Art, I'm not interested in bucking any church or its theories. We are living in perilous times. Unless someone brings to the world the actual and literal truths of God, then all I can say is 'God help humanity'. But someone will bring these truths, Art, and, by the way, I sort of wish these truths had been given to someone else to bring to the world—I don't

know whether I'm capable of handling such a stupendous job. However, if it is my work, I'll do it. You see, Art, it's not a case of bucking other religions, as you call it. It's a case of bringing to this world knowledge of the only Power in the universe which can stop Hitler. If America knew the truths of God as I shall reveal those truths to the world when I return to San Francisco, Hitler could be stopped dead in his tracks without our firing a single shot or shedding the blood of one American boy. I said that to Doc Bowers the other day."

"Well, Howard, how is this Power going to be brought to the earth? Where is it coming from?"

"It isn't going to be brought to the earth, Art, because it's here already. All I am going to do is to tell men and women where that Power exists, and I'm going to show them how to use it.

"Art, that Power has always existed. You can use it, and so can I. So can the whole world, for that matter. But religion has come into the picture with its false theologies of God and, naturally, the trusting superstitious followers of religion have believed their priests, preachers and rabbis. They have taken the false for the true. They have never taken the time to even investigate the story their churches have brought to them. They just exhibited what they call a 'blind faith'. Now it turns out that their 'faith' has been placed in a wrong god. Instead of the churches finding out and teaching the truth about the present existence of the invisible Spirit which is God, they have come to the world and told it that two thousand years ago Almighty God came down from heaven to die on a cross for the sins of the American people, and for the sins of the whole world, for that matter. But, Art—this world has been revolving in space much longer than two thousand years. Men and women have been on this earth much longer than two thousand years. And the theory of God Almighty crucified on a cross two thousand years ago is, or

should be, an insult to the intelligence of every thinking American."

"Well, I never believed it, Howard. As a Mason, I believe in the existence of a Supreme Being—you have to believe that, and any damned fool will admit that. But this Jesus stuff—well, I've seen too much of those who profess to believe it to suit me. It just can't be so, and even if it was so, how come these churches can't use the Power of Jesus to stop Hitler?"

"That's exactly what I'm driving at. However, take it from me, when the world finds out who and what God really is, and when every man and woman discovers the staggering fact that he or she can literally talk with God and use the Power of God for anything right he or she can need—Boy!— That's true religion, Art."

"Well, how about all these other religions, Howard? Will they find out, too?"

"Of course they will. God is a universal spirit. And every man, black, white, brown or yellow was made by God. Therefore, every man on the face of the earth is capable of recognizing God here and now because God lives in every one of them. And in the moment the actual truths of God are brought to this earth, believe you me—all men—because they are creations of God, will instantly recognize God when He is presented to the world as He will be very soon. As long as the Christian claims that Jesus Christ is God, and the Hindoo claims that Chrishna is God, and the Mohammedan claims that Mohammed is God, the poor befuddled world doesn't know what to believe—and I don't blame it. But, remember this, Art—the manifestation of Hitler has made necessary the manifestation of God."

"Do you think Hitler is the cause of this war or the result of world conditions?"

"That's a peach of a question, Art. Hitler is not the cause of this world calamity—he is the direct result of world conditions. Hitler knows no god other than the god of military

might. And the reason Hitler knows no god is because no religious organization on the face of the earth has been able to demonstrate the Power of God. Therefore, listening to what all religions have to say, Hitler sees the fallacy and uselessness of their theories and he makes the fatal mistake of thinking that just because the god of the churches is impotent, there is no other God. But that's where he is fooling himself. No, Art, this world calamity is the most perfectly natural thing I know. It's a perfect example of how far wrong the world can go without God. And, in spite of false notions of God—I might add that."

"Then you mean to say, Howard, that when the world recognizes the present existence of an invisible Spiritual Power which is God, it will be able to down Hitler's supposedly impregnable military might by using this invisible Power which is God, against him?"

"That's exactly what I mean. You are beginning to see what I am talking about."

"Well, it looks like to me there certainly should be such a Power, but how do you explain the fact that the churches have missed it all these years?"

"Well, Art, they missed it because the church leaders are more interested in spreading their religions than they are in discovering the truths of God. They are all failing, yet they will not face the facts. The Christian church, for instance, will hang on to the exploded fable of Jesus Christ, even if it leads it down to its doom, which it is doing at the present moment. It thinks more of its idol, Jesus, than it does of God. Take my own denomination—the Methodist. All the Methodist church is interested in is in spreading the doctrines of Methodism. All the Methodist churches are failing in that. But God?—well, did not the old church fathers ages ago decide that Jesus Christ was God—why change now? And so I say that the Christian religion will hang on to its old unprovable fallacies and theories of God—until it sees that the true God is not manifesting in the church, but is manifesting in the lives of

all who recognize that Great Presence, and this without church affiliation of any kind."

"Tell me something about these other big religions—how came they to be in existence?"

"Okay, Art. Let's take a look at them. It will help you to get the picture of the muddled, confused condition of religion as a whole in the world today. And it isn't a very nice picture. It will, however, prove to you the truth of what I have been saying to you."

"Just a minute, Howard. There's one question I want to ask you before you tell me about those big systems of religion. What do you think of prayer? Don't you suppose that if there is a God, and I admit there is, well—that God can answer the prayers of the people and stop this war that way?"

"I'm glad you asked that, Art. I'm asked that question in my radio mail more often than I am asked any other question. The idea of God answering prayer is an old one. It's part of the old system of religion out of which the Christian religion sprang. It has no basis in fact. It is not scientific and if Christians are expecting God to stop this war through prayer, they are doomed to disappointment. For two thousand years Christians have been praying by the millions. For three thousand five hundred years Hindoos have been praying by the millions—more millions than the Christians have. And every other system of religion which has separated God from man and put Him in the sky or some other place, has been praying for this, that, and the other thing.

"It will take more than praying to stop this war. The idea of prayer is not logical. It is a pagan idea. You see, Art—God is above the sky—He's everywhere but where he ought to be. No one knows who or what God is, nor does anyone know where God is, except—'above the sky'. Now of what earthly use is it to pray to an unknown god, located heaven knows where and whose power is an absolutely unknown quantity on this earth? Just as long as systems of religion pray, and ask their followers to pray, they are manifesting evidence that

they do not have the slightest idea of who they are praying to, where their 'god' is and how the results, if any, of those prayers can reach the earth.

"Hitler cannot and will not be stopped by prayer. Nor has prayer ever accomplished anything worth while on this earth. Sometimes the attitude of prayer automatically throws the existing Power of God into play—but that is never consciously done. No system of religion on the face of this earth knows how to intelligently direct the Power of God against undesirable conditions, whether personal or national. And that is the only way this war will be stopped. Christians and others will have to first learn the truth of who, what and where God is. Then, that truth learned, there must be a willing, conscious effort to direct that Great Spirit of Power which is God against the things which are devastating this earth and blasting millions of human lives into eternity. To pray as churches pray today is a mockery of God. It is a stench in the nostrils of God. In the first place it admits that we are powerless ourselves. In the second place it admits that 'our Father is in Heaven' wherever that mythical place may be. In the third place, it is an absolute admission that we are believing in an unknown God, and that in turn means that we don't know what we are believing or why we are believing at all.

"No, Art, our whole conception of God has to be changed. We shall have to get God out of the sky and get Him down here on earth where He belongs, if Hitler is to be stopped and if peace, love, happiness, freedom and joy are to be restored to this earth again. These things never really have existed, Art, as you know. And the reason they have not existed is because the actual truths plus the Power of the Spirit of God have never been taught on this earth by any religious organization. If they had been, how long do you think Hitler would have been able to last against the absolute Power that created this universe and Hitler, too? Don't you see what that mad-man is doing? He is attempting to become a greater power than

the Power which created him. And he can never do that, certainly.

"Art, if there does not exist today, right here on this earth, and in the lives of men and women, a spiritual Power which, because it is God, can stop this war, then we are living in a Godless world. Either there never was a Creator through whose power and intelligence we live, move and have our being, or that Creator has taken leave of humanity, leaving it to shift for itself. That, neither you nor I can admit. If there does not exist here and now on this earth and within the reach of man, the Power that is God, then these dictator nations will win,—for their combined strength is far greater than the combined material strength of England and America.

"I will go one step farther than that. I'll make the statement to you that unless we, here in America, actually discover the dynamic Power of the Spirit of God, and discover it rapidly, we all may face annihilation.

"Not a pleasant prospect, but one which may happen. No man alive can say with certainty that the dictators will not be able to conquer the democracies. We all hope they don't, and the Christians pray that they won't—but if they should, then what? What power will there be left which can liberate the world from the mad domination of Adolf Hitler? Hitler will never see the day when he will rule the world. But there is no known power on earth, today, that can stop him.

"Take note here, Art, I said no '*KNOWN*' Power. And it is for this reason that it has become necessary for some man—any man—not necessarily I, to come, at long last, to this earth with the actual and literal Power of the Spirit of God."

"And you believe that the world will recognize that Power when it has it brought to its attention?"

"Art, if I offered you a thousand dollars as a gift, would you take it?"

"Try me and see."

"Very well, then. Listen, Art, deep down in your soul, very deep, perhaps, but there, nevertheless, is a consuming desire

to know the fullness of the Power of God. You want to be happy. You want to be free. You want to be amply provided for. You don't want to be ill. Well, God Almighty, the invisible Spirit of Creation *IS* all of those things. And the reason every normal human being longs for God is because he is part of God. And, being part of God, all the resources and Power of the Spirit of God are at his disposal at any hour of the day or night . . . do you see that?"

"Howard, seems to me I'm beginning to see a heck of a lot since you came to Rocky Point. It seems all so simple, doesn't it?"

"It is simple, Art. What a pity it is that religion, or what calls itself religion ever had to come to this earth. It would have been far better had man never heard of the false teachings of all of the eleven systems of religion, than to have had them lead him so far away from the Truth which is God. Had these pagan theories of God never been born, this world automatically would know who and what God is, and would be a paradise today. Guess we have to learn by our mistakes, though. Isn't that it?"

"You see, Art, man is the greatest thing on this earth. There isn't too much difference between man and God. Now take this war—it is a war of human beings, is it not? But where can God find human beings through whom He can work to stop this war? Religions won't allow anyone to believe anything about God except what their denominations teach. And if it should be that there is none of God in what they teach, how is man ever going to find God? You see what organized religion has done for this world . . . it has very effectively kept God from it.

"No, Art, we have to find some way to actually and literally throw the Almighty Power of God against the inferior physical power of Adolf Hitler. It is my contention that no religion on the face of the earth knows how to do that. They can 'pray' and that's all they can do. But, as I said before, prayers

to an unknown God are useless. They only hinder in that they raise false hopes.

"In this world conquest, one of the two opposing forces will win. Right or Might. The force of Right is many times more powerful than the negative, destructive force of wrong. But, if no one is using the Power of Right against the negative power of destruction, how can the forces which stand for God and the Right win?

"Diphtheria antitoxin is a sure cure for diphtheria—if used. But if it stays in the druggist's ice-box the world around it could die of diphtheria. It must be used. It must be injected into the body of the sufferer. The same thing applies to the Power of God. This world is full of the Power of God now—only, it has not been used. And I say very earnestly, Art, that unless the actual and literal Power of the Spirit of God is deliberately and intelligently used against world despots, they will win.

"How, then, is the Power of the Spirit of God to be applied to world conditions? It will not be prayed into existence. All of the eleven systems of religion on the earth today can stay on their knees till the crack of doom, and unless they get up from those knees and actually use the Power of God, Hitler will overtake them while they are on their knees.

"God Almighty did not create this universe and then take His leave of it. He did not ever leave the creation He made. But, because of man-made systems of theology,—because of honest, though untrue church teachings, this world has not known who or what God is.

"Therefore, the world cannot intelligently use the Power of God until it knows by actual experience what that Power is and how it operates. Praying can never demonstrate that."

* * *

Shadows from drifting clouds were beginning to fall on Odessa Creek when Bannister, pulling out his watch, said, "Do you know what time it is? We've been here nearly three hours, Art!"

"That means we can't talk about those other ten religions this afternoon, I take it. We maybe can get together tomorrow or some time before you leave, Howard."

"Come up to the cabin tonight. Bowers is still in Portland, and maybe I'll get started on them then."

"Okay, Howard. Say, what do you say if we fish our way in?"

"Fine. Was going to suggest that, myself."

The two brothers-in-law made their way to the old skidway where their boat was anchored and, starting the Seahorse, they made their way slowly out of Odessa Creek into the lake proper. Lines were reeled out, Bannister using an Andy Reeker and Art Devitt using a Wilson Wobbler.

Before they had gone two hundred yards from the mouth of the creek, Bannister hooked a dandy. It went on the board for it was over seven pounds.

Fishermen at Rocky Point have discovered that early in the morning and late in the afternoon the fish seem to bite better. During the middle of the day when the sun is shining brightly, they keep to the bottom in the deep pools and shade. This is not always so, however.

Then Art snagged one. A five-pounder which put up the fight of a twenty-pounder.

Bannister connected with another one and still another one. So Art changed his lure to a plug, but that did not work any better than the Wilson Wobbler.

When they reached the Point, Nels was awaiting them.

"How many fiss did you get, Howard?"

Pulling four nice ones out of the fish compartment and throwing them on the dock, Art said, "Not bad, Nels, for one hour's fishing."

"Fort Klamath is calling for Dr. Bannister—Oakland on the line."

Making his way to the little store, Bannister called Fort Klamath. It was his assistant, Dr. Alan Fordyce, on the line.

He wanted to know whether Bannister would be back to preach the Easter sermons, or should he take them, for next Sunday was Easter Sunday—a big day in All Souls. Bannister informed Fordyce that he was having a fine time fishing, but would be back in time to preach twice on Easter Sunday.

“And, by the way, Alan, make the ads in the newspapers three times their usual size and announce the subject prominently. Here it is: *‘DID JESUS CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?’* Have you got that?”

Dr. Fordyce assured Bannister that he had.

“Better call Doc Williams, of the Chronicle and the other religious editors and have them give us a good bit of space—the sermons next Sunday will make history, Alan.”

This little chore out of the way, Art and Bannister drove into Klamath Falls after eating lunch at the Point. The drive into the Falls, although very dusty, was very beautiful. Art had a COPCO Ford which was a “Leaping-Lena” if ever there was one.

However, they arrived—as Fords usually do.

Barney greeted them as they drove in and inquired about the ‘fissing’, as Nels called it. A Swede can’t say ‘fishing’.

“Got some beans ready, Hazel?” jokingly asked Bannister. He liked to kid his sister-in-law about her cooking. Really she is a good cook, but it had so happened that the last few times Bannister had called on them Hazel had been quite busy and had dished up a mess of beans, which, incidentally, Bannister hated.

“Oh—you and your beans! I’ve got some nice cold chicken in the ice-box if you want that.”

“Who cooked it?”

“Barney cooked it, of course.”

“Okay. Maybe a little later I’ll take a drum-stick—that is, if you’re sure you didn’t cook it.”

Disappearing into the house, Hazel soon returned with a plate of cold chicken and some slices of bread and butter

which she placed on a table under an apple tree in the yard in front of the house. Art, Barney, Hazel and Bannister gathered round and began to nibble on the chicken.

"Doggone, Howard—you sure look cute in those high boots, red flannel shirt and Stetson hat—having a pretty good time, at that, though. But you sure don't look like the famous Dr. Bannister," said Barney.

"Well, I'm not the famous Dr. Bannister, Barney. There's nothing very famous about me. Whatever reputation I may have has come to me—certainly I never went after it, and, anyway, a reputation gained as a preacher is a somewhat questionable honor. A preacher is a man who is supposed to lead men and women to God—and that's something I've never been able to do."

"Isn't that business of leading men and women to God rather old-fashioned, Howard?" asked Hazel.

"Yes. I suppose it is," Bannister replied after a few moments of thought. "But it shouldn't be, should it?"

"No, it shouldn't be. But who is there that knows anything about God these days?" returned Hazel.

"That's the pity of it all, Hazel. That's the pity of it all. Here on this earth there are one billion and a half human beings who belong to some system of religion or other. Think of that—one and a half billion people. There are eleven different major systems of religion of which this billion and a half are members. And yet—there is not a single preacher, priest or rabbi in that entire billion and a half who can prove that there is a God at all. And yet—here on this earth there exists the Power which is God to such a degree that this invisible Power is able to bring peace to the warring nations almost instantaneously."

Art leaned forward in his chair.

"Is it your contention, Howard, that none of these systems of religion know anything about God?"

"Remember what I told you this afternoon up Odessa Creek?"

"Yes, I'll never forget that. But what puzzles me is how all these different systems of religion with their billion and a half members came to be, if none of them know God."

"Well, do you know of anyone in your large circle of friends who can say truthfully that he actually knows who God is, what God is, or where God is? These millions of people want to know God. That's the reason they embrace religion. But no religion on earth can disclose God to them."

"Not me, Howard. And I don't believe Barney or anyone else does. Why, to say that a man actually and literally knows God is something I've never heard before."

"Exactly. And in spite of the fact that there are eleven major systems of religion operating on the earth today, let me repeat what I just said—there is not a single soul among them all who knows the first thing about God. Of course, these eleven systems of religion are only 'beliefs' about God. They cannot all be true for they are all different. Either one is true and the rest false, or they are all false. The funny thing about it is that each one of them claims to be the only true religion and the rest all are false."

"How about running over that list, Howard?"

"Okay. And mind you, I'm only talking about living religions now. There have been a couple of score more that died a natural death just like this eleven will die if they don't get busy and find God."

"If you ask me, all religion is a graft," said Hazel.

"No, I don't think that, Hazel. I don't agree with you at all. The trouble with religion is that the leaders of it are not honest with the people. These leaders admit that they do not really know anything about God. They admit that their present theories of God are utterly useless when it comes to an actual demonstration of the Power of God, and yet they will not come clean with their membership.

"For instance, they will not tell their people that over thirty-five hundred years ago Hindooism, which now has over two hundred and fifty million followers, taught that Almighty

God came down from Heaven to die on a cross for the sins of the world. They do not tell us that this 'god' was the second part of a trinity. They do not tell us that this same Hindoo 'god' was resurrected from the dead after three days in a tomb. Nor do they tell us that he ascended into Heaven where he now sits at the right hand of his father—God.

"There are many more things the Christian church does not tell its members about the religion of the Hindoo. For instance, they do not tell us that the Hindoo bibles are about fourteen hundred years older than the Christian Bible, nor do they tell their members that the story of Jesus Christ, using another name, was known to these Hindoos fifteen hundred years before either Jesus Christ or the Christian religion were ever heard of. Do you think that's playing the game?"

"Why of course, it's playing the game—their game," said Art.

"Yes. Their game. But it is not coming clean with the citizenship of this nation."

"I think a bit less religion and a lot more honesty might work better," said Barney.

"I agree with you, Barney. The Christian church might, for instance, tell the world that besides the Hindoo god, Brahma, fifteen hundred years before the supposed time of Christ, God Almighty again sent his only begotten son, Buddha, into the world 'that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have eternal life', as the Buddhist claims—and that was three thousand five hundred years ago. This 'god' was born of a virgin, also. Like Brahma, he was the second person of a supposed 'trinity of gods' exactly as Jesus Christ was the second person of another 'trinity of gods'.

"Brahma, and Buddha both were crucified on a cross for the sins of the world. They both were God's only begotten sons. They both were, according to their respective religions, resurrected from the tomb, and they both ascended into heaven where, with Jesus of the Christian religion, they are, we are told, sitting at the right hand of God. Soon, the followers

of all three of these 'crucified gods' tell us, they will return and smite the enemies of God.

"There may be some confusion, however, if they all take a notion to come back at the same time. There would be about thirty in all.

"That, however, is not all. For twelve hundred years before the supposed time of Christ we find another system of religion. This time it is Judaism. Its 'god' is Jehovah, which 'god', by the way, is the God of the Christian. Yet Jehovah was the Jewish god twelve hundred years before Christ's time. That is four different systems of living religions.

"By the way, Buddhism has one hundred and fifty million followers and Brahminism has two hundred and twenty-five million followers. That is a lot of human beings for the Christian God to cast into hell for not believing on Jesus Christ, especially when they didn't have a chance to believe on him for the simple reason that he wasn't born then.

"You see, folks, every religion condemns the rest of the world to hell. If it doesn't believe what they ask it to believe, well, there just simply is no hope for the world. With all these varied gods and claims of divinity, no wonder a muddled world has turned completely away from religion and is seeking for the truths of God elsewhere.

"In Japan we have another system of religion. It has eighteen million adherents and its 'bible' is called, Ko-ji-ki. Like Christianity, this religion is a divinely inspired religion. God spoke to the world through it. All other systems of religion are false and they who believe in them are lost, of course. This system of religion came into existence twelve hundred years before Christ was ever heard of.

"Then six hundred and sixty years before the time of Christianity, there came Zoroastrianism. Its God is called Ahura and its bible is the Avesta. Almighty God saw fit to send His son down to earth to save it from sin, and bring eternal life to all who believed. This time the 'only begotten son of God' was Zoroaster.

"In China there are four hundred and fifty million human beings—all of them created by the one Great Spirit of God—and these millions of poor devils have a god called Lao-Tze. Their bible is the Tao-Teh-King. Their 'god', of course, was sent from Heaven to earth in the form of a man to save the poor Chinese from sin.

"But there is another religion in China and this one has two hundred and fifty million simple trusting followers who believe every word their priests ask them to believe. This system of religion is Confucianism and Confucius was another divinely begotten son of God who came down from Heaven to save the world from sin.

"Surely, with so many saviours the world cannot, or should not be lost. It is lost, however, in spite of them all. At the birth of Confucius holy angels sang songs of praise to Almighty God, for there had been born a son whose name was 'Holy Redeemer', 'The Son of God', the 'Saviour of Mankind'. These good Chinamen, whose number has been decimated to the tune of twenty millions by the cruel Japanese, have a bible. They have many bibles—the Classics. Here we see millions of Japanese who have a religion which they claim to be 'the only true religion divinely inspired by God', brutally murdering millions of innocent Chinese who, too, have 'the only divinely inspired religion'. Horrible, isn't it?

"Then there is another major system of religion and this one, by the way, is the fastest growing religion on the face of the earth. Yet it did not come into existence until six hundred years *AFTER* the supposed time of Christ. Its bible is the Koran and two hundred and fifty million people, all human beings, all creatures of the one Great Spirit—are trusting in Mohammed, 'the only begotten son of God', for their ultimate salvation.

"And so it goes. Eleven of them. All except one before the time of Christ. All divinely inspired of God—what a blatant mockery of God all religion is.

"There are several things worth noting in connection with

these pre-Christian systems of religion. We may include the Christian system, also, by the way.

"The first thing I want you to note is that these religions are only *BELIEFS ABOUT GOD*. Each believes that a certain man was God. And they believe that because the promoters of those religions, like the promoter of the Christian religion, told them that Jesus Christ was actually God Almighty in human form.

"It would be foolish, of course, to believe for one moment that any of these religions know the first thing about God. If they knew that, they would not be 'beliefs' about God. They do not know who God is, where God is and most certainly none of them can manifest the Power of the Spirit of God on this earth. Hence, they are man-made theories of God and 'beliefs' about God. The Christian religion stole everything it has from the religions of the Hindoo.

"Now all of these systems of religion cannot be true. One is true and the rest false, or they are all false. Probably the latter. Then again, remember this—no one asked these religions to come to this earth with their conceptions of God. In each case, these religions were promoted by some efficient religious promoter, and then they were offered to the general public as having come directly from Heaven. Of course, no proof of this was given—you either have to believe it or be damned—as the Christian tells us.

"The Christian tells us that 'there is none other name given under heaven whereby we may be saved' but that claim is counteracted by other systems of religion which existed on this earth long before Christianity came and they make the same claim.

"You see, folks, the weapon most used to propagate these differing systems of religion was fear—*IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN MY GOD YOU LOSE YOUR SOULS—YOU GO TO HELL AND ONLY OUR GOD CAN GET YOU OUT OF IT*. The Roman Catholic preaches that today. They all taught it and, being ignorant and superstitious people,

naturally these old religions, through fear, had quite a following.

"Many of them still have. But the point I make is this: In spite of these differing religions with their claims to divinity—and in spite of all their 'crucified gods', this world is closer to annihilation today than it ever was. And not one of these religions, nor their purported 'gods' can lift a finger to help. That's what I'm saying to you people here under this apple tree. And the Christian system of religion stands on exactly the same insecure footing that the rest of them stand on.

"Therefore, none of these systems of religion know God. None of them have ever brought to this earth the truths of God. Therefore, *GOD ALMIGHTY MUST EXIST ENTIRELY OUTSIDE OF THE TEACHINGS OF ALL OF THEM.*"

"That's pretty good logic, Howard," said Barney. "I think you have something."

"I believe that it might be interesting if I gave you a rather detailed description of some more gods, all of which were crucified long ago . . . long before the Christian religion or its Christ were every heard of. Would you like me to do that?"

"We sure would—that is, if it won't weary you, Bannie."

"It won't weary me. I'm after the truth about God, and I believe I have found it," replied Howard Bannister.

"The first of the sin-atoning gods to come down from heaven and attempt to save this world from sin, descended upon the plains of India. His name is Jeseus Chrishna, and the time of his advent was about twelve or thirteen hundred years before the time of Christ. Now, I want you to notice here the similarity between the name Jesus Christ and the name Jeseus Chrishna. I think it is more than a coincidence. I think it is much more than a coincidence. You see, they both were supposed to be the Son of Almighty God. They both were born on the 25th day of December. They both were born of a virgin, called Mary. And the Christian religion contains every fundamental of the teachings of the religion Chrishna

founded. So I should say, perhaps, that this fellow was the most important and the most exalted character of the thirty-five or forty gods who came down from the mystic realm beyond the skies to save this world from sin. He led a far more conspicuous life than Jesus Christ did, and he has today many more followers. As a matter of fact, he commanded then, and still commands, the most devout and universal homage of any of these many gods.

"I want you to note here that while some of the most incarnate gods were invested with only a limited measure of infinite deity, this chap, according to the teachings of the Hindoo New Testament (the Ramazand) comprehended in himself a full measure of the godhead bodily. The evidence of his having been crucified is as conclusive as any other sacrificial or sin-atoning god whose name has been immortalized in history or embalmed as a sacred idol in the memories of his devout worshippers.

"I want you to remember here that there is much more evidence of the actual existence of this god than there ever was of the existence of Jesus Christ. There are sculptures and monuments which still exist and which represent Chrishna, who is called 'The crucified God and Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, Jeseus Chrishna'. Now here is the same identical statement made about Jesus Christ, yet this statement concerning Chrishna was made fifteen hundred years before Christianity or Christ were ever heard of. I think this god has done more to convince me of the falsity of the Christian religion than any of the rest of the crucified gods which came down from heaven to suffer death upon the cross.

"This god is depicted with holes pierced in his feet and hands and certainly that is intended to represent the nail holes made by the act of crucifixion. Then again, there exist more transcript drawings of this god which show him actually upon a cross. These pictures are almost an exact duplicate of the pictures we all have seen representing Jesus Christ, too, as being killed on a cross. Altogether, about fifteen of these

plates are in existence and I have copies of them in my possession. One of these crucifixion pictures is ornamented with a dove and a serpent and it is interesting to note that these are both emblems of deity in the Christian Bible.

"Now, Barney, the thing I want to know and the question I would like to drive into the innermost temple of the Christian's conscience with the overwhelming force of the unconquerable logic of history, is this: '*WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?*' How does it happen that the Hindoo had the complete story of the crucifixion of Almighty God fifteen hundred years before Christianity had it, the name of each of these crucified saviours being practically identical? I wish Christianity would only let conviction have its perfect work while answering this question. I wish I could destroy the prejudices of a thousand years. If I can do that, all Christians can rejoice in the discovery of an historical truth, calculated to disenthral their minds from the soul-cramping crucifixions and bloody atonements. I don't think you can hang the salvation of this world on this type of tradition.

"Not very long ago the British Parliament sent to India a commission for the purpose of examining the sacred books and monuments I am speaking of. The report of the commission was left in the hands of a Christian bishop at Calcutta, with instructions to forward it to England. On its arrival in London, however, it was found to be so horribly mutilated as to be scarcely recognizable as the official report of this commission. The account of the crucifixion of Jeseus Chrishna was gone. It had been physically removed from the report.

"The history of this crucified god is contained principally in the Baghavat Gita, the episode portion of the Mahabaret Bible. This book, of course, is divinely inspired, like all other bibles, and it has the antiquity of six thousand years. It happens to be the oldest sacred writing in existence. The book recounts that, like Christ, Chrishna was of humble origin, and like him, had to encounter persecution and opposition. He seems, however, to have been more successful than Jesus in the propaga-

tion of his doctrines; for it is declared 'He soon became surrounded by many earnest followers, and the people in vast multitudes followed him, crying aloud, "This is indeed the Redeemer, promised to our fathers"'.

"His pathway was literally strewn with miracles. He healed the sick, he cured the lepers, he restored speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, and eyesight to the blind. He raised the dead, he aided the weak, he comforted the sorrow-stricken, he relieved the oppressed, and he cast out devils. It seems to me the Christian religion teaches all these things in its Bible and yet six thousand years ago they all were taught in the Hindoo Bible. In the time of Alexander the Great, 330 B.C., millions upon millions worshipped Chrishna as Almighty God and the Son of God.

"Am I boring you too much with this recitation?"

Hazel spoke up quickly, "You certainly are not. This is the most interesting and amazing thing I have ever listened to. The preachers in this country tell the very same things that you're talking about, and they offer them to this world as original—yet were they not all written in a Bible written six thousand years ago? How come?"

"All right, Hazel, let me tell you some more counterparts of Chrishna to the story of Christ. As a matter of fact, these stories are practically identical.

"Now listen. Here was a god miraculously born of a virgin and fathered by the Holy Ghost. The mother and child were visited by shepherds, wise men from the East and an angelic host who joyously sang, 'In Thy delivery oh divinely favored among women, all nations shall have cause to exalt'. You will recall that in the Christian Bible we are given a monstrous story of King Herod ordering all the first born to be put to death, but the Bible of Chrishna anticipated that by five thousand years. It, too, had a tyrant ruler by the name of Cansa, and he, long before the time of Herod, ordered all the first born to be put to death.

"Now this Hindoo Bible also recounts the miraculous escape

of the mother and child from the bloody decree of Cansa and the recitation of this is very similar to the Christian story of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea. In this instance, the River Jumna parted its waves to permit the mother and child to pass through on dry ground. When those who were seeking the life of the young child got out into the middle of the river, the walls of water fell on them, drowning them all.

"You will recall that Jesus Christ retired early to a desert, but so did Chrishna as recorded six thousand years ago. Christ, you will recall, was baptized in the River Jordan and at his baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him. But Chrishna had that experience in the River Ganges long before Christ or Christianity were ever heard of.

"Jesus Christ, we are told, was transfigured on the Mount and it is interesting to note that on the very same mountain at Madura Jeseus Chrishna was also transfigured. At this transfiguration Jesus Christ said, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'.

"Now listen to what Chrishna said, according to the Hindoo Bible. 'Present or absent, I will always be with you'.

"You will recall that Jesus had a favorite disciple called John and it may be interesting to note that Chrishna had a favorite disciple, also, which he called Arjoon.

"Like Christ, Chrishna was anointed by women with oil. You will recall the parable of the fishermen who couldn't catch any fish and who were commanded to let down their nets on the other side of the boat—well, you had the same story told of Chrishna. You have practically a duplicate of the Sermon on the Mount, and I think I can safely say to you that it could hardly be possible that these two stories could exist without one being copied from the other."

Art interrupted at this point and said, "You mean to tell me that more people believe that story than believe the story of Jesus Christ?"

"I mean to tell you this, Art. I mean to tell you that this story had, and still has, about three times as many believers as has the story of Jesus Christ. But listen to this:

"Here's another Hindoo god, and this fellow came into the picture about seven hundred years before Christ. His name is Sakya. I'll tell you, Art, these Hindoos had a lot of virgin born gods in their time. The one I'm talking about now had three names. He was known as Sakya, Buddha-Sakya, and Sakya-Muni. The stories of this god run something like this. He was crucified by an arrow being driven through his body which fastened into a tree; the tree with the arrow thus projecting at right angles formed the cross, emblematical of the atoning sacrifice. One account of Sakya states that he was crucified by his enemies for the humble act of plucking a flower in a garden. You will recall that one of the accusations brought against Christ was that of plucking ripened ears of corn on the Sabbath. There is rather a remarkable coincidence in that the pictures of Christian gods representing the virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, either the child or the mother is frequently represented holding a bunch of flowers in the hand. Undoubtedly this comes from the legend of the Hindoo god we are now talking about.

"Well, I won't waste too much time talking about our friend, Buddha, any more than to point out that he was called 'The Saviour of the World', 'The Light of the World', 'The Source of Life', etc.

"His mother was a very pure, refined, pious and devout virgin woman who never indulged in any impure thoughts, words or acts. She was so much esteemed for her virtues and for being the mother of God that an escort of ladies attended her wherever she went. The trees bowed down before her as she passed through the forest, and flowers sprang up wherever her foot pressed the ground. She was saluted as 'The Holy Virgin Queen of Heaven'. I wonder what some of my good Catholic friends will think when they read this."

"Well, Howard, don't you suppose that all these big Christian church organizations know all about these things as well as you do?"

"Of course, I believe that, but you couldn't expect the Christian church to tell the man on the street that, could you? Why, the Catholic church won't even let them read its own Christian Bible, so certainly they are not going to tell 'the faithful' that there had been a lot more virgins in this world who were the mothers of God before—long before—the time of their fabled Virgin Mary.

"But let's go back to this fellow, Buddha. I want to point out just a couple more important analogies.

"Like Christ, Buddha began to preach his gospel and heal the sick when he was about twenty-eight years of age. It is declared 'The blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, the lame danced, and the crooked became straight.' Where have you heard that before, Barney? Seeing his many miracles, the people declared, 'This is Almighty God.'

"In some ways, the Hindoo bibles are far more logical and uplifting documents than is the Christian Bible. I can show you passages in the Christian Bible that if they appeared in any other book would not be allowed to go through the United States mail. So absolutely filthy are they that I would not allow my children to read them.

"There's one thing I'd like you to note, folks, about Buddhism. It is a very important point. It succeeded in converting about three hundred and fifty million people, yet it was never propagated by the sword and it never persecuted the disciples of other religions. More people have been brutally slain on the fields of battle and in the torture chambers of the Roman Catholic church as a result of Christianity than have been put to death by all the rest of the religions combined. That is the reason that just a few months ago the Arch-bishop of Canterbury threw up his hands in London and shouted: 'Christianity is a bloody religion—it has failed'.

"Now, before I leave this god, you've heard about the Ten Commandments of the Christian Bible, haven't you?"

"Sure, we've heard them all our lives," replied Hazel.

"All right, now the moral code of Buddha has only five commandments; not ten. Here they are: '(1) Thou shalt not kill. (2) Thou shalt not steal. (3) Thou shalt not commit adultery or any impurity. (4) Thou shalt not lie. (5) Thou shalt not intoxicate thyself.'

"So, you see, Barney, the Ten Commandments certainly are not original with the Christian Bible, yet hundreds of thousands of Christian priests and ministers for hundreds of years have told poor, believing people like you and me, that these commandments were given by Moses. Nothing of the sort. The oldest known reference to them is right here in the Hindoo bible, which is at least six thousand years old.

"Now, let's take a look at the next god. This fellow was called Tammuz. He was born and raised in Syria eleven hundred and sixty years before the time of Christ. The most complete history of this god was written four hundred years before the time of Christ by a historian called Ctesias. Here's a verse which appears in the writings of this author and what at this very moment, with one word changed, is used in the Methodist Hymnal:

*'Trust ye saints your Lord restored
Trust ye in your reason Lord; for the
pains which Tammuz endured; our salvation
have procured.'*

"One of the statements in the history of this God is as follows: 'Trust ye in God for out of his loins salvation has come to us.' Another famous writer speaks of this God as 'Rising from the dead for the salvation of the world,' while the Christian writer, Parkhurst, alludes to this saviour as being long before the time of Christ and filling the same chapter in sacred history.

"Now God number four appeared on the scene about 552 B.C. We have a very conclusive historical proof of the crucifixion of this heathen god. Mr. Higgins tells us, 'He is represented in his history with nail-holes in his hands and the soles of his feet. . . .' Nails, hammers and pincers are constantly seen represented on his crucifixes and are objects of adoration among his followers. And the iron crown of Lombardy has within it a nail of what is claimed as his true original cross, and is much admired and venerated on that account. The worship of this crucified God prevails chiefly in the Travancore and other southern countries in the region of Madura.

"God number five was crucified six hundred twenty-two years before Christ. With respect to the crucifixion of this ancient saviour, we have this very definite and specific testimony that 'he was crucified on a tree in Nepal'. The name of this incarnate God and Oriental saviour occurs frequently in the holy bibles and sacred books of other countries. Some suppose that Iao (often spelled Jao) is at the root of the name of the Jewish God, Jehovah.

"We now come to another God, and this one, also has practically the same name as Jesus. One is 'Jesus' and the other is 'Hesus'. Mr. Higgins informs us that the Celtic Druids represent their God Hesus as having been crucified with a lamb on one side and an elephant on the other and that this occurred long before the Christian era. Also, that a representation of it may now be seen upon 'the fire-tower of Brechin'.

"In this symbolical representation of the crucifixion, the elephant, being the largest animal known, was chosen to represent the magnitude of the sins of the world, while the lamb, from its proverbial innocent nature, was chosen to represent the innocence of the victim (the God offered as a propitiatory sacrifice). And thus we have the 'Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world'—symbolical language used with respect to the offering of Jesus Christ. And here is indicated very clearly the origin of the figure. It is evidently borrowed from the Druids. We have the statement of the above writer

that this legend was found amongst the Canutes of Gaul long before Jesus Christ was known to history.

"Now, there is another God in Mexico who was crucified about six hundred years before Christ and I am going to give you a little insight into that fellow. Historical authority, relative to the crucifixion of this Mexican God Quetzalcoatl, and to his execution upon the cross as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind is explicit, unequivocal and ineffaceable. The evidence is tangible and indelibly engraven upon steel and metal plates. One of these plates represents him as having been crucified on a mountain; another represents him as having been crucified in the heavens, as St. Justin tells us Christ was. According to another writer, he was sometimes represented as having been nailed to a cross, and by other accounts as hanging with a cross in his hand. The 'Mexican Antiquities' says: 'Quetzalcoatl is represented in the painting of 'Codex Borgianus' as nailed to the cross'. Sometimes two thieves are represented as having been crucified with him.

"That the advent of this crucified saviour and Mexican God was long anterior to the era of Christ is admitted by Christian writers. In the work above named, 'Codex Borgianus', may be found the account, not only of his crucifixion, but of his death, burial, descent into hell and resurrection on the third day. And another work, entitled 'Codex Vaticanus', contains the story of his immaculate birth by a virgin mother by the name of Chimalman.

"Many other incidents are found related of him in his sacred biography, in which we find the most striking counterparts to the more modern gospel story of Jesus Christ, such as his forty days' temptation and fasting, his riding on an ass, his purification in the temple, his baptism and regeneration by water, his forgiving of sins, being anointed with oil, et cetera. 'All these things, and many more, found related of this Mexican God in their sacred books,' says Lord Kingsborough (a Christian writer,) 'are curious and mysterious.'

"In the year 506 B.C., another virgin-born God appeared on

the scene, this time in Rome. His name was Quirinus. The crucifixion of this Roman saviour is briefly noted by Mr. Higgins, and is remarkable for presenting (like other crucified Gods) several parallel features to that of the Judean Saviour, not only in the circumstances related as attending his crucifixion, but also in a considerable portion of his antecedent life.

“He is represented, like Christ:—

1. As having been conceived and brought forth by a virgin.
2. His life was sought by the reigning king (Amulius).
3. He was of royal blood, his mother being of kingly descent.
4. He was ‘put to death by wicked hands’—i.e., crucified.
5. At his mortal exit the whole earth is said to have been enveloped in darkness, as in the case of Christ, Chrishna and Prometheus.
6. And finally, he is resurrected and ascends back to heaven.

“Now we come to crucified God number nine, and this fellow hung on the cross five hundred and forty-seven years before Christ was supposed to have been born. In the account of the crucifixion of Prometheus of Caucasus, as furnished by Seneca, Hesiod, and other writers, it is stated that he was nailed to an upright beam of timber to which were affixed extended arms of wood and that this cross was situated near the Caspian Straits.

“The modern story of this crucified God, which represents him as having been bound to a rock for thirty years while vultures preyed upon his vitals, Mr. Higgins pronounced as an impious Christian fraud. ‘For,’ says this learned historical writer, ‘I have seen the account which declares he was nailed to a cross with hammer and nails’. Confirmatory of this statement is the declaration of Mr. Southwell, that ‘he exposed himself to the wrath of God in his zeal to save mankind.’

“The poet, in portraying his propitiatory offering, says:—

*'Lo! streaming from the fatal tree
His all atoning blood,
Is this the Infinite?— Yes, 'tis he,
Prometheus, and a God!*

*'Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And veil his glories in,
When God, the great Prometheus, died
For man the creature's sin.'*

"The 'New American Cyclopaedia' contains the following significant declaration relative to this sin-atoning Oriental saviour: 'It is doubtful whether there is to be found in the whole range of Greek letters deeper pathos than that of the divine woe of the beneficent demigod, Prometheus, crucified on his Scythian crags for his love to mortals.' Here we have first-class authority for the crucifixion of this god. (900.)

"In Lempriere's 'Classical Dictionary', Higgins' 'Ancalypsis', and other works, may be found the following particulars relative to the final exit of the God above named, viz:

1. That the whole frame of nature became convulsed.
2. That the earth shook, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened, and in a storm, which seemed to threaten the dissolution of the universe, the solemn scene forever closed and 'Our Lord and Saviour' Prometheus gave up the ghost.

"'The cause for which he suffered,' says Mr. Southwell, 'was his love for the human race.' Mr. Taylor makes the statement in his 'Syntagma' that the whole story of Prometheus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection was acted in pantomime in Athens five hundred years before Christ, which proves its great antiquity. Minutius Felix, one of the most popular Christian writers of the second century thus addresses the people of Rome: 'Your victorious trophies not only represent a simple

cross, but a cross with a man on it,' and this *man* St. Jerome calls a God.

"These coincidences furnish still further proof that the tradition of the crucifixion of gods has been very long prevalent among the heathen.

"We go back now to seventeen hundred years before the time of Christ, and we find another chap to join the long parade of crucified Gods, who came from heaven to save this world from sin. Thulis of Egypt, whence comes 'Ultima Thule', died the death of the cross about thirty-five hundred years ago.

"Ultima Thule was the island which marked the ultimate bounds of the extensive empire of this legitimate descendant of the gods.

"This Egyptian saviour appears also to have been known as Zulis, and with this name—Mr. Wilkison tells us—'his history is curiously illustrated in the sculptures, made seventeen hundred years before Christ, of a small, retired chamber lying nearly over the western adytum of the temple.'

"We are told twenty-eight lotus plants near his grave indicate the number of years he lived on the earth. After suffering a violent death, he was buried, but rose again, ascended into heaven and there became 'the judge of the dead,' or of souls in a future state. Wilkison says he came down from heaven to save mankind, and that he was said to be 'full of grace and truth.'

"Seven hundred and twenty-five years before Christ, Indra of Tibet thought he would try his hand at saving the world from sin. The account of the crucifixion of the God and saviour, Indra, may be found in Georgius, Thibetinum Alphabetum. In the work just referred to, may be found plates representing this Thibetan saviour as having been nailed to the cross. There are five wounds, representing the nail-holes and the piercing of the side. The antiquity of the story is beyond dispute.

"Marvelous stories are told of the birth of the Divine Re-

deemer. His mother was a virgin of black complexion and hence his complexion was of the ebony hue, as in the case of Christ who was a Syrian Jew, therefore more dark than light, and some other sin-atoning saviours. He descended from heaven on a mission of benevolence and ascended back to the heavenly mansion after his crucifixion. He led a life of strict celibacy which, he taught, was essential to true holiness. He inculcated great tenderness toward all living beings. He could walk upon the water or upon the air; he could foretell future events with great accuracy. He practiced the most devout contemplation, severe discipline of the body and mind and acquired the most complete subjection of his passions. He was worshipped as a god who had existed as a spirit from all eternity and his followers were called 'Heavenly Teachers'.

"Crucified God number twelve showed up about six hundred years before Christ. The 'English Classical Journal' furnishes us with the story of this crucified God, known as Alcestis—a female god—or goddess; and, in this respect, it is a novelty in sacred history, being the first, if not the only example of a feminine god atoning for the sins of the world upon the cross. The doctrine of the trinity and atoning offering for sin was inculcated as a part of her religion.

"God number thirteen was crucified in the year 1170 B.C. Speaking of this crucified Messiah, the Anacalypsis informs us that several histories are given of him, but all concur in representing him as having been an atoning offering for sin. And the Latin phrase 'suspensus lingo', found in his history, indicates the manner of his death. He was suspended on a tree, crucified, buried and rose again.

"We now have a Chaldean God, who went to his doom attempting to save the world in 1200 B.C. The Chaldeans, as Mr. Higgins informs us, have noted in their sacred books the account of the crucifixion of a god with the above name. He was also known as 'the Redeemer', and was styled 'the Ever Blessed Son of God'. And when Crite was offered up, both heaven and earth were shaken to their foundations.

"God number fifteen went the way of the other Gods about seven hundred and twenty-five years before Christ. We learn by the Oriental books that in the district or country known as Orissa, in Asia, they have a story of a crucified god, known by several names, including Bali, all of which, we are told, signify 'Lord Second' having reference to him as the second person or second member of the trinity, as most of the crucified Gods occupied that position in the triad of deities constituting the trinity, as indicated by the language, 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' the Son, in all cases being the atoning offering, 'the crucified Redeemer,' and the second person of the trinity. This god Bali was also called Baliu, and sometimes Bel. The Anacalypsis informs us that monuments of this crucified God, bearing great age, may be found amid the ruins of the magnificent city of Mahabalipore, partially buried amongst the figures of the temple.

"I'm not going to tell you about any more Gods, except one, who is a rather important God in many respects. His name is Mithra. This fellow was crucified six hundred years before the time of Christ. This Persian God, according to Mr. Higgins, was 'slain upon the cross to make atonement for mankind, and to take away the sins of the world.'

"He was reputedly born on the twenty-fifth of December and crucified on a tree. It is a remarkable circumstance that two Christian writers, Mr. Faber and Mr. Bryant, both speak of his 'being slain,' and yet both omit to speak of the manner in which he was put to death. And the same policy has been pursued with respect to other crucified gods of the pagans as we have shown elsewhere.

"If I should be met here with the statement that the stories of the ancient crucifixions of gods were mere myths or fables, unwarrantable traditions saddled onto their histories as mere romance, and have no foundation in fact, I reply—there is as much ground for suspecting the same thing as being true of Jesus Christ.

"One of the most celebrated and most frequently quoted

Christian writers of the ancient bishops, Irenaeus, declares upon the authority of the martyr Polycarp, who claimed to have got it from St. John and all the elders of Asia, that Jesus Christ was not crucified, but lived to be about fifty years old.

"We find there has always been a margin for doubt amongst his own followers as to the fact of his crucifixion.

"Many of the early Christians and contemporary Jews and Gentiles doubted it and some openly disputed its ever having taken place. Others bestowed upon it a mere spiritual signification, and not a few considered it symbolical of a 'holy life'. One circumstance, calculated to lead to the entire discredit of the story of the crucifixion of Christ, is the relation, in connection with it, of a violent convulsion of nature, and the resurrection of the long-buried saints—events not supported by any authentic contemporaneous history, sacred or profane.

"And another important consideration arises here. If the inhabitants of this planet required the murderous death of a God as an atonement, I must presume that the eighty-five millions of inhabited worlds recently discovered by astronomers are, or have been, in equal need of a divine atonement. And this would require the crucifixion of eighty-five millions of gods. Assuming one of these gods to be crucified every minute, the whole would occupy a period of nearly twenty years. This would be killing off gods at a rather rapid rate and would make the work of the atonement and salvation a very murderous and bloody affair—a conception which brings to the mind a series of very revolting reflections.

"The conception of gods, Barney, coming down from heaven and being born of virgins and dying a violent death for the moral blunders of the people originated in an age of the world when man was a savage, and dwelt exclusively upon the animal plane and blood was the requisition for every offense. And it was an age when no world was known to exist but the one we inhabit. The stars were then supposed to be mere blazing tapers set in the azure vault to light this pygmy

planet, or peep-holes for gods to look out of heaven, to see and learn what was going on below.

"Such conceptions are in perfect keeping with the doctrine of the atoning crucifixion of gods which could never have originated or been entertained for a moment by an astronomer, with a knowledge of the existence of innumerable inhabited worlds. For as there is to the monotheistic Christian but one God, or 'Son of God', to be offered, he must be incarnated and crucified every day for a thousand years to make a sin-offering for each of these worlds—a conception too monstrous and preposterous to find a lodgment in a rational mind."

Barney, Hazel and Art had listened to their brother-in-law with rapt attention. Never had they heard these truths before. They were amazed, as well they might be. All of these good folks were loyal Americans. They were not criminals. They wanted to know God just as much as the rest of the human race wants to know God. As a result of Bannister's discourse out on their front lawn, a faint ray of hope was kindled in them.

If the preachers and priests had not told them the truth regarding God, and if the whole structure of Christianity is only another rendition of the pagan religions of the past, certainly there is still hope for the world, in spite of Adolf Hitler. Certainly there was a possibility of Bannister bringing to this war-worn earth knowledge of a Power so great and so dynamic that it can, by virtue of what it is, bring eternal peace, eternal joy, and eternal life, perhaps, to a suffering humanity here and now.

"Have you ever preached a sermon on what you've just told us?" asked Hazel.

"No. I never have, but I'm going to, when I return to San Francisco. You see, folks, I wanted to be absolutely sure of my ground before I made a public statement on the discovery of the True God. Now—I'm sure. Now—*I KNOW!* Barney, does what I have said to you appear logical? Do you think

men and women will listen to a new conception of God if I bring one?"

"Why, don't be foolish, Howard. Of course, they'll listen. If you have discovered who and what God really is, and if the Power of God can be made known to humanity here and now, you'll go down in history as the greatest spiritual pioneer this world has ever known. You will be the only man who has brought to this earth what it is dying for—the truths about the existence of God."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Barney. God lives— He must live. And if He does, this war can be stopped and permanent peace can be brought to both individuals and nations. Do you think for a moment Hitler can stand up against the Power of the Spirit of God?"

"If you have the answer, Howard, and if you can manifest and prove the existence of God here on this earth, nothing can stand against such a Power."

"Thanks, Art. That's what I wanted to hear you say."

The hour was getting late so Bannister piled into bed at Barney's place and Art set out for Rocky Point.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END sooner or later. That includes our friends' vacation at Rocky Point, in Oregon. The next Thursday saw them on their way back to their homes on the Oakland side of the Bay.

The morning broke clear and cloudless. A hearty breakfast was partaken of, the fishing gear packed and loaded into the trunk of the big Cadillac. Art filled the car with gas at the little one-horse pump, gave Howard Bannister a receipt for the bill, and, after kissing Winnie and the kiddies 'Good-bye' and shaking hands with Nels—the Swede—they climbed into the car and swung up over the steep hill which leads into the Point.

On the way out they met Jack Fallon and his Ford truck. Both truck and Cadillac stopped, Bannister getting out to say 'Good-bye' to Jack.

"Oh, so and it's goin' to lave us ye are, Howard—sure an' Oim sorry as sorry can be to see yez a-lavin'. But dhid you have a gud time—and ye'll may be back agin this fall—yes?" said Jack.

"Well, I don't know whether we'll be back this fall or not, Jack. I'm going to try to bring Pearl up and the kiddies, too, maybe. You know they love this place—all lazy men love Rocky Point."

The inference was not lost on Jack Fallon, for, smiling all over his Irish happy face, he said, "Shure and us lazy folk arr nat the only ones what loves Rocky Point—by me sowl there's ithers whot loikes it, too—and some of thim is awful lazy thim-selves, but thim does not know it—shure."

"Okay, Jack. I get you. But it's been good to see you and I hope this war soon ends so that your fox business will be

good again. I can't imagine an Irishman raising foxes, though—ought to be raisin' spuds, don't you think?"

"Shure and Oi hev some shpuds in me back yarrd," replied Jack Fallon, after which they shook hands all around and went their respective ways, Jack's "God bliss ye," ringing in their ears.

"I like Jack Fallon—he's a real fellow," said Bannister, climbing into the car again and throwing the gears into mesh. "Funny how an Irishman like him will hide himself away up here, raising foxes."

"There must be pretty good money in the fox business when an Irishman goes into that business," replied Dr. Bowers.

"I'm not so sure Fallon hasn't got the right philosophy of life. Here he is, living in the most beautiful spot God ever created—his work is not hard, he makes more than a living, and in the winter time he goes out with Nels trapping. I'm not so sure that Jack Fallon is not a good deal closer to God than either you or I, Bowers."

"Personally, though, that sort of life would grow mighty tiresome and monotonous to me, I'm afraid."

"Maybe so—maybe so. We can't all raise foxes," replied Bannister.

They crossed Rock Creek, Eagle Ridge, and were on the steep hill down the Aspen Lake road. The Ed Berry bent-grass farm lies at the bottom of the hill.

"There's the biggest bent-grass seed farm in the world," Bannister informed his friend. "Ed and I have been friends for a long time—maybe I'll drop in for a minute and see if Ed's there. Sort of like to see him again before I go back."

They did not need to drive to the Berry home, though, for Ed and George Weverson, his brother-in-law, were talking by the barn alongside the road when Bannister spotted them. Bringing the car to a halt, Bannister alighted and shook hands with his old friends, Ed and George. They were all glad to see each other again.

"What do you think of this war, Howard?" asked Ed of Bannister.

"Don't like to think about it, Ed. And I don't think about it any more than I have to. What I'm interested in is bringing to men and women knowledge of a Power greater than a human power, which can bring such world disturbers as Hitler to their knees. It seems a crime that such ungodly destruction should be wrought upon the earth."

"Sure does, Howard. And it begins to look like Hitler will go through the whole world—I don't believe anyone can stop him—do you?"

"No, Ed, I don't believe any nation or any combination of nations can stop him—but, he'll be stopped, all right. He'll go just so far, and then some man will demonstrate on this earth a Spiritual Power so dynamic that Hitler and his ilk will be glad to fade into nothingness before the dazzling brightness and purity of this Power."

"Something, certainly, like that will have to happen—there must be something somewhere that can stop him."

"There is, Ed. I wouldn't worry too much, if I were you. It's always darkest just before the dawn. And this dawn will be a dandy. It will be a permanent dawn, Ed."

They shook hands and the Cadillac was soon passing through Klamath Falls on its way to Weed. They passed through Worden, then MacDoel, and finally pulled up in front of the Weed Hotel for lunch. The road from Weed to Redding is a long, winding affair, though a very beautiful drive. Not much time can be made on this road, though, so it was thought advisable to pull up at Weed for lunch.

After lunch they filled the car with gas and oil and settled down to enjoy the long drive over the Siskiyou to Redding.

Dr. Bowers began to fish through his vest pockets, evidently trying to find something.

"I have a couple of clippings I cut out of the Oregonian in Portland. Thought you might be interested in them, if I can find them."

"How was the recital? Did Boyster do a good job?" asked Bannister.

"That boy always does a good job. He's a master if ever there was one," replied Bowers. "Never heard an organist bring the life out of an organ like he does. He had an old instrument to work on, at that. Yet he brought down the house."

"Well, what did those clippings say?"

"Oh here they are; one says that Little Willie doesn't go to Sunday School any more. Shall I read it to you?"

"Go ahead—let's hear about Little Willie and the Sunday School."

"It's headed 'SUNDAY SCHOOLS LOSE ATTENDANCE' and here's what it says:

"'Little Willie doesn't go to Sunday School any more—and the Portland Council of Churches would like to know why. Sunday School attendance has decreased at an alarming rate, Dr. Henry B. MacFadden, chairman of the committee of Christian education told fellow members of the council yesterday at a meeting in the First Methodist church.

Only one in every five high school students attends Sunday School and only one in every four grammar school students attends. Within a week a drive will be started by the council to remedy matters'."

"I wonder just what the council will do to remedy matters?" asked Bannister. "You see, Alf, the high school boys of today are not interested in Sunday School. The only ones who attend are those whose parents make them attend. And why should they attend? . . . They're not interested in being told that two thousand years ago Almighty God came to earth in the form of a man and was killed on a cross for their sins. Those boys are not interested in what Almighty God did or did not do two thousand years ago. They have more important things to occupy their minds.

"If the churches, however, could tell our high school stu-

dents that they can use the Power of the Spirit of God to bring to them perfect happiness, perfect peace, perfect love and an abundance of everything material and spiritual here and now, why you couldn't keep those young Americans away from Sunday School. But with the tripe being handed out by Sunday School teachers today, I don't blame them for not going. The wonder to me is that they went as long as they did."

"Wonder how the council is going to remedy that condition?" asked Bowers.

"Well, they won't remedy it—they can't remedy it. There isn't a thing they can do about it. And they won't try, either. The secretary will make a record and the whole thing will die a natural death. Yet if you went to that council of churches and told them the trouble was with their religion, they'd chew your head off. If any Methodist preacher got up in his pulpit and told his congregation that Jesus Christ was a myth, they'd have his head served on a platter before next Sunday morning, I warrant you."

"I remember some years ago, that young son of mine back in Overland used to attend Sunday School regularly. Then, all of a sudden he stopped going. One day I asked him why. Looking at me in a rather disgusted sort of way he said, 'Pop, —Blankety Blank goes to Sunday School, and the other evening I saw that son-of-a-gun get up and pray at Epworth League. If he can pray in Epworth League, I don't want to have anything to do with it.'

"And the boy's right, for I happen to know that young Blankety-Blank is one of the biggest little crooks in town."

"Well, what is going to happen to religion as it exists today, Howard?"

"It's going out. It will be replaced by the true religion—that's what is going to happen. These old pagan ideas of God have had their day. Let them go."

"Maybe you'd like to see this other clipping I cut out—I'll read it—it's a peach."

Bowers opened up the second clipping and read as follows:

AUTOS ARE TO BE BLESSED

While special prayers are read by a priest clothed in surplice and stole, the annual blessing of automobiles will be given at St. Mary's church after the 8 and 10 o'clock masses Sunday.

Each car will be sprinkled with holy water as it passes before the church and will be dedicated to the safe keeping of St. Christopher, the church's patron saint of transportation.

Practically every car in the parish has been blessed and sprinkled in the last few years, an official said, and he invited the parishioners to enjoy the blessing again next Sunday.

"Where did you get that one?" asked Howard Bannister.

"I cut it out of some Portland paper. What do you think of it?"

"What do you think of it?"

"Well, I think it's the biggest bunch of bunk, Howard, I have ever seen anywhere."

"It's worse than that, Alfred—it's hypocrisy and paganism of the worst order. That is the very thing which is masquerading as religion. Through such practices as that, Almighty God has been made a laughing-stock all over the world. Yet millions of people fall for such idolatry. This church should be finding some way to throw the Power of God against Hitler. Instead of that, it is dousing automobiles with holy water and telling American men and women that is of God. You see there, Alf, a perfect example of the traditions and rituals and idolatry of the systems of religion which are operating on the earth today. They know nothing whatsoever about God, nor do they want to know anything about God. All they are interested in is spreading the rituals, traditions, and paganism of their church. They think it is true religion. And they're all alike. Hitler, however, is not afraid of their holy water. If this country falls, he'll make short work of such paganism as that. There is only one duty lying ahead of all churches and all systems of religion today—that one duty is to stop Hitler by the

Power of God. But, you see, these church organizations know nothing whatsoever about the Power of God. They can sprinkle apartment houses and automobiles with holy water—they can take up collections—but as far as bringing the Power of the Spirit of God to this world—they know nothing about that. And yet, the idolatrous church which was pouring so-called holy water over those cars, claims that its head, the Pope, is the only man on the face of the earth authorized to act and teach for God Almighty. Do you wonder Hitler was able to do what he has done, with such a revolting thing as that masquerading as being of God?"

"I guess it's fast dying out, though, Howard."

"It can't die too fast to suit me, brother. If this world had never known that sort of thing—if it had never heard of either Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary, the crucifixion, or the atonement, the resurrection, or any of the rest of the insane Christian theories, this world would know God today. But it can't know God as long as such paganism masquerades as religion—see that?"

"Of course, I see it. But, Boy! You're a changed man. Expect any trouble when you get back?"

Bannister looked at Bowers inquiringly.

"Trouble—did you say?"

"Well, I just wondered what might happen if you start preaching like that in All Souls."

"Me too," chipped in Rube from the back seat.

"I don't think anything will happen, Alf. I believe the congregation of All Souls is sick and tired of the hypocrisy and sham and idolatry of present day religion. In any event—we'll soon find out. But I'll bet you another trip to Rocky Point that All Souls will welcome the actual truths of God as I shall give those truths to it when I return."

"You may be right—they respect your honesty and ability plenty."

"It's not a case of my honesty or my ability—it's a case of continuing to preach pagan superstition or the actual truths

of God. And my mind is made up, Alf. That clipping you just read to me about sprinkling automobiles with holy water in the name of Almighty God is a bit too much. Think of it! All this world has to stop Hitler is that sort of thing masquerading under the garb of religion—no wonder a jackal like Hitler can manifest. No wonder there is so little spirituality in the world that this war-mad maniac cannot be stopped.

“Alf, the way to stop wrong is with right. For right is always greater and more powerful than wrong—but right must have someone through whom it can manifest and it must not be a pseudo-right. I have said that before to Art—I say it again to you.

“Alfred, I’m going to say to you that unless some manifestation of the Power of God is brought to this earth *AT ONCE*, civilization as we have known it here in America may fall. Holy water won’t save it. Sunday School won’t save it. The blood of Jesus Christ won’t save it. Those things are all negative. They are rituals and traditions, and they are totally and completely powerless against such military might as Hitler has at his command. I shall not say that the eleven systems of religion on the earth are not honest—for I believe they are. But I shall say that they cannot all be true. And I shall say further that any system of religion based on the virgin birth and crucifixion of Almighty God is a fallacy of the first water. In what way can such a system of religion meet and defeat Hitler? In what way can the power of such a religion manifest, if there is any power in it, which there is not?

“Don’t you see? . . . A couple of score of crucified gods have been presented to this world. Religion never has had any other theory of God than that. Yet I ask you today what have those theories ever done to bring God to the world? Of course, the Catholic church boldly states that God ordained it. But the Protestant church says ‘no such thing’. And if we go back to the other major systems of religion in other lands they tell us that Almighty God ordained them, too.

“Now someone is making a mistake and these religions being

all fundamentally alike, I choose to believe that God Almighty has had nothing to do with any of them. But I'm not afraid to challenge the man Hitler with the Power of the Spirit which is God."

"World conditions are worrying you, Howard. I can see that."

"Of course they are worrying me. They are enough to worry any man. What sort of a preacher would I be if they did not worry me? Alfred Bowers, I believe in God. I believe God lives. I believe and know that God lives now. If that is true, God can stop this war and bring mad-man Hitler to his knees in rapid-fire order . . . yet no church organization can manifest enough of the Power of the Spirit of God to do it. Therefore, someone else must. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, God has laid this thing very heavily on my heart. I can do no other than back my belief in the existence of God with my very life.

"This I shall do. And if I am correct in my belief in the present existence of Almighty God here and now, you will see the greatest demonstration of the Power of God ever known on this earth. In any event—I shall have fought a good fight—and a good fight for God, with God with you, is always a winning battle.

"I don't want to preach, Alf, and I'm not preaching. I'm simply telling you how I feel about this whole thing. Oh, the ghastly impotence of what calls itself religion, and what claims to be the agent of God Almighty. Eleven systems of religion . . . a billion and a half membership . . . yet Hitler appears on the horizon and mocks every one of these religions and the God they say they are teaching. Well, I believe I'll present to this world a God Hitler will be afraid to mock. If he should be so foolhardy, his extermination will come in rapid-fire order. For God still lives. God is still the Creator of this universe and man. And, if God can find but one man on the face of the earth who actually believes in the Power of God—

that man, plus God, is more than sufficient to stop Hitler. And, oh, how I pity that poor fellow who actually believes that the power of his military might is greater than the Power of God."

The car was climbing the curves of the Siskiyou. Beautiful country. The towns of Anderson and Cottonwood were passed. Swinging over the Pit River Bridge, our two travellers stopped at the little roadhouse on the south side of the bridge for a cup of coffee and a sandwich. Seeing some canned rattlesnake piled on the counter, Bannister asked the German who runs the roadhouse if he could make a sandwich of rattlesnake meat.

"Oh, ya, ya, I can make dot rattlesnake meat sandwich for you . . . ya ya."

Bowers was outside sitting on the running board of the Cad.

"All right, then, make two sandwiches—one ham and egg sandwich for me and the other a rattlesnake sandwich for my friend—but don't tell him what's in the sandwich. You can serve them on the side porch, if you will please."

The German went to work on the sandwiches and coffee and Bannister went out to keep Bowers company.

"I've ordered you a sandwich and coffee, and I'm having a sandwich and coffee, too," said Bannister. "It'll be a few minutes, I guess. They will be served on the side porch—we get a nice view of the river below there."

After a little while the German proprietor called to his two customers: "Chentlemen—your lunch iss ready—it is on the side porch table."

Bowers looked his sandwich over, took a bite and said, "Boy! That's good—what's in it?"

"I kind of thought you'd like it, Alf. They sell a lot of them here."

Again Bowers asked what the contents of the sandwich was, but Bannister turned the conversation cleverly away. Soon, the German came in.

"Iss everything all right, chentlemen?" he asked.

"Oh fine," said Bannister. "You might bring us some more coffee, though."

Away went the German after the coffee and soon was back with a percolator full of steaming hot coffee.

"Say, what sort of a sandwich was that I had? I believe I'll take another," said Bowers.

"You like him?" asked the German.

"I sure did. What sort of sandwich was it?"

Looking over to Bannister the German proprietor said, "Shall I tell him?"

"Sure. Tell him if you like," replied Bannister.

"Vell, dot vas a rattlesnake sandvich, mine vriendt."

"A what . . . ?"

"Vait, I show you," said the German, going into the little store in front. Shortly he returned with a can of rattlesnake meat.

"Dis iss vat you vas eat mit dot sandvich. Him goot, ya?"

Bowers looked at Bannister and smiled.

"So that's it. You eat a ham and egg sandwich and slip me a canned rattlesnake sandwich—heck of a friend you are."

"Yes, but you didn't know the difference—you said it tasted fine and ordered another one."

"Well, I don't want another one now," returned Bowers. "Come on, let's get out of here and as far from that canned rattlesnake as we can. I think that's a dirty Irish trick!"

Bannister roared as they climbed into the car and headed for Redding, just a few miles away.

It is hard to find more beautiful scenery than on that road from Pit River to Redding. Beautiful mesquite, winding hills with their scrub oaks. A beautiful highway. The sun was shining brightly as our two travellers enjoyed the wondrous scenery of that drive.

"Seems too bad the civilization and wonderful countrysides like this should be destroyed by those damnable Stuka dive bombers and parachute troops, doesn't it?" said Dr. Bowers.

Bannister thought for a moment before replying.

"Yes, it does. Certainly civilization is threatened today. But when civilization is threatened it's a good plan to remain civilized, don't you think?"

"Yes, but that may be pretty hard to do," replied Bowers.

"Oh, I don't know. It can be done. It should be done by doing the very opposite to what is being done by those who are threatening civilization. In this present world crisis, the force that is threatening civilization is a mechanized murdering brute force. Hitler, the prime moving figure in the world crisis, is convinced that if he can build tanks, dive-bombers, flame-throwers and submarines faster than the rest of the world can build them, he can conquer the world. He could, if there existed no force superior to brute force. But it happens that there is a Spiritual Power so great that all other powers and forces fade into insignificance beside it.

"This poor confused world vaguely, yet instinctively believes in the existence of such a force or Power. But it does not know where to look for it. Deep down in the subconscious realm of everyone there lingers there the conviction that there is a far greater force than the brutal mechanized forces Hitler is using. And we all hope that in some strange mysterious manner this force, whatever it may be, will take control of this war-maddened world and bring it to peace. But—as I say—while all men have that suspicion and that hope, no one knows where to look for that Power."

"That is true, Bannister—absolutely true. But unless someone discovers where this Power may be found and uses it pretty quickly, what is happening in Europe may easily happen here. You and I don't know just how long we shall be able to travel over our beautiful highways as we are doing now. Inside of thirty days the Shasta Dam we just passed may be blown out by saboteurs—or perhaps by a Japanese or German dive-bomber. Seems to me there isn't much time to lose in finding and using such a Power as you speak of."

"Bowers, there is no time to lose. Not a single day. If such

a Power could be found and used, say, today, well England and the rest of the nations which are being so sadly punished would get relief. For whatever Power there is must be a quick-acting Power. It must be able to make itself felt right now—the minute it is used.”

“And you believe religion can disclose such a Power?”

“Religion as we know it cannot disclose any such Power—but true religion—knowledge of the true God most certainly can disclose such Power. It must, if it is true religion. For true religion must disclose God to man. If it can't do that it isn't true religion no matter what claims it makes for itself. Seems to me it is a very evident fact that no religion on the face of the earth today can disclose such a Power. Therefore, regardless of the creeds, dogmas, rituals and claims to divine authorship, it is very evident that religion today is fooling itself. It must have the wrong god.”

“Seems funny, though, that none of the great religions of today have the right conception of God. It's a remarkable thing that eleven systems of religion are all untrue, does it not?”

“Well, one thing is certain, Bowers—they can't all be true. They can't all have the right God. Almighty God did not send a score of His sons down to this earth to be crucified for the sins of the world. That is one thing I'm absolutely positive about. And I'm equally sure that Almighty God never sent even one of His sons down—if God ever could have a Son in the flesh, which I very much doubt.

“You see, Alf, there is nothing surprising about the fact that these old systems of religion all have the wrong god. Look at their origin. Look at the period of time when they came into existence. It is not reasonable to think that the religious conceptions of two or three thousand years ago fill the needs of today. Man has progressed considerably since those dark ages. You see, these old superstitions and superstitious religions looked to the past for their inspiration. Then, because their fathers before them held the same beliefs, they called them

'sacred traditions' and what was presumed to be true thousands of years ago is still presumed to be true today. But the facts speak for themselves. No religion on the face of the earth can stop Hitler. All religion knows how to successfully do is to fight with other religion. I remember reading a book Art loaned me the other night at the Point. It is called 'RED EAGLES OF THE NORTHWEST'. It's an Indian yarn written by Francis Haynes and the publishers, I believe, are Binfords and Mort—you remember—they have published several of my books. Well in the story Chief Joseph was approached by the white missionaries with the suggestion that they build schools on the reservation.

"To which Chief Joseph replied:

"WE DO NOT WANT SCHOOLS OR SCHOOL HOUSES ON THE WALLOWA RESERVATION. THEY WILL TEACH US TO HAVE CHURCHES. WE DO NOT WANT CHURCHES. . . . THEY WILL TEACH US TO QUARREL ABOUT GOD AS THE CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS DO ON THE RESERVATION AND OTHER PLACES. WE DO NOT WANT TO LEARN THAT. WE MAY QUARREL WITH MEN SOMETIMES ABOUT THINGS ON THE EARTH, BUT WE NEVER QUARREL ABOUT GOD. WE DO NOT WANT TO LEARN THAT."

"Thus, old Chief Joseph explained in council his antagonism to the white man's education and his religions. The old Chief had been an active Christian for twenty-seven years, from his first contact with the Spauldings, until the betrayal of his people at the treaty council in 1863. Much of his bitterness toward the Christians and their teachings in the last years of his life probably came from his great disappointment. The religion he had hoped would serve as a shield for his people had proved to be but a screen for the rapacious greed of his enemies.

"So, you see, Alfred, there is little use in our looking to

anything in present day religions for the help this world needs. Their seat of origin is wrong. They came out of the most ignorant ages of the past. All they have ever done is to divide and fight. You can't reform Europe or any other country with the so-called religion of today. We should be maniacs if we tried to. Why, we can't even reform ourselves, let alone Europe.

"America today is engaged in building a defense for what may come and what probably will come. Yet right in our own Bay district, and in spite of our national emergency, men are going out on strike and tying up the whole defense of our nation. Not only on the Pacific slope, but in the East—the coal mines and in the great automotive industries. In this, the hour of America's greatest peril, these so-called Americans are doing everything in their power to hamstring us by going on strike. If I had my way, getting the wages these strikers do, I'd make every one of them who went on strike join the United States Army for twenty-one dollars a month as the draftees get . . . talk about bringing civilization and morality and Christianity to Europe . . . better make it work here at home first.

"And there's another thing, Alf. You never heard of men and women fighting over education—you never heard of men and women killing each other for the sake of science. They don't murder each other over art, or music, or mathematics. Certainly not. But the trail of religion is a bloody trail, believe you me. More blood has been shed on this earth over differences of religious opinion than for all other causes combined. Religion will make a man hate his father and mother. It will separate husband and wife. It is what people do not know that they are persecuting each other about.

"How many families do you know who have been separated because a Protestant married a Catholic, and vice versa? Religion help us today in this emergency? Not any religion on the earth today can do that."

"Then you do not think any religion, Catholic or Prot-

estant or Jewish has in itself the power to make the slightest effect for good in this world today?"

"Do you? Do you know of any system of religion which can stop Hitler? Or do you know of any power possessed by any system of religion which can do that?"

"No . . . not unless they possess a power they don't know anything about."

"Well, even that wouldn't help—even if they did. Of what use is a power if you don't know you have it? Certainly no theory or preachment or ritual of any religion today can stop Hitler. There is no merit in anything any church teaches, nor does any church have either the power or the ability to throw the power of its God against these mad world conditions. This, of course, is because their theories, creeds, dogmas and so on, have no merit in them. Their gods are untrue. Their theories of Almighty God are worse than untrue. They are an insult to the Supreme Intelligence that made man."

"Suppose it might be that these religions did possess a power they knew nothing about—might that not be the case?"

"I've just answered that, Bowers. You might go to a bank and put five thousand dollars to my credit. But that could not possibly do me any good until I knew of that fact and began to write checks. The bank or you would have to notify me that this sum was there awaiting my order."

"The same thing applies to these various religions. No, Alf, if you think that any system of religion on the earth today can stop Hitler and bring his mad orgy of wholesale murder to an end, you are mistaken. You are deluding yourself."

"I didn't say they could—I'm just asking you for information."

"Listen, Alfred, the greatest challenge to God today is Adolf Hitler. His is also the greatest challenge to the eleven major systems of religion. Each claims their god to be the only true God. Each says the other is damned if it doesn't believe what it believes. Now the appearance of Hitler gives each and

every one of these systems of religion a wonderful opportunity to exchange words for action. It gives them a golden opportunity to demonstrate any power their theology may have. If any of these different gods can bring Hitler to his knees, that is the true God. For this world conflict is nothing more nor less than a battle royal between the powers and forces of truth and the powers and forces of materialistic error. You can talk about the cross of Jesus Christ and the blood of Jesus Christ until you're black in the face. But if that cross and that blood cannot stop Hitler, the theory is false. Anyway—to use blood against blood seems to me to be a rather ghastly way of doing things.”

“What do you think of the theory that some day soon Jesus Christ will return to the earth and with one fell swoop, destroy his enemies?”

“Well, Alfred . . . the trouble with that theory is that if Jesus Christ is to return, as the Christians claim, then there are about thirty-five other sons of God about whom the same claim has been made. If all of these sons decide to return at the same time they'd probably start fighting among themselves to decide which was the one and only true son of God. That is what their followers have been doing since the beginning of time. No, I'm afraid that is not the answer. The answer lies in the actual existence of the Great Spirit of God here on this earth . . . *now*. The answer lies in being able to throw the Power of God against Hitler to such an extent that It will bring his doom—*here and now*.

“Let's forget all about God being in the sky. Let's see if we can't find enough of the invisible Power of the Spirit of God right here on the earth to stop mad Adolf. For that will eventually have to be done. There is no physical force, nor any combination of physical forces which can stop him. And unless someone brings to earth the actual knowledge of God, and an actual demonstration of the Power of God, Hitler will take the world.

“And something else, Alfred, while we are talking about

Jesus Christ or any other supposed god returning on the clouds of Heaven. If that is true, why the delay? Every day the Christian god delays his coming, the ruthless brutal Hitler is laying waste more territory. He is snuffing out thousands of human lives. He is causing hearts to bleed anew. Untold agony multiplies every day the Christian god delays his coming—if he is coming.

"That has been a nice theory. It is a wonderful escape mechanism for those who are afraid to face the real issues of the present world crisis. They, themselves, although divinely inspired and appointed, can do nothing. But their god will look after it all, at the proper time. Hitler can do his worst in the meantime, upsetting this whole earth; but their god, one of these fine days, will come back to the earth on the clouds of heaven, and then brother Hitler had better look out.

"Oh, Alfred—away with such damnable trash as that. Let us, for God's sake, and for the sake of a dying world, get busy and throw the Power of God against this megalomaniac *now*.

"The Christian god failed this earth in the hour of its direst need. Then let's try the God of all humanity. Alf, I'll bet you that Hitler can be brought to his end within forty-eight hours of the time Americans discard all church fallacies about God and use their own God-given reason and the Power they possess, against this ghastly inhuman murdering fiend."

Silence followed for three-quarters of an hour. The Cadillac was just entering Corning, home of the olive groves.

"How about a cup of coffee here, Alf? Feel like having one—perhaps a sandwich, too?"

"Okay. But no more rattlesnake sandwiches. Gosh—I feel that I never want to eat another sandwich as long as I live."

"Well, I could have told you it was a hamburger sandwich seasoned up and you wouldn't have known the difference. I will admit, though, that it was a dirty Irish trick. Wait till I tell Mrs. B. about your eating rattlesnakes."

Bannister pulled the car up in front of the Hotel Corning

and they had their coffee and sandwiches. Not rattlesnake sandwiches, either, however.

Over then to the Standard Service station across the street for a change of oil and a tank full of ethyl and the trio were on their way once more.

"I think you're headed for a lot of trouble, Howard. Don't you think there will be so much crystallized opposition on the part of the churches to your new message that they'll make it pretty hard for you? You won't be allowed to talk like you have been talking to me, over the air."

"I don't know whether I told you or not, but the Catholics have, for some time, been trying to get me off the air. To date, however, they have not succeeded. They may, but I doubt it. You see, these are desperate times. And they will get very much more desperate before this war is over. In fact, I expect them to get so desperate here in our own fair land that anyone who offers a solution to this mad, bloodthirsty revolution will be eagerly listened to. Blood will flow in our streets, Alfred. Don't fool yourself it won't.

"And so far as anyone having me put off the air goes, well . . . I sort of have an idea that if I am teaching the actual truths of God, those truths will win out over any church organization. They have failed, certainly. The American public has little use for any of their fantastic practices such as blessing automobiles with holy water and sprinkling apartment houses with the same sort of water. That thing is utterly impotent to stop Hitler. It is pagan superstition, just as the Protestant theory of God is pagan superstition.

"But in this, the darkest hour humanity has ever known, you can be quite sure that the man in whom God has placed his confidence, and has given the work of finally bringing to this earth the actual truths of God—that man, Alfred, will be overwhelmingly successful. The world will make a beaten path to his door. And the world will automatically know and recognize the staggering Power of the Invisible Spirit of God any time anyone brings that Power to this earth.

"No, our future is not going to be a bed of roses. Hitler will carry everything before him up to a certain point. And then . . . men and women here in America will throw overboard the pagan philosophies of God which the church has offered and in their place men and women, all kinds of men and women, will actually throw the unseen Power of the Spirit of God into play and down will fall brother Hitler. For Almighty God lives here on this earth. He exists in the lives of men and women. They don't know that yet, but they will find that out. And when they do, Hitler will be the first one to know that at last a Power has been discovered which any man who believes in the triumph of right over wrong can use. For the Power of the Spirit of God is not some ethereal thing living up in the sky—it is the motivating Power in every life. It is the cause of life itself. *It is life itself.*"

"Then you and I will live to see the day when Hitler and all that he stands for falls before the superior Power of the Spirit of God? Is that correct?"

"That is very correct. This war should be over in ninety days at most. It all depends upon how much opposition the churches throw against the Power of the Spirit of God. If they admit their theories of God are false and if they fall into line, the war should be over before that. But, of course, if they do as they always have done, and oppose the truths of God, if those truths do not jibe with what they teach, well, it will take so much longer to educate the American people to the actual existence of the Power of the True Spirit which is Almighty God. That is something the future will reveal. I'm of the opinion that when the churches actually see the Power of God thrown into full operation, they will fall in line. The Pope will have to take a back seat then. But I believe he will be honest enough to do it. Matter of fact, he'll have to do it. For the Pope is only a man, regardless of what unprovable claims he makes—but *God is God*—the Creator of us all."

"You've got me completely mystified, Howard. Yet you

have me in complete accord with what you say. I have never heard a more logical definition of God in my life. If you are correct, and I'm positive you are, your name will go down in history."

"I'm not interested in that, Alfred. I'm only doing what has been given me to do. I possess no magic potion which gives me any special insight into the Kingdom of God. All I am doing is using my God-given reason. I am fearless enough to challenge religion as it exists today. I love God to such an extent that my life means nothing to me. As a matter of fact, I don't care much about living, after I have brought to America the actual truths of Almighty God. After that, those truths will take control of this universe and the manifestation of another Hitler will be absolutely impossible. That's all I am interested in . . . that's all I want to do . . . throw the Power of the Spirit of God against Adolf Hitler. I know what the result will be."

"How do you account for the fact that not until this age, has humanity had an opportunity to know the True God as you will reveal Him?"

"Religion and churches have been directly responsible for this condition, Alf. I told you that all present day religion is a result of dark age paganism. All present day theories of God came out of the dark ages. They are the work of priests and witchcraft workers. Under such systems of religion, Hitler has manifested. The true manifestation of the True God will put this old world where it would have been had there never been religion as we know it today."

"Of course, Howard, the Christian church will answer you by saying that Jesus Christ was the divine incarnation of Almighty God."

"Well, they won't get away with that. Listen, Alfred, the incarnation of an *infinite* God is a shocking absurdity, and an *infinite impossibility*. I ask in all solemn earnestness and in the name of the intuitive monitions of an unshackled reason and an unbiased conscience, can any man in his sober senses, who

has been in the habit of reflecting before he believes, entertain for a moment the monstrous absurdity that the Almighty and Infinite Maker of the universe was once reduced to a little wailing infant, lying in a senseless and helpless weakness on the lap of its mother, unable to walk a step, or lisp a word, or do aught but cry with pain or for nourishment stored in the mother's breast? What! Almighty God fallen from his burnished, dazzling throne in the lofty heavens, and reduced to helpless, senseless babyhood! Omnipotence shorn of all power but to breathe and cry and smile! What! that Omniscient Being, who 'leads one world by day and ten thousand more by night', becoming suddenly transformed into a human bantling, which knows no higher enjoyment than that of being 'pleased with a rattle and tickled with a straw!' Who can believe it? Ay, who dare believe it, if he would escape the charge of blasphemy? Then say not that 'the man Christ Jesus,' though standing at the top of the ladder of moral manhood, and high above the common plane of humanity, was yet a God—'the Infinite Ruler of the Infinite universe'. Who can believe that *that* Being, whose existence stretches to an eternity beyond human conception, yea, whom 'the heaven of heavens cannot contain,' was ever cooped up in a human body, reduced so near to nothing in dimensions as to be susceptible (as was Jesus) of being weighed in scales, and measured with a yardstick?

"I ask again, Alfred, who, from the deepest depths of his inmost, enlightened consciousness, can believe such revolting, such atheistical doctrine as this? Or who will venture to descend still lower, and conceive of an Almighty, Omnipresent Being, who fills all space above, around and beneath, 'from infinity below to yon fixed star above,' and millions upon millions of miles beyond it, sinking and dwindling to that mere mite, speck or monad state and condition comprehended in the initiatory step of embryonic existence?

"And then think of the Almighty, Omnipotent Creator of the universe, lying in a manger with four-footed beasts and

creeping things, sleeping with oxen and asses in a stable. Next he is seen an urchin on the street playing with marbles and jack-knives, absorbed and forgetful of the world around him.

"Who can believe that awfully majestic Being, who is represented by his own inspired book as being so transcendently grand and awe-inspiring that 'no man can see him and live' (Ex. xxxiii 20), was not only daily seen by hundreds and thousands, but was on such familiar terms with men that they regarded him as their companion, and equal, and even sometimes coolly reprimanded him for supposed misdemeanors and errors? Could they believe this to be Almighty God? Impossible! Impossible! And then who can believe that that infinite Being, whom we have been taught to regard as absolutely and eternally unchangeable, could become subject to hunger and thirst (as did Jesus)? Or who can believe that the eternally and unceasingly watchful Omnipotent Deity, whose eye, we are told, 'never slumbers', could sink into unconscious sleep, become 'to dumb forgetfulness a prey' night after night for thirty years, oblivious and unconscious of the world around him?

"Think of a being of incomprehensible majesty, dignity and power, able to 'shake the heavens and the earth also' being unable to protect himself from insult, and was therefore derided and 'spit upon' and finally overcome by his enemies, as is related of Jesus.

"Can any man believe, who has not made shipwreck of his senses, or banished Reason from her courts, that God Almighty, who comprehends in himself the most absolute and boundless perfection of goodness and wisdom, was tempted by demons, devils and crawling serpents? Who can believe that the Lord, who owns 'the cattle upon a thousand hills' (Psalm 1.10), and the countless hosts of worlds, besides, that wheel their course through infinite space, had not 'where to lay his head'?

"Who can believe that that was the all-wise, omnipotent and omnipresent God, possessing all power in heaven above and

the earth beneath, who was betrayed by weak, finite mortals? What! the Almighty Creator betrayed by a puny being of his own creation into the hands of his disobedient and rebellious children? Why could he not, if possessing 'power to lay down his life and take it up again' (John x 17), cause that all these children of his (as we must assume they were, if he was Almighty God, and hence the Father of all) should love him, instead of hating him?

"Can any man believe that Jesus was possessed with omnipotent power while standing to be whipped (scourged) by Pontius Pilate, or that he possessed a power above that of finite mortals while in the act of praying, with such extreme ardor that the sweat dropped from his face, that the cup of death might pass from his lips, or while calling for an angel to support him in the hour of his mortal dissolution? Or that He, 'by whom all things exist,' could cease himself to exist, by dying upon the cross between malefactors?

"Think of this, Alfred, and think of the eternal Creator, the infinite Deity, the omnipotent Jehovah, the Maker of worlds as numberless as the sands upon the sea-shore for multitude, fainting, bleeding, dying, and pouring out his own blood to appease his own wrath; dying an ignominious death to satisfy an implacable revenge!

"Away with such insulting mockery, such blasphemous humbuggery! It can only find place in the dark chambers of an unenlightened mind.

"Well has Watts said of Locke's skepticism,—

*"Reason could scarcely sustain to see,
Or bear the infant Deity;
A ransomed world, a bleeding God,
And heaven appeased by flowing blood,
Were themes too painful to be understood."*

"Yes, and too painful to be believed, too, Mr. Watts! Here we have a 'bleeding God,' and 'infant Deity,' and a vengeful

God, appeased by murder and streams of 'flowing blood.' Gracious heavens! Whose reason does not revolt at such a picture? Whose soul does not sicken at the thought and would not prefer, infinitely prefer, to sink to annihilation, if not to perdition itself, to being thus saved by navigating a river of blood?

"Dr. South hits off some of the absurdities involved in the Christian doctrine of the incarnation so forcibly and so lucidly, Alfred, that I cannot resist the temptation to subjoin here a few extracts from his sermon on the subject. 'But now,' says this Christian clergyman, 'was there ever any wonder comparable to this, to behold the Lord (Jesus Christ) thus clothed in flesh, the Creator of all things, humbled, not only to the company, but also to the cognation, of his creatures? It is as if one should imagine the whole world not only represented upon, but also contained in, one of our own artificial globes, or the body of the sun enveloped in a cloud as big as a man's hand, all of which would be looked upon as astonishing impossibilities, and yet is as short of the other as the finite is of the infinite, between which the disparity is immeasurable. It is, as it were, to cancel the essential distances of things, to remove the bounds of nature, to bring heaven and earth, and what is more, both ends of the contradiction, together. Men cannot persuade themselves that a Deity and infinity should lie within so narrow a compass as the dimensions of a human body; that omnipotence, omnipresence, should ever be wrapped in swaddling clothes and debased to the homely usages of a stable and a manger; that the glorious Artificer of the whole universe, who spread out the heaven like a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth, could ever turn carpenter, and exercise an inglorious trade in a little cell. They cannot imagine that He who once created and at present governs the world, and shall hereafter judge the world, should be abased in all his concerns and relations, be scourged, spit upon, mocked and at last crucified. All which are passages which lie extremely close to the notions of conceptions which reason has

made to itself of that high and impossible perfect that resided in the divine Creator.'

"Dr. South admits that the doctrine of the divine incarnation involves many palpable absurdities and contradictions, and lies directly across the path of reason. Fatal admission to the doctrine of the deityship of Christ, but true, as his own elucidation of the subject demonstrates. To me, since I first subjected the question to a logical scrutiny and looked at it with an unbiased mind, it presents difficulties insurmountable and absurdities innumerable.

"I can imagine nothing more transcendently shocking, revolting, and dwarfing to the mind, both morally and intellectually, than the thought of believing that a being born of and suckled by a woman, and possessing the mere form and dimensions of a man, can be regarded as the great Almighty and Omnipotent God, the Creator of unnumbered worlds, millions of which are larger than this planet, on which Jesus was born.

"And then, Alf, look for a moment at some of the many childish incongruities and logical difficulties this giant absurdity drags with it. It represents Almighty God as coming into the world through the hands of a midwife, as passing through the process of gestation and parturition. It insults our reason with the idea that the great, *infinite* Jehovah could be molded into the human form—a thought that is shocking to the moral sense, and withering cramping and dwarfing to the intellectual mind, and forbids its onward progress.

"Christians tell us that the human and the divine were united in 'the man Christ Jesus'. But this is a monstrous absurdity, which no truly rational and unbiased mind can accept for an instant—that of hitching, splicing, tying or dovetailing together finite man with the infinite Jehovah, that of amalgamating and commingling human foibles with divine perfection. Think of wedding mortal weakness to omnipotent power, local man with the omnipresent Deity! This of compounding the creature and the Creator in one and the same being! Think of

the omnipresent '*I am*' whose illimitable existence stretches far away throughout the expansive arena of a boundless universe, occupying a dwelling within the narrow confines of the human temple! As well essay to crowd the universe into your pocket, or the Himalaya Mountains into a thimble. On the other hand, think of a small compound of flesh, blood and bones, a few feet in dimensions and weighing perhaps not more than one hundred and fifty pounds avoirdupois, containing that infinite, omnipresent Being whom, we are told (repeating the quotation), 'the heaven of heavens cannot contain'!

"And more than that, Alfred, I ask you if you can accept for a moment, without the immolation of your common sense, and the trampling of your reason beneath your feet, the monstrous thought that *that* mighty and almighty Architect who created the countless myriads upon myriads of ponderous worlds, which now roll in majestic order and eternal rotation along the great cerulean causeway of heaven, that mighty Architect who, from time beyond human computation, has been rolling out orb after orb, world after world, if not myriads at a time, ten thousand times, ten thousand of which would dwindle our little pygmy, Lilliputian planet into insignificance, if compared with it in size.

"I ask, and drive home the query to your inward consciousness, and the inmost temples of your sacred reason, can you believe, after a moment's reflection, that a Being who is too vast, infinitely too vast in power and ubiquity to be grasped by the human understanding, did become (as did the finite and humble Jesus) a helpless, senseless, unconscious human infant; a suckling, crying squalling babe, powerless of speech, and unable to walk?

"Ay, worse, more startling still, we are shocked with the thought that this mighty World-builder, this infinite, omnipotent Creator, was reduced so near to the verge of nonentity, so near to the last glimmering spark or speck of existence, and the world so near without a God, as to become an inanimate

foetus, a monad in the matrix of a human virgin? Shocking the thought! Blasphemous the doctrine!

"Believe it who will; believe it who can. I cannot. I would not. I am infinitely beyond it. Such a belief may be deposited by educational tradition in the affections, but to enter the temple of Reason, it never did, it never can. She never unbarred her doors to admit such monstrous, such enormous incongruities. And all these illogical absurdities, and a thousand more, grow legitimately out of the doctrine of the divine incarnation—out of the postulate which would (following in the line of the pagan superstitions) elevate the finite, humble, mortal Jesus to the throne of heaven, the exclusive prerogative of Almighty God.

"Let us get away from such disparaging, such dishonorable views of the Deity, such blasphemous caricatures of Almighty God. Come away from such morally darkening and such intellectually dwarfing superstitions, the moldering relics of oriental mythology, the expiring embers of childish credulity and tradition, which originated far back in the dark cradle of human existence, in the infancy of an undeveloped age, ruled by ignorance, superstition and priestcraft.

"Yet millions of people laying claim to sense and intelligence, even now profess to believe it! Talk not to me of the infidelity or blasphemy of those who deny the divinity or Godhead of Jesus Christ. The blasphemy lies in the other direction. The infidelity is with the opposite party. It is with those who thus make the dignity and character of Deity the sport of childish baubles, the game of priestly tawdryism.

"And, be assured, Alf, that coming generations will make the man who now worships 'the man Christ Jesus' as being 'very God' as an idolator, if not a blasphemer—for worshipping a finite man for an infinite God, even though the motives for such worship may be as pure as the pearly stream that issues forth from the golden fount which rolls and sparkles beneath the throne of Almighty God."

* * *

Soon the lights of Vallejo came into view.

The car sped across the Carquinez Bridge, after paying the toll, then on through Pinole, Olene and into Richmond.

Doctor Bannister drove Alfred Bowers to his home and went in for a cup of hot coffee.

There he related to Mrs. Bowers what a cannibal her husband was. He had eaten a rattlesnake in a sandwich.

CHAPTER NINE

AFTER LEAVING DR. BOWERS, Reuben took the wheel of the Cadillac and Dr. Bannister climbed into the rear seat.

The drive to the Bannister home took about fifteen minutes from the Bowers home and after passing through Berkeley and Richmond the car finally swung into the Bannister driveway. It was dark, but the outside porch light had been turned on as Bannister had telegraphed his wife that he would be home that evening.

The unloading of the car was left to the chauffeur, and Dr. Bannister crossed the back lawn, ascended the patio steps and entered his home through the large living room at the north end of the house. Mrs. Bannister and little Margie were awaiting him in the small living room.

As soon as the patio door opened, Bannister heard little Marge say, "There's my Daddy!"

Like a shot out of a gun Marge came bounding toward her daddy and literally leaped into his arms. Then she let loose with a string of chatter which must have kept up for at least five minutes. Something about a white monkey.

"Wait a minute, young lady, hold your horses. What's all this talk about a white monkey?"

"I want a white monkey, Daddy. Pretty please, Daddy. You have to get me a white monkey. It has to be white with red legs and a black tail and a green nose, Daddy. They have them in Africa and you're supposed to leave for Africa the first thing in the morning and bring me back a white monkey. Now you can't say 'no', Daddy, because Joyce Marnerson's Mommy told her that white monkeys with red legs and black tails and green noses grow in Africa, so, Daddy, I have to

have a white monkey and I want you to go to Africa and get one right away."

"So you want a white monkey, young lady, do you? You have a Siamese cat around here, a little brown dog, two canaries, and seventeen goldfish—and now you want a white monkey."

"Yes, Daddy, and you can't tell me I can't have it, either. Pretty please, Daddy. Promise me that you'll go to Africa and get me a white monkey."

"Well, what do you say if we talk about the white monkey in the morning? I'll admit I'm more interested in something to eat now and besides, I have one little white monkey around here. I don't see why I should get another one."

"You haven't any white monkey around here, Daddy, and you know it."

"Oh, but I have, and I'm holding it right in my arms now."

"Oh you! Daddy. I'm not a white monkey and besides, I don't have four red feet and a black tail and a green nose. What are you talking about, Daddy?"

Mrs. Bannister was standing close by while this conversation was going on. Finally Dr. Bannister got little Marge out of his arms and his wife went into them, giving him the usual kisses and embrace.

"Gee, it's good to have you back again, honey," said she.

"Well, it's good to be back and see you again. I know two weeks at Rocky Point constitute a real vacation, but the best part of any vacation is the return home again, especially when you have a nice wife and a little white monkey awaiting you."

"I told you I wasn't a white monkey, Daddy."

Mrs. Bannister stopped the argument about the white monkey by announcing that she had a nice meal of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding in the oven and would serve it immediately.

Bannister went into his bedroom-study, discarded his fishing togs and put on a lounging suit after taking a cold shower.

Dinner was served, and little Marge kept the conversation

hot by asking all about the little friends she had at Rocky Point. For several years the Bannister family had spent their vacation with their brother-in-law at Rocky Point and until this year Bannister had taken his family with him. He intended to make another trip up there later in the fall and if he did, of course they would go with him.

It was about nine o'clock and the suggestion was made that little Marge get ready for bed. Her face dropped a little as she said, "I want to go to a show, Daddy."

"You want to go to a show at this time of night? Why, it's nine o'clock and besides I have a good show that I'm going to take you to tonight, anyway."

"Oh, I know, Daddy. It's a show that has sheets and blankets and pillows in it. I don't want that kind of a show."

"Oh yes you do. You hustle off to bed now and we'll talk about a show tomorrow night. Do you have any special show in mind?"

"Yes, Daddy. Shirley Temple is at the Mayflower Theatre and tomorrow night is her last night, so I want to see her, Daddy."

"Okay, if I can't take you tomorrow night, I'll have Arlene or your Mommy take you."

Arlene was one of the maids and on several occasions Dr. and Mrs. Bannister allowed her to take little Margie to the show when they were too busy to take her themselves.

Finally Margie was in bed and after calling out, "Good-night" several times from her bedroom, silence reigned. The little thing had forgotten all about white monkeys and shows for she soon was snoring away as she always did.

Dr. Bannister went into his bedroom-study to take a hasty glance through the mail.

A few minutes later his wife entered and putting her arms around his neck she said, "Did you have a good time, honey? How about the fishing—did you catch many?"

"Well, both Bowers and I caught the limit every day we fished. Say, I must tell you a joke I pulled on Dr. Bowers.

You know that little German restaurant at the end of the Pit River bridge? Well, we went in there to get a cup of coffee and a sandwich. Bowers had told me to order a sandwich for him, so I ordered a ham and egg sandwich for myself and a canned rattlesnake sandwich for Bowers. You remember those cans of rattlesnake meat they had in that little restaurant? Well, I had the Dutchman fix up a rattlesnake sandwich."

"Did you do that, honey? I think that's about the worst trick anyone can have played on them. How would you like it if Dr. Bowers had ordered you a rattlesnake sandwich?"

"Well, Bowers took it in good part; as a matter of fact, before he knew what the sandwich was he said he liked it, and wanted to order another one."

"What did you decide about your future policy at All Souls Church, Howard?"

"Well, I have decided, Pearl, to be true to myself, true to my ministry and true to Almighty God as I believe God exists today. I have given a lot of thought to what I am about to do and am convinced beyond question of doubt that it is the proper thing to do.

"Certainly nothing offered to this world today in the name of religion can do very much towards stopping the greatest menace that has ever threatened civilization. All religions claim, of course, to be divinely inspired. Each of them claims its God to be the only true God the world has ever known. Yet each of these Gods is different. One of the most significant things about our own Christian religion is that its origin is surrounded by such a cloud of haze. It requires an unusual amount of faith to accept the accounts of it which the churches teach.

"Of course, this is what one might expect in the case of a natural religion. But Christianity claims to be a supernaturally revealed religion. One would think that if God were going to reveal himself to mankind he would do it in such an unmistakable manner that no man could doubt the reality of that revelation. Yet from the very beginning, it has been so

obscure that only the most credulous have been able to accept it. Christianity is supposed to have its origin in the person of Jesus, yet it is exceedingly difficult to establish the fact that such a person ever lived. Jesus, Himself, forms one of the most controversial aspects of the whole question of religion and one which bristles with special difficulty through the lack of information accessible on the subject."

"What do you think about the actual existence of Jesus Christ? Do you believe He lived or not?"

"Well, I'll tell you, honey. Practically all the information available about this person is contained in four short anonymous essays of unequal value, teeming with contradictions and inconsistencies, and supplying Biblical students with a never-ending theme for discussion as to what may be accepted as authoritative and what is to be regarded as spurious.

"You see, these four essays or gospels, as the Christian church calls them, were placed in the Christian Canon of Scripture because animals have four legs."

"You say that the four gospels were put in the New Testament because animals have four legs?" Mrs. Bannister inquired.

"Yes. I'll show you the authority for that statement one of these days. The story is told that Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in the year 1545 A.D., called together a group of a hundred and eighty Roman Catholic priests and bishops. A large number of anonymous essays had appeared about that time, always in the hands of priests. To decide, therefore, which of these essays should be introduced into the so-called 'holy writ' and in order that it might be done authoritatively, this Catholic bishop called his pow-wow.

"Well, it didn't take long for these holy men of God to get into a drunken free-for-all brawl and quite a time was had deciding which of these thirty or more essays should be voted into the 'Sacred Canon of Scripture'. Here is what Irenaeus said, 'The earth has four corners; there are four great winds; *animals have four legs*, so we must have four gospels, no more no less.' "

"Is that authentic, honey?"

"I will show you the quotation in the Catholic encyclopedia any time you care to see it. So, you see, the only place where any reference to Jesus Christ was ever made is in four absolutely anonymous essays which were voted into the Christian Bible by a group of drunken priests, and they were voted in there because animals have four legs."

"Are you going to tell your congregation at All Souls Church these things?"

"Yes—I am. I am going to tell my congregation the complete truth as I see it and I'm going to do that next Sunday."

"I notice your advertisements in the San Francisco papers are much larger than they have been. I also note that the religious editors of these papers have given you quite a write-up and they seem to hint that your sermon on Sunday morning may be rather sensational."

"Yes, I should not be in the least surprised if it did not turn out to be very sensational. You see, honey, we must get at the truth of God. If the eleven great religions of Christendom have not brought those truths to this world, then it is high time that someone did. Personally, I am convinced that there exists on this earth now a Power so dynamic that all other powers and forces fade into insignificance beside it. This Power I believe to be God. I do not believe in the existence on this earth as God, of Jesus Christ, Chrishna, Buddha, Mithra, or any of the rest of the thirty-five gods who have received divine honors and have been worshipped as gods or sons of God and inaugurated as Christs, Saviours, Messiahs, or Mediators.

"You see, honey, all history ignores Jesus Christ. You cannot find one single record of that man anywhere outside of these four anonymous essays, which were voted by drunken priests into the Christian Bible because animals have four legs.

"The fact that all history, sacred or profane—that not one of the three hundred histories of that age—makes the slightest allusion to Christ, or any of the miraculous incidents ingrafted

into his life, certainly proves with a cogency that no logic can overthrow, no sophistry can contradict, and no honest skepticism can resist, that there never was such a miraculously endowed being as his many orthodox disciples claim him to be. The fact that Christ finds no place in the history of the era in which he lived; that not one event of his life is recorded by anybody but his own interested and prejudiced biographers, settles the conclusion, beyond cavil or criticism, that the Godlike achievements ascribed to him are naught but fable or fiction. It not only proves that he was not miraculously endowed, but it proves that he was not naturally endowed to such an extraordinary degree as to make him an object of general attention. It would be an historic anomaly without a precedent, that Christ should have performed any of the extraordinary acts attributed to him in the Gospels and no Roman or Christian historian, neither Philo nor Josephus, both writing in that age, and both living almost on the spot where there are said to have been witnessed these events, and both recording minutely all the religious events of that age and country, make the slightest mention of them nor their reputed author. Such a historical fact banishes the last shadow of faith in their reality."

"Then, Howard, are you going to cut loose completely from the traditions of the Christian religion, and are you going to offer your congregation and the whole world the actual and literal Power of God—is that it?"

"That's exactly what I am about to do. Would you have me do otherwise?"

Putting her arms around her husband's neck, Mrs. Bannister said, "Honey, I would have you be true to yourself, regardless of the consequences. I am convinced that humanity has not yet conceived of who or what God really is. I do not believe that any nation or any civilization of any age or period of time has known God."

"You are perfectly correct, Pearl. No system of religion in any age has known or been able to teach the simple, though

dynamic truths of God as this present age will know those truths before too long. First of all, the mad beast of Europe, Hitler, must be brought to his end. In the second place, it will take the mighty truths of God to bring him to his end, for I do not believe the democracies can bring against him enough military or naval power to crush him.

"Civilization, therefore, is standing today on the threshold of either complete liberation or complete subjugation. If man discovers once and for all who and what God is and where God is, he will have conceived of an invisible spiritual Power before which such world-disturbers as Adolf Hitler cannot possibly last."

Bannister rose out of his chair, threw his lounging jacket on the bed and said to his wife, "Let's go and sit in the big room; it is a bit more comfortable there."

Mrs. Bannister followed him into the large living room where he sat down in his favorite chair by the French window. Pearl Bannister looked hard and interestedly at her husband for several moments. She knew he was a changed man. She saw in his steel gray eyes a depth of power which had never been there before. The smile he usually carried was gone. His whole attitude was that of a man who has been charged with a grave responsibility. No one knew what this charge was any better than Howard Bannister's wife.

They continued to sit in silence. Each knew that the decision the famous preacher had made was a momentous decision. Each knew that Howard Bannister was either right or wrong in this new conception of God. Mrs. Bannister had all the faith in the world in her husband, for she had seen him fight with his back to the wall, as very few men can fight for the truth as he believed it to exist.

She was not underestimating the possible result of the stupendous decision her husband had made. Yet she knew that he would be victorious. She knew that only one thing mattered in her husband's life, and that was the Power of the Spirit of God. She knew that her husband was intensely in

earnest and as he sat there thinking, both hands clasped behind his head, she went over to him and, kissing him on the forehead, said, "Honey, I am sure you are right and I am sure you will win; I envy you your task."

"Do you remember that sermon I preached some eight years ago in which I suggested that the United States equip an army of ten million men, build one hundred thousand bombing planes and build also ten thousand submarines?"

"Yes, I remember that sermon well—if I remember correctly it was preached on an Easter Sunday, was it not?"

"I don't recall the day I preached the sermon, but I do remember very distinctly making that suggestion. You see, for many years now, I have looked for and predicted the very conditions which are manifesting on this earth today. I knew that civilization could not last with its present conception of God. I knew that conception is so fallacious that sooner or later some would-be world dictator would arise, and, seeing the utter lack of spiritual power on the earth, would make the fatal mistake of thinking that he could, by the force of arms, completely subdue and rule this earth. I knew that. So as far back as eight years I suggested in that sermon which by the way, was broadcast from coast to coast, that the United States be prepared.

"I recall that for making that statement I was an alarmist. I was a religious fanatic who could not possibly know anything about the future. Why, it was foolish to think that a standing army of ten million men, with one hundred thousand bombing planes and ten thousand submarines could ever be needed. But if we had them now, we might feel a little more secure than we do in the face of the threat of the greatest despot this world has ever known.

"So, you see, Pearl, the decision I am making now has been in the process of construction for many years. You will recall that when I graduated from Theological Seminary, even then I questioned the truth of the Christian conception of Almighty God, and I think I've been questioning it ever since."

"I should say, Howard, that this is no time to mince words, nor is it any time to consider the feelings of any individual or organization. As I see it, liberty is in peril. Our free way of life is in peril. Our freedom and our very existence are threatened by the marauding hordes of those who, through the might of brute military force, are bringing to the earth an abomination which is desolating every peace-loving land which happens to stand in the way of this destructive force. If, by presenting to this world, either the actual truth of the old God, or perhaps a new God, you can bring this destructive force to an end, then I say more power to you! I shall give you one hundred percent support. Regardless of what the outcome of your decision may be, even if it means we walk the streets penniless, you will still find me by your side, with our little Margie, and our Bruce back in Overland."

Bannister left his chair and went over and caressed his wife very tenderly. Tears began to stream down his face as, kissing her on the forehead, he said, "You always were true blue. Somehow or other, though, I don't believe we're going to have to walk the streets as a result of bringing to this earth the truths of God. You know, honey, I think that All Souls Church will welcome those truths. I think it is entirely possible for us to light such a flame of religious power that it will never be extinguished until every living soul has learned of the superlative Power of the Great Spirit which is God, here and now."

"You don't anticipate much trouble from the Bishop or the Board of Trustees, then?"

"We'll handle that problem if it should arise. Personally, I don't think it will arise, because, as I have said a few moments ago, if this new work upon which I am embarking is of God, no man can hinder it; if it is not of God it will come to naught and Howard Bannister will be the most colossal failure this world has ever seen.

"Somehow or other, I cannot conceive of that happening. You see, honey, we are facing a brutal murderous war, and

war is never right. It cannot ever be right to send a bullet crashing into the brain or the heart of a fellow human being, regardless of what nationality he may be, and regardless of who orders the bullet fired. All human beings, German, French, Japanese, British, American are creatures of the one Creator, regardless of their race or nationality.

"It cannot ever be right for one human being to drop ghastly death-dealing bombs on the heads of other innocent helpless peace-loving human beings, yet that is exactly what is being done today. I think the reason this is being done is because there exists no restraining influence in this world higher than the philosophy that brute force is all powerful. If no such restraining influence exists, it just simply means that we are living in a godless world. Either that, or a world which is full of the Power of God, yet completely unknown to the inhabitants of this universe. I tell you, Pearl, I must rise up and in the strength of the Power of the Spirit which is God. I must challenge this ungodly thing which we now see in full manifestation.

"And I'm not afraid to challenge it, either. If there exists a Creator, then this Creator must be first of all, invisible life itself. My definition of God is 'Life capable of existence without physical form'. In addition to this, that great life which the Creator gave to all of us must embody in itself the infinite of peace, love, wisdom, and everything else that would automatically go with a Power so great that it could create this universe and the human beings which inhabit it. Now then, the condition of this world today is evidence of the most impressive kind that the Power of the Creator, or, to put it in other words, the Power of the Spirit of God, is absolutely an unknown entity in this universe, our churches notwithstanding.

"Twenty million honest, harmless Chinese have been blasted into eternity by the cruel bombs and machine guns of Japan. Death—horrible suffering death—is being dealt out all over this earth today and the answer to this horrible carnage must lie somewhere. Someone must discover it. For I cannot con-

ceive of the brute force of a Hitler permanently subduing a creation with which he has nothing to do.

"If the combined religions of this earth today with one billion and a half followers cannot find the answer to this problem, perhaps I can. In any event, I would rather lose my life, ruin my reputation, go down to defeat trying, than I would to complacently sit by, drawing a salary of ten thousand dollars a year from All Souls Church and not make any attempt to try to find the answer."

The hour was growing late and Mrs. Bannister suggested that she make a cup of coffee and that they both retire for the night.

"You mean make some colored water," said Howard Bannister. "At Rocky Point we had some good coffee for Winnie knows how to make it."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you percolate the coffee tonight, then you won't sleep."

This badinage over, Bannister made the coffee, nibbled on the hunk of roast beef in the ice box and retired for the night, Mrs. Bannister following him.

* * *

Bright and early next morning, Howard Bannister was in his study in All Souls Church. Miss Johnston, his secretary, was there already at work when he arrived. Bidding her a cheery "Good-morning" he said, "Elaine, I wish you would call up every member of the Board of Trustees and ask them if they won't meet me here in my study tonight at eight o'clock. Tell them it's very important."

"All right, Dr. Bannister, and if any of them should not be able to be here I'll let you know."

While All Souls Church was a member of the Western Methodist Conference, it had always been more or less of a thorn in the side of that Conference. It was an extremely wealthy church and more than once there had been talk of it breaking away from the Methodist Conference completely

and operating as an independent unit. On certain occasions the presiding Bishop had seen fit to criticize some of the statements made over the radio by Dr. Bannister. Delegations from the Conference had called on him on several occasions and had suggested that perhaps he might be preaching outside of the scope of the dogma and traditions of the Methodist Church.

To all these approaches, however, Bannister had turned a deaf ear. He had firmly but politely informed these delegations that he was preaching the truths of God as those truths had been revealed to him. He had given them to understand further that no interference from any bishop or from the Western Conference itself would be tolerated. On one occasion Bishop Midas Bow had secretly met with the Board of Trustees of All Souls Church in an attempt to undermine the standing of Dr. Bannister. This attempt had met with signal failure and the Methodist Conference knew that full well.

The attempt was never repeated.

All Souls Church was fortunate in having a representative group of Trustees who stood completely behind Howard Bannister. Most of them had been Trustees and Directors for many years, and it was through their cooperation that All Souls Church and its pastor had won world-wide reputations.

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Joseph Wilson, was one of the Pacific slope's outstanding surgeons. He was on the staff of many hospitals and was perhaps one of the most outstanding orthopedic surgeons of the West. Dr. Wilson had a very firm conviction that some intelligent power was behind this universe. He put little stock in the theory that Almighty God had been crucified on a cross, and, being a physician, quite naturally he discounted one hundred percent the impossible doctrine of the virgin birth. As he said to Dr. Bannister on one occasion when they were discussing these old church traditions, "Whenever a baby is born, Howard, you can be perfectly sure that the male and female have come together."

On another occasion in an after dinner discussion in the Bannister home, Howard was asking the noted surgeon if he

did not recognize some Power living in the physical body which originates entirely outside of that body.

"For instance, Dr. Wilson, when someone fractures a bone, there is a Power inherent in that person which heals that bone, yet you cannot say that the intelligence which does the healing is part of the bone, itself."

"Dr. Bannister, any physician or surgeon who does not recognize the existence of an undefinable, intangible, super-human intelligence and power in the human body will not get very far in the practice of medicine. The greatest physicians and surgeons in this country and the most famous psychiatrists are paying more attention to investigating this power which is life, than they have ever done before. I certainly owe whatever success I may have achieved to the recognition of the Life Principle which medical jurisprudence knows nothing about, therefore cannot define."

Dr. Wilson had been a member of the Board of Trustees ever since the church was built and for the past ten years had been reelected every year as Chairman of that Board. He had been a source of constant inspiration to Howard Bannister and the friendship which existed between them was quite deep.

The second member of the Board was Dr. Carl Seymour. Dr. Seymour was an internationally known professor of church history in one of the Methodist Theological schools. Knowing considerable about the origin of all religions and being well informed of the fact that no system of religion can prove itself true, Dr. Seymour was looked upon as a broad-thinking modernist. He, too, had discarded a long time ago the story that Almighty God held a conversation in the Garden of Eden with a talking snake. He also was too well educated a man to believe that the Creator of this universe formed man by spitting in the dirt, and he also resolutely refused to believe that Almighty God had created the female of the human species by causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and then stealing a rib away from him. The theory that God Al-

mighty had made a mistake when he created man and drowned his entire creation like rats in a trap, with the exception of one man, was, of course, completely discarded by Dr. Seymour. As a matter of fact, he never had believed the Biblical story of creation.

"The Christian Bible gives two stories of creation and both are completely different, so how am I to know which to believe?" he had replied to Howard Bannister on one occasion when he was being questioned regarding this Biblical creation fable.

Moreover, Dr. Seymour knew that the Pentateuch, whose authorship is usually attributed to Moses, was merely a copy of a far older code of laws called the Hammurabi code. As a deep student of comparative religions, Dr. Seymour knew that the Hindoo bible contains almost word for word, the same story of creation as found in the Christian Bible, the only difference being that the Hindoo bible had this story fifteen hundred years before either Jesus Christ or Christianity were ever heard of.

He had repeatedly called attention to the fact, when in conference with Dr. Bannister, that the first created couple in the Christian Bible were Adam and Eve, while in the Hindoo bible they were Adimo and Heva. He had pointed out that a similar flood story was told fifteen hundred years before in the Hindoo bible. In that Hindoo bible the only man found righteous in the sight of the Lord before the great watery destruction of the entire human race was Noe. In the Christian Bible, however, it was Noah.

According to the Christian Bible, Noah had three sons whose names were Shem, Ham and Japheth, while in the Hindoo bible the three sons of Noe were Sherma, Hama and Jiapheta. It was also known to Dr. Seymour that the births of Jeseus Chrishna of the Hindoo religion and Jesus Christ of the Christian religion were both virginal births and both occurred the same day, December 25.

Dr. Seymour had written two books which pointed out the

similarity between the stories of Jesus Christ and the story of Jeseus Chrishna. The books created a sensation, but they did point out the remarkable coincidence that the 'heathen' Hindoo was in possession of every fundamental Christian tradition fifteen hundred years before Christianity was ever heard of. Being of an inquiring and logical turn of mind, Dr. Seymour had been forced to repudiate both stories.

When two stories fundamentally disagree, either one of them is wrong or both of them are wrong. They both cannot be right.

The Theological Seminary in which Dr. Seymour was Head of the Department of Church History, came as close to being "atheistic" as any college can be and still retain the name "Christian". However, the trend of most Christian universities today is away from the old traditional ideas of God and Dr. Seymour had been one of the leaders in this trend.

The next member of the Board of Trustees was Bernard Heyneman, founder and directing head of the famous Heyneman Advertising Agency. Heyneman was born in San Francisco, but lost his parents while still a child. The first job he had secured when he was old enough to work, was that of "barking" outside of a mercury-tube postcard photographic establishment on the lower end of Market Street, opposite the old Terminal Hotel. Heyneman was paid 20% of the money received from all customers who came in as a result of his sidewalk solicitations. The postcards sold at three for fifty cents and that, of course, meant ten cents to little Bernard every time he secured a customer.

Graduating from the sidewalks of south Market Street, Bernard secured a job for himself selling the old San Francisco Call on the corner of Kearney and Pine. He sold more papers on that corner than any other boy had been able to sell. At the age of seventeen, he found himself with a job in the circulation department of the San Francisco Call. Later he started a small advertising agency and, having a knack of being able to graphically describe anything he wanted to describe, his

success was soon assured. Now his agency was the third largest in the United States and the total volume of advertising written each year was in the neighborhood of \$100,000,000.

Heyneman was a deeply religious sort of chap. His early years naturally had been without religious training. He had never attended church nor had any church member ever bothered his head about the little fellow who sold newspapers on the corner of Kearney and Pine. Nevertheless, deep seated in Heyneman was an overwhelming sense of the Presence of God in his life. Where it came from he did not know, nor did he care, and in his own blind way, he sort of struck up an acquaintance with God, and his every action was performed with the conscious realization of the Power of God in his life. It is worth repeating here that this intuition of the Power of God in his life had not been imparted to him by any church or other religious organization. It had come from the skies, if you will.

Heyneman handled all the advertising for All Souls Church and his love for Dr. Bannister was almost a passion with him. His ability and his keen insight into business problems had proved of inestimable value to All Souls Methodist Church.

Bill Mortensen, an employee of a garage, was another member of the Board of Trustees of All Souls Church. One might think it strange that an automobile mechanic should be a member of the Board of Trustees of this wealthy church. But in spite of its wealth, the consuming desire of this church and its Board of Directors and its pastor was that it might accomplish something tangible and definite for the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Bill Mortensen was a devout soul. He was not gifted with too much ability, but his exceptional earnestness and depth of character had won for him one of the largest votes any member of the Board of Trustees had ever received. Bill was a married man, having four children. He lived on the other side of the Bay in Marin County.

Everyone in San Francisco knows Inspector Eric Palmer of

the San Francisco Police Department. His name is a synonym for honesty and integrity and has been that in San Francisco for thirty-five years. One of the most brilliant detectives San Francisco has ever possessed, the keen mind and peculiar understanding of human nature had made Inspector Palmer one of the foundation stones of San Francisco's civic life. Inspector Palmer had been on the Police Department since his graduation from college. He had always wanted to be a famous detective and he had achieved his goal. Most of the major crimes committed in the state of California came under the scrutinizing eye of Inspector Palmer sooner or later. He had been voted a member of the Board of Trustees just three years before. All Souls, however, considered itself fortunate in having at its disposal the keen, brilliant, analyzing mind of Inspector Palmer.

The financial power behind All Souls Church was William P. Evers, one of San Francisco's millionaire bankers. He was president of the huge Pacific Coast Banking Corporation, which had branches in more than fifty Western cities. In fact, the Pacific Coast Banking Corporation was the third largest banking chain in the United States.

Like Trustee Heyneman, Bill Evers had come up from the sidewalks of San Francisco. His first job was that of messenger boy for the Wells-Fargo Express Company. One of the officials of this company had taken a very deep liking to Bill Evers and had made it possible for him to go through high school and later the University of California.

From that point on, and by dint of hard work, plus frugal living, Bill Evers had slowly and steadily climbed to his present place of financial power in San Francisco. His purse was ever open to the demands of the church and it was out of his pocket the ten thousand dollars a year drawing account which Howard Bannister was getting, came.

There were other bankers who held memberships in All Souls, but none of them had the strength of character and beautiful religious life of Bill Evers. To see him behind his desk in the main offices of the Banking Corporation on Market

Street one might gain the impression that he was a cold-blooded, money-grabbing Shylock, but underneath this outward appearance there beat a heart of true gold. More than fifty prominent San Francisco business men could attribute their success to the help given them by Bill Evers. From each of them, before he helped them, he extracted a promise that under no circumstances would they disclose who their financial backer had been. Nor would he ever ask for one cent of interest on the money he loaned these business men when they were struggling to get a start.

That was Bill Evers, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees of All Souls Church.

The last member of the Board was James Hoffman, member of the firm of Hoffman, Wright and Hoffman, Architects. Jim Hoffman, as he was affectionately called by all who knew him, had been the designer of All Souls Church. It stood there on the crest of a hill, overlooking Market Street, a monument to the brilliance of the mind of Jimmy Hoffman who, incidentally, while All Souls was well able to pay him, donated his services free of all cost.

When Howard Bannister argued with him that he should be paid a fair sum for his architectural ability, Jimmy Hoffman replied, "Dr. Bannister, I have made a success of life. I have more money than I know what to do with, so I feel like giving the very best in me to this church with the earnest hope that, as a result of the building of the church, thousands of men and women will come to know the Power of God."

Jim Hoffman's religious experience had been rather unusual. Some twenty-five years before, he and a chum by the name of Bill Blakely, had gone fishing in a little skiff on the waters of San Francisco Bay. Clouds were hovering low when they left, and it was against Jim's advice that they go fishing at all that Saturday afternoon. His companion insisted, though, so out they went.

Storms come up very fast on San Francisco Bay and as the rain began to fall and the wind began to blow, Jimmy and his

young friend began to pull for the shore. The little boat, however, could not stand the buffeting of the wind and the waves and it capsized one hundred yards from shore. Not being able to swim, it looked like certain death.

While struggling in the water with no hope of escaping drowning, Jim Hoffman had uttered a prayer to whatever God there might be. His companion had Jim in a death grip and was dragging him down, so the prayer went up.

Here it is: "Oh God, I don't know anything about you, but you made Bill and me and this is your ocean and that was your boat and it is up to you to bring the pair of us safely to shore."

As if in answer to that prayer, Jimmy heard the whistle of a ferry very close. Struggling to release the hold of his friend, and taking him by one hand, in some superhuman manner Jimmy Hoffman pulled his friend to the surface where he was seen by the passengers on this Alameda ferry.

Life belts were thrown out, the ferry was stopped, and both boys were safely pulled aboard the ferry. Later they were taken to the police emergency hospital where, after being given first aid treatment, they were little worse off for their experience.

This experience, however, made a deep and lasting impression on Jimmy Hoffman, for while he never had much use for the theory that Almighty God was crucified on a cross for his sins, he did have an abundant faith in the Invisible Spirit which had snatched him out of the very maws of a seemingly inevitable death.

This, then, was the Board of Trustees of All Souls Church.

Bannister sat at his desk, planning his sermon for next Sunday morning and evening. Much depended on that sermon. Every fibre of his being thrilled with power as he dictated to his secretary the main thoughts he wished to bring out. Bannister never preached from notes. He got over that a long time ago. In the early years of his ministry he would spend hours and days elaborately planning a sermon and then when

he ascended the pulpit, would find himself preaching on an entirely different subject.

The coming sermon, though, was to be different from any sermon he had ever preached. He knew in a general way what his topic would be and was so filled and thrilled by the power he had recently discovered, that he decided only to have his secretary jot down a few outstanding highlights of what the sermon would be. This little task over, he turned to his secretary and asked, "Well, were you able to contact all the members of the Board of Trustees?"

"Yes, Dr. Bannister, they will all be in this study at eight o'clock tonight."

Bannister left the church study late in the afternoon and Reuben drove him to his home across the Bay where he ate his dinner, returning to the church study in San Francisco at about seven-thirty that same evening.

CHAPTER TEN

BANNISTER'S STUDY was an elaborate affair. There was a mahogany table, six by twelve feet, and twelve beautiful leather upholstered mahogany chairs. A special chair was always at the head of the table in which Bannister sat whenever the Board of Trustees was in session. No expense had been spared in building that church and certainly none had been spared in equipping the pastor's study, and the room in which the Board of Trustees met. A beautiful Kashan rug covered the complete floor and concealed lighting gave a very soft mellow glow to both the pastor's study and the Trustees' room.

One after another the Trustees arrived at the study and a little while later they were all seated around the table. Of course they were curious as to just why Howard Bannister had called the Board of Trustees together only two days before Easter. Usually the Trustees met in January and July, except when unforeseen matters of business came up.

"How did you enjoy your vacation at Rocky Point?" asked Dr. Seymour.

"Well, I had a fine time, caught lots of fish, but better than that, I caught a new conception of God. If you gentlemen will take your seats around the table, I will tell you why I have called this special meeting of the Board of Trustees at this time."

The Trustees took their seats, but instead of taking his place at the head of the long table, Bannister walked to one of the windows through which he could see the glittering, twinkling lights of the famed city below. He stood there in silent thought for a few moments and then, hands deep in his pockets, and with head bent forward, he began slowly to pace up and down the room.

"Gentlemen," Bannister began, "for fifteen years you have honored me by making me pastor of this world-famous church. For fifteen years I have given this church and its Trustees everything that I have. Now I consider an emergency exists. If you will bear with me, for a little while, I will try to make myself clear.

"An event has come to pass in our day which is without precedent in the known history of the world. There has arisen on the international horizon, a man who, by the sheer power of his ruthless military might, is not only challenging civilization, but is challenging Almighty God, too.

"While I was on vacation at Rocky Point I decided to accept that challenge. I have called you together, gentlemen, to find out whether or not All Souls Church wishes to join me in accepting this challenge which has been thrust upon the world, or whether you wish me to fight alone.

"We are supposed to be a Christian nation. That only means, however, that the Christian faith is in the predominance here in America as it is in Europe. It does not mean that we know anything at all about God; all it means is that the Christian nations of Europe have long indulged in the fond belief that ours is the highest civilization to which man has attained. The Christian faith and other major 'faiths' are nothing more nor less than that. We believe our philosophy of God is true; we think it is true, but we cannot prove that it is true. Yet we have held the fond belief that we have in our keeping the only religion which Almighty God has ever revealed to this world. We believe that to us was given the very Son of God Himself to instruct us in the true way of life and to make it possible for us to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. We have prided ourselves most of all upon this, our religion. So precious have we considered it, and so necessary to the well-being of man, that with unrivaled generosity we have deemed it our duty to impart this—our treasure—to all mankind.

"We have sent out our choicest souls into the foreign mission field, and we have spent millions of dollars to preach

this gospel of ours to those whom we have chosen to call 'the heathen'. And we have been honest in all this. These good souls whom we have sent to the foreign mission fields have given their very lives in an attempt to change the religion of the 'other fellow' to ours.

"So true did we consider our religion to be, that we have done this without equivocation. We perhaps lost sight of the fact that those to whom we sent our missionaries with our religion, had their own religious faith, which they consider equally as true as we consider ours. And they have had it longer.

"Now all this, I repeat, has been in the utmost good faith. This church here, of which I am pastor and you are Trustees, stands at the head of the list of American churches for the amounts contributed to foreign missions."

Bannister paused and removed his coat, as the evening was rather warm.

"If any of you gentlemen feel like taking your coats off, you do so, because we may be here for quite some time."

Several of the Trustees peeled their coats and hung them upon hangers in the large clothes closet which was at the east side of the room.

Then Bannister continued.

"It is my intention to look facts in the face. For those of us who are trying so desperately to make God real to the world, find our religious beliefs disintegrating. We find the whole world in a strange state of disturbance and upheaval, and much as we may hate to admit it, the conclusion is forced upon us that our vaunted truth and exclusive Christian religion is utterly powerless in this world crisis. Christianity seems to have lost its authority even in Christian America and Europe.

"Next Sunday only two people out of every hundred in the United States will attend a church. The theatres will be full, the baseball stands will be full, the night clubs will be full and the streets will be crowded with American citizens who are not in the slightest degree interested in the Christian

church and its beliefs, or in any other church, for that matter. The sanctions of the church are gone; its foundations are sapped; and the very springs of its existence are running dry.

"In addition to that, the people have discovered a thousand and one new and vital interests which have displaced whatever little interest they may have had in religion. Instead of religion today being a major element in human life, it has come to be a very minor element. Thinking people all over the world are asking: 'What is wrong with the world?' and 'Is there a God'?"

"Of course, in the deepest sense, there is nothing wrong with God, although there is very much wrong with the world. True religion must ever be an attempt to disclose the Great Creator to humanity. If religion cannot do that, we might just as well have no religion.

"Someone once said, 'Religions are many, but religion is one'. What this really means is that religion constantly and necessarily must adjust itself to its environment. Sometimes these adjustments are so radical that they make the product appear to be atheism, when in reality, what is called by the Christian 'atheism' may be but the first faint glimmerings of new gleams coming over the horizon of world history.

"I like to think of religion as being constantly reborn in order to maintain itself. Look back, if you will, gentlemen, to the time you were born. You will find that your life has passed from one set of conditions into another. Your life between the process of birth emerged from the darkness, the silence, the restriction of the womb, into a world of light and sound and freedom. All the circumstances of life are actually changed, but the life itself goes on. Life can only continue thus by passing from one state of environment to another. Dr. Wilson will bear me out in this. If a child tarries too long in the bosom of its mother, the child dies and the life of the mother is in danger. So today, gentlemen, in spite of the horrible conditions prevailing on this earth, I believe that religion here in America is only now being born.

"The whole religion of Europe and America was conceived in the days of the Roman empire. Its life was the result of the impregnation of Greco-Roman thought, coupled with the old Jewish spirituality. It was born, flourished, and lived so long as its environment was conducive to that type of religion. For instance, in the Dark Ages, when the lightning struck and the thunder roared, our forefathers took refuge in caves. God was speaking—God was angry with this world—someone had done something wrong and by that act had incurred the wrath of Almighty God who was spewing out his anger in flashes of destructive lightning and in the voice of the thunder clap.

"That type of religion, however, having outlived its usefulness, faded into decay and death. It exists no more.

"The environment of this earth has changed so radically that that kind of religion can no longer adapt itself. So it lapsed into decay and death, while true religion was being reborn. Just as the child when it is born must adapt itself to the entirely new conditions of the outer world, so religion must adapt itself to the entirely new and different modes of thought and conduct which have arisen as the result of our changing civilization. The appearance on this world's horizon of the German despot, Hitler, will call, not for a rebirth of any old system of religion, but for the birth of true religion. That is something which is positively unknown on this earth today.

"Those of us who have considered ourselves specially favored by having the Son of God given into our exclusive hands, must cast aside that theory. We must exchange the theological premises of a dark and pagan past for the sublime truths of this new and true religion, as it is being born on this earth today. The disintegration among our churches, who thought they were standing for the fullness of the sublime truths of God, is pitiable to witness. Just as the religions of the pagan past could not stand in this present crisis, our much vaunted exclusive religion with its exclusive Son of God, cannot stand, either. There is nothing in the structure of it which can be faintly suspected of fulfilling the spiritual needs of this earth today.

"We find evidence of this if we look only superficially at Christianity itself. In the beginning, it was rather a simple, ethical religion of fear. It was used by priest and preacher to secure submission to and on peculiar theories of God. However, it soon assumed many different forms as it spread over a world of different cultures.

"When it came into contact with Greek Mysticism, it took on the color of the materials with which it worked, until it finally emerged in all the speculative fantasies of the Greek Orthodox Church.

"Later it came into contact with Roman Legalism. It reinterpreted again its doctrines and ceremonies until it developed into the elaborate ecclesiasticism of the Roman Catholic Church. Then it spread northward into the forests of the Teutonic peoples. It absorbed the principles of freedom and individualism and finally developed a new form of individual and comparatively free religion in the Protestant reformation. This is merely an illustration of the same religion adjusting itself to minor changes in culture; that is, changing its form to meet the requirements of different forms of civilization."

Bannister walked over to the sideboard and drank a glass of cold water.

"If any of you gentlemen would like a drink I would be glad to bring you one."

There evidently was no desire for a drink, the Board of Trustees being too wrapped up in what their pastor was saying to them. It was quite evident, though, that so far they were in perfect accord with the statements he had made. Dr. Seymour's face began to smile as if he suspected what might be coming.

Then Bannister continued.

"What I have said, gentlemen, so far has been by way of introduction to what I want to discuss with you now. I want you to try and comprehend what is actually happening to what we know as religion today. Christianity has been carried on for almost two thousand years by making adjustments to

different forms of essentially the same civilization. Today we are in the midst of a change in our manner of life and mode of thought, so radical as to give rise to a new form of civilization or new culture, comparable only to the drastic changes which took place when the people turned from cavemen into farmers.

"Every religious denomination in America today is disintegrating. They have all lost faith in the fundamental precepts of what they have been teaching. I believe, gentlemen and friends, that this staggering change in world conditions calls for an equally staggering change in religion.

"As I see it, the cause of all the bewilderment, the consternation, the suffering and the horrible brutality on this planet today, is a complete lack of true religion. But what is true religion? Has the Christian church demonstrated the truth of its theory, that it was given exclusively the Son of God? Does its record disclose that its theology is sufficient to meet these horrible world conditions today? Or have we been fooling ourselves?

"Gentlemen—I maintain to you that what we have been teaching as the religion of Almighty God has been a cruel hoax, a mockery of God, and a sham of the very first water. If this is a fact, we have been misled by those who told us that all the truths of God Almighty were wrapped up in the Christian religion and the Son of God, which we think was given exclusively into our hands. If God did give his only begotten Son into the hands of the Christian church, the Christian church has made the most dismal failure of that Supreme gift.

"There exists today, gentlemen, an actual conflict between a rapidly dying civilization and one that is surely emerging. This confusion is caused mostly by the unawareness on the part of the Christian church of what is actually happening. Of course, the average man is aware that he is living in a period of social change, but he does not sense its significance; neither does he know whether this change is for good or evil. Least of all does he know that the horrors and the ghastly brutalities in Europe

today are but the birth pangs of religion, not being born anew, but being born for the first time.

“Religion, gentlemen, has not been born on this earth as yet. I say this in spite of the claims of the Christian church and a dozen other major systems of religion, all of which claim to be bringing to this earth the sublime truths of God. These systems of religion all claim, as we do, that Almighty God did give to us ‘the only revelation of his truth that ever was given to anyone.’ Yet, gentlemen, the appalling fact remains that, with eleven major systems of religion with their one billion and a half followers, not one of these systems of religion or all of them combined, nor any individual member of them, can reveal to this earth a Spiritual Power great enough to make any effect whatsoever on the ghastly, murdering hordes which, if not checked, will devastate the human race.

“We stand tonight, my friends, torn between two forces. We are bewildered. We are confused. We ask ourselves ‘Will anything be left of the Christian religion when this war is over?’ You know, my friends, humanity is a funny thing. It has qualities which are very startling. Perhaps the most startling quality it has is the one which permits us to be so sure of the things we don’t know and which make us so utterly positive in our opinions and yet those opinions be so wrong.

“I was listening to the radio last Sunday. My dial was on KFSO, the local Columbia outlet. The beautiful organ from the Mormon Tabernacle was playing the Bach Prelude in A Minor. Then the announcer made the following statement, which I was very surprised to hear. So impressed was I by this statement that I wrote to the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City and asked them for a copy of the statement made by the announcer. The statement was written by Richard L. Evans, of the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, and I wrote Mr. Evans, asking him for a copy of the statement. He kindly sent it to me and I am going to pass it around among you. It is a copyrighted statement, of course, and full credit must be given to its author, Mr. Richard L. Evans.

"Here is the statement:

"'One of the most startling things about humanity is that quality which permits us to be so sure about things we don't know—which permits us to be so utterly positive in our opinions, and yet be so wrong. History has given us many examples of uncompromising declarations which the verdict of succeeding generations has found to be in error. Things which only yesterday we were dogmatically taught in school, are being replaced by other theories which today in some quarters are taught with equal dogmatism, some of which will also later be discarded. Constantly there are being challenged, discredited and abandoned man-made doctrines and dogma that have heretofore at some time or other, been pushed into our consciousness by the pointing of the professorial finger or the pounding of pulpits. Theories are often the stepping stones to truth, but they must be regarded with suspicion until greater light comes to credit or discredit them conclusively. Some things, which to question would once have been akin to heresy, have long since fallen with their own unsupportable weight. Wisdom comes when we learn to know how much we don't know, and when we learn to remember how much that was accepted as dogmatic truth yesterday is not in the discard, and how many of today's positive assertions will be discarded by those who follow us. And so, in all our searchings and in all our soundings of the truths of life, before we become too positive in a wrong direction, we could save ourselves a good deal of trouble to remember that when two men fundamentally disagree in a matter of belief, whether it be religious or scientific, or in any other field of thought or learning, either one or the other of them is wrong or both of them are wrong.'

"No one knows, gentlemen, how long the human race has inhabited the earth. It is fairly well established that it was inhabited by human beings at least fifty thousand years ago. Of course, we know little of civilization that long ago, although there is some evidence that it may have been, in some respects at least, a better civilization than the one we now have. But

this thing that we call civilization is a very thin veneer. If evolution is at work, it is a very slow process certainly. Under this thin veneer, we find the fighting, brutal, killing animal. What outwardly appears peaceful, intelligent and educated, is found to be barbarism under the surface.

"Throughout all nature, both human animal and flower, the same spirit of ruthless destruction manifests. There are wonderful flowers and shrubs surrounding the grounds of my home, as you know. There are earwigs, too. The earwigs ruin the flowers and plants. They kill them. Then the birds come along and eat up the earwigs. Then comes the cat and kills the bird. Some day a big dog will come along and kill the cat and someone will shoot the dog. Thus is nature today.

"The leopard stalks its prey throughout the forest. One pounce and its cruel jaws crush the life out of the weaker animal which has not power to protect itself against the superior strength of the leopard. Yet the leopard has to eat. It has been created by the Superior Intelligence which created all things with the faculty to secure its livelihood by killing weaker things.

"Taken as a whole, then, what we call civilization is a brutal, selfish, murdering, cheating, immoral thing. Yet it must have had an intelligent Creator. The creative power which caused this earth to blossom as the rose must be a force far beyond that which it created. But I cannot conceive of this creative intelligence building, or otherwise making a creation whose outstanding characteristic is the destruction of the weak by the strong. Yet that is what has been happening throughout all creation since time began. That is the philosophy of this world today.

"It's a torn, sorrowing, bleeding, suffering world, gentlemen, a sad monument to those of us who have boldly proclaimed to the world that Almighty God gave his most treasured secret, including His own Son, into our hands for safekeeping."

Bannister, by this time had taken his seat at the head of the table. All eyes were fastened upon him. They had seen him in

fighting moods before, but they had never seen the power which exuded from every fibre of his being as now.

"Gentlemen, there is something out of alignment between this United States and our Creator. I believe our Creator lives. I believe the misalignment lies in our conception of the Creator and his relationship to us. I do not believe our Christian theology is true. I think it is too small to embrace all mankind, and most certainly it is self-evident that no conception of God advanced today by Christianity can make the slightest particle of difference to the war-mad dictator in Europe, whose sole aim and ambition is to conquer the entire world and drive every semblance of religion out of it.

"As I said earlier, gentlemen, I want to take up that challenge of Adolf Hitler and I want you gentlemen to state now whether you are for me or against me. I cannot go contrary to the revelations which have come to me from the realm of the Spirit of God, so what I want to do is tell this congregation the truth of what I know about our own Christian religion. What I want to know, first of all, though is this:—Has the Board of Trustees of All Souls Church enough confidence in me to allow me to preach what I believe to be the truths of God, or does this Board of Trustees insist that I stay between the covers of the Christian Bible and advance Jesus Christ as the only hope for this world?"

A silence you could cut with a knife came over that room. Certainly this was something new. Here was the pastor of one of America's most famous Christian churches asking its Board of Trustees if it would allow him to preach the Power of God entirely outside of the Christian Bible and Jesus Christ.

The silence continued.

One Trustee look at another.

Finally, Dr. Wilson, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, broke the silence.

"Howard, let me get this straight. Am I to understand that you believe the Christian religion and its Bible are not big enough to handle the problems which confront this world?"

Am I to believe further that God has given you a revelation of His truth, which you are convinced can bring peace and good to this earth?"

Bannister replied, "Joe, that is exactly what I mean. I know the history of the Christian church and I think I know the impotence of religious theories to do one single thing toward bringing Adolf Hitler to his knees. During the past ages the Christian religion had its place, but now that the world faces a crisis—now that Hitler has thrown out a challenge to Almighty God, I see nothing in the Christian religion which can even faintly be suspected of being able to combat the brutal military force of Hitler by a stronger spiritual force or Power, which Power must be God. Personally, Joe, I believe so firmly in the existence of the Great Spirit, which is God, on this earth that I am convinced that neither Adolf Hitler nor any other would-be world conqueror can stand against that Spirit of God. But I am equally sure that the Great Spirit of God does not manifest or operate in or through our Christian religion. If it does, and if the Christian church possesses enough power to bring this holocaust to an end by stopping Hitler, then I have never seen that power nor do I know where the Christian church keeps it. Does that answer your question, Doctor?"

"Yes, it does, Howard, and I am in one hundred per cent agreement with you."

"Well, thank you very much, Joe. I thought you would be."

"May I ask a question, Howard?" spoke up Dr. Seymour.

"I am here, gentlemen, to answer all your questions. If you give me a go-ahead signal, I will promise you that I will bring to the city of San Francisco and the whole world, for that matter, through this church, so much of the Power of the Spirit of God that such jackals as Hitler and the rest of his breed cannot possibly stand against it. You see, gentlemen, this whole proposition is quite simple. It is merely a case of a conflict between two powers. The one Power is the Creative Intelligence which put man on the earth. The flowers that

bloom in the front of this church are manifestations of that Power. The seagulls and other beautiful birds that fly in the air overhead are manifestations of the creative ability of that Power which I call God.

"Opposed to this Power we find a physical, material brute force whose sole object is to destroy what Almighty God, the Creator, has made. In order to accomplish this, flame throwers, bombers, tanks and submarines are built, and in the first two years of this war the destruction, not only of human beings, but of natural creations, has been horrible.

"Now it is my contention that the Power which creates is far greater than the power which destroys. But the power which destroys operates completely through material, physical means, while the Power which creates is a silent force. Right here may lie the reason why we have not believed in the existence of this Invisible Power which is God, as we should have.

"I think the time has come for a showdown, and I am asking you to let me have a free hand in not only preaching the Power of the Spirit of God in San Francisco, but in demonstrating that Power.

"Now, Carl, what question was it you wished to ask me?"

"Well, Howard, I have been watching you very closely. The little talks we've had in your home and in mine convinced me of just how your mind was running. I stand behind you one hundred per cent. I will vote to give you a free hand. If it would not be out of the way, I would like to ask you how you are going to demonstrate the Power of the Spirit of God on this earth and stop Hitler by using that Power against him."

"Carl, the Power of the Spirit of God always demonstrates and manifests itself. There is nothing I can do to assist the Spirit of God Almighty in making its superlative power felt on this earth. What I can do, though, is pull up the weeds that the flowers may grow. I can tell our people here that the theory of God brought to them by the Christian religion

is not sufficient. I can tell them that it has no inherent power by which it can rise and challenge the great disturber of our civilization. Then, after I have done that, I can point out to them not only who God is, but where God is and how that great Spirit may be thrown into actual operation against Adolf Hitler.

"I can do that. But I must ask you to trust me until Easter Sunday is over. I'm going to preach two sermons day after tomorrow. In the morning sermon, I'm going to preach, as you know, from the subject, *'DID JESUS CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?'*

"In that sermon I expect to blast out of existence the very foundations of our Christian religion.

"Then on Sunday night I intend to lead the whole membership of All Souls Church into an acquaintance with the actual Spirit of God. I intend to show them how each one of them can use the omnipotent Power of that Invisible Spirit of God to bring Adolf Hitler completely to his knees."

Inspector Palmer spoke up.

"Howard, if you can do that you will render the United States the greatest service any man ever could render it. Why, your name will go down in history as the Saviour of the human race. I'm all for letting you go ahead, for I know that under no circumstances would you make the statements you've made here this evening unless you knew that you could accomplish exactly what you say you can. I'm all for you, Howard."

Addressing William Evers, Bannister said, "Bill, what's your reaction to what I want to do? Understand, of course, that it will bring down the wrath of the Methodist Church on our heads, and we may have to withdraw from the Methodist Conference, but are you willing to trust the Power of Almighty God to bring Adolf Hitler to his knees?"

"Howard, you know what my religious philosophy is. You know that I have an unshaken faith not only in the existence of God, but in the power of God. I agree with you that the Christian religion has miserably failed to give this earth one

constructive thought about the power of the great Spirit which put us all here. For many years the virgin birth theory and the immaculate conception and all that stuff has gone in one of my ears and out of the other. Nevertheless, I never believed more firmly in the present existence of the Spirit of God than I believe now. So far as I'm concerned, I'm perfectly willing to give you a free hand, for I believe that unquestionably God Almighty has spoken to you and has given you a message to bring to this earth."

"Heyneman, what is your reaction?" asked Bannister.

"I am absolutely taken off my feet by what you've said, Howard, but it appears to me to be so logical that I stand behind you to the limit. If it means pulling out of the Methodist Conference, let's pull out."

Both Bill Mortensen and Jim Hoffman agreed with the rest of the Trustees.

Bannister went to the clothes closet, took out his coat, and, putting it on, said, "I knew you would stand by me. Let me promise you now that All Souls Church will witness the greatest spiritual awakening it has ever known, and as a result of this awakening all America will know of the Power of God and when they know that, it will not take this country long to throw that Power against Adolf Hitler. Americans as a whole are a very intelligent class."

"What will be the effect on the congregation, Howard? How will they react?"

"Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to write out my resignation as pastor of this church and after I've preached my sermon on Sunday morning, I'm going to read that resignation. It will become effective at one o'clock the day after tomorrow. Then I'm going to call the Board of Trustees to the platform and have them go into special executive session, calling for a vote of the congregation to decide whether I stay here or move on. I think that's the best way to make the decision of the Trustees unanimous."

"That's a good idea, Howard," said Dr. Seymour, "and I'd

like to ask all the Trustees to be present Sunday morning and suppose we gather in this room. We can hear Howard's sermon over the loud speaker, then at the proper time, when he calls for us, we can go on the platform and call for a vote of the congregation."

Every member of the Board of Trustees agreed to be present in the ante-room on Sunday morning.

"Good-night's" were said all around and Bannister and his Board of Trustees left the church after the most momentous meeting of that Board All Souls had ever known.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ALL NATURE seemed to be showering her choicest gifts upon San Francisco that beautiful Easter Sunday morning. A few fleecy clouds scattered across the sky, cast their ever-moving shadows o'er the city. Market Street was like a fashion parade. New hats, new suits, young men and women, older men with their wives—even the oldest were out on parade each trying to outdo the other in their Easter finery.

Little did these pleasure-loving men and women dream of the momentous action which was about to take place in famed All Souls Church, up there on the hill. There was a sort of sadness, however, permeating the crowds, for the grim ghastly spectre of impending imminent war, with all its horrors was just around the corner.

What would happen before another Easter Sunday came around? Would San Francisco see another free Easter, or would the cruel hand of the oppressor and despot bathe the fair city in the ghastly sticky human blood of these wonderful Americans who, on this Easter Sunday were enjoying freely the bounteous gifts of all nature and of nature's God?

How long would it be before the deadly inhuman dive-bombers of the world aggressors would soar over this lovely city, dropping their death-dealing bombs on men, women and children alike? How long would it be before the ghastly hordes of murdering barbarians would leave young children disemboweled on the sidewalks of Market Street? How long would it be before Kearney and Pine would be a human slaughterhouse, along with every famous street in the city of San Francisco?

How long would it be before Japanese or German para-

chute troops would be flying overhead, bathing this wonderful city with human blood? Or would these things be?

Under all the frivolity and apparent happiness of the Sunday morning crowds, there was a feeling of pessimism. Mothers thought of their young boys. Many of them even now were in training camps. Fathers, too, thought of the boys and girls their love had given life to. Brothers and sisters, hand in hand, walking up and down the wide streets of the Bay City—how long would they be able to do that unharmed?

Or would the ghastly spectre of dive-bombers strike terror into their human hearts before another year, or perhaps month rolled by? What did the future hold? The entire shipbuilding industry was tied up by strikes. Seventeen hundred machinists were keeping five large shipbuilding yards working on government contracts closed down.

Was it true that the Communist party controlled the ranks of organized labor? The picket lines were thrown round these shipbuilding yards, so vital to our national defense. Yet, in spite of the very gravest national crisis, men and women already making more than a dollar an hour, were deliberately tying up the entire Pacific Coast's defense industry. Was this red anarchy, in disguise? Was this a deliberate attempt to sabotage our defense industries? Were the lumber strikes in the Northwest, and the strikes in Detroit part of a Nazi or Communist plot to stop the United States from delivering the sorely needed ships to Great Britain?

These questions and many more were subconsciously in the minds of most of the crowds that filled Market and other streets that beautiful Sunday morning. Why do men have to kill each other? What gets into a ruthless despot and tyrant which makes him insanely desire to become master of the whole civilized world? How come that one nation believes itself to be a superior race? Why would it be trying with its very life's blood to conquer all the rest of the human race and bring it into slavery and serfdom? Why all these things? Is there no Supreme Power which can take a hand, and deliver

the human race once and for all from the terrors that fly by day and the abominations in the form of destruction that flieth by night?

Perhaps civilization is completely corrupt. Perhaps there is no power greater than the power of brute force. Perhaps there is no God. Doesn't look like, certainly, thought many.

So this Easter Sunday, though outwardly calm, was throbbing with apprehension of what the future might bring. Little did these good honest American souls dream of the Power that was shortly to be manifested on this earth. Little did they dream that up yonder, on the hill, stood a church which, at this very moment was paving the way for the permanent peace all humanity has so eagerly longed for.

No. These good San Franciscans knew nothing about this. Oh yes, they knew there were churches. But they were not interested in them. In their childhood, of course, they had gone to Sunday School, and perhaps then after they were married they had attended church spasmodically. But church had nothing to offer which was more beautiful than God's wonderful sunshine and breezes which laved San Francisco that Easter morn. As far as finding God in these churches, well, hadn't they attended, some of them for many years, and had they not been disappointed when all they heard in those churches was "sin," "salvation," "crucifixion," "the blood of Jesus," "the virgin birth of Almighty God," "heaven and hell"?

No. Much as these good San Franciscans wanted to know whether or not there exists a God, they preferred to walk up and down Market Street, keeping away from all churches, for they knew that what these churches taught and preached about held little charm for them. And yet, every one of those men and women who were showing off their Easter finery on this Sunday morning would have broken their necks to get to any place where they thought the actual truths of Almighty God were being taught.

But the Christian churches? Well—these hundreds of thousands of Americans were not interested in them. They wanted

God. They wanted to know something of the Power of God. They were confused this Sunday morning as they pondered over the imminent danger of the times. Oh yes, somewhere, they knew there must be a God. But to expect to discover anything of God in a church? Well, it just simply wasn't done—that's all.

The Salvation Army with its band was holding a street-corner service outside the Hearst Building. A few stragglers were listening to it. Once in a while a good-natured soul would drop a nickel or a dime on the drum-head, and for that gift would hear a "God bless you, brother," from the Captain or whoever it was in charge of operations.

*"OH YOU MUST BE A LOVER OF THE LORD
OR YOU CAN'T GO TO HEAVEN WHEN YOU DIE."*

This was the song the good old Salvation Army was singing. This was followed by another which went like this:

*"OH THE LAMB—THE BLEEDING LAMB:
THE LAMB OF CALVARY,
THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN BUT LIVETH AGAIN,
TO INTERCEDE FOR ME."*

Yes. San Francisco knew all about that. They had heard about the bleeding lamb since their boyhood and girlhood days. But what was bothering and disturbing the minds of those San Franciscans was the question as to whether or not Hitler would subdue the whole world, the United States, included. They wanted to know whether San Francisco was safe from air attack. They wondered if the British life-line of ships was being slowly but ruthlessly strangled and broken. If Great Britain went down—what would happen to America? These were the questions uppermost in the minds of the good Easter paraders. The blood of the lamb did not interest them. They wanted to know God. They were not interested in being

a lover of the Lord in order to go to heaven when they died. For they were up against the grim dangers of aggression—*NOW*.

Heaven and hell didn't worry these good folks, but the safety of America did. Yet, where was God to be found, if at all? Surely not in a Salvation Army barracks. Surely not in any church in San Francisco that they knew of. They had never heard of any spiritual power that could stop Hitler. They did not know or even suspect that such a Power was in existence. They had never heard of it and, certainly, if any organization possessed a Power so great that Hitler could be brought to his knees through it—well, they'd like to know where such a Power was to be found.

A very few blocks below the Army, and evidently in competition to them, was a group of the Volunteers of America. They used to be a part of the Army but a fight developed among the leaders and the Volunteers broke away and started their own organization in opposition to the Army.

They were singing:

*"WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS, ALL OUR
SINS AND GRIEFS TO BEAR,
WHAT A PRIVILEGE TO CARRY, EVERYTHING TO
GOD IN PRAYER."*

Yes, that was what San Francisco, the beautiful city by the Golden Gate, wanted. It wanted, as every true American wants, true knowledge of God. Instead, the churches had spoiled everything by offering Jesus to the world in the place of God. And this world just won't have Jesus. It will have God, but no substitute will be accepted. And the American people walking up Market Street that day knew the difference between Jesus and God. You could not fool them. Man has never been fooled in danger by a false god. And many such "gods" have been offered to the world and they have all been rejected, as the present one is being rejected.

On the hill overlooking San Francisco, All Souls Church was packed to the doors half an hour before the regular preaching time. Dr. Williams, of the Chronicle, and the rest of the church editors had given a special write-up to the Easter Sunday services at the famous church. When All Souls increased the size of its advertisements in the local papers, something unusual must be taking place, and they had been quite free with their press notices. Three of the newspapers ran a photograph of Dr. Bannister in their write-ups and, while All Souls was always packed to the doors, it had been some time since the huge auditorium had been packed at 10:30 instead of 11:00 A.M.

New hats and new dresses and new suits were the order of the day in All Souls and as one looked over that vast audience of more than two thousand souls, one saw a sea of color. The huge organ, under the masterful touch of Dr. Bowers, was peeling forth the last few bars of "*FINLANDIA*" as Dr. Alan Fordyce, assistant to Dr. Bannister, entered the rostrum. Every pipe in that huge organ was speaking. Never had such volume been heard in All Souls before. For Dr. Bowers knew what was coming. Bannister had told him, on the trip back from Rocky Point, the substance of his discourse this Easter Sunday.

It was unusual for Dr. Fordyce to ascend the rostrum alone when Dr. Bannister was in the city. Usually Howard Bannister preceded him, both taking seats together. Fordyce took the preliminary part of the service while Bannister delivered the sermon, usually. But this Sunday morning, Bannister was not there.

He was in his study, on his knees before God, asking to be given strength to deliver the epoch-making message which Almighty God had given to him direct from the Realm of the Spirit of God. Howard Bannister seldom got down on his knees. In fact, he could not remember having done this for many many years. Yet, this Easter morning, he felt like a little child. He felt like his little Marge when she ran into trouble,

and took her troubles to her Daddy just as soon as they happened.

And so felt Howard Bannister. So humble did he feel himself to be that he was impelled, yes compelled to get down on his knees before the staggering Power he was about to tell his congregation about.

Both study doors were locked and only he had the key. He wanted no interruption this Sunday morning. Shortly before eleven he had called Dr. Fordyce to his study and said, "Alan, won't you please take the preliminaries this morning? I'd like to be alone with God for half an hour. Sing the usual songs, make the usual announcements, and I'll turn on the loud speaker and come into the pulpit at the proper time. And, Alan—you know what my message is to be this morning—please speak the word of Power into existence for me when you lead in prayer—I need it."

"Do you feel perfectly O.K., Howard?" asked Alan Fordyce.

"I never felt better in my life, Alan. I'm as happy as a lark. And yet I feel the tremendous responsibility of what I am about to undertake. Yet—Alan—there can be nothing but victory for Almighty God, this sin-cursed world, and All Souls, so get in there, Alan, now, and leave me alone for a while with the Spirit of God—will you?"

Dr. Fordyce was a very lovable character. He was very close to Howard Bannister. He loved this great preacher as if he were his own brother. Bannister always took Alan Fordyce into his confidence and this Easter Sunday morning Alan knew exactly what the staggering message was to be.

So, in deference to Dr. Bannister's wishes, at the proper time, and as the strains of "*FINLANDIA*" were dying away, he entered the rostrum—alone.

In the locked study, Bannister was, as already stated, down on his knees. His eyes open, a brilliant smile lighted up his face as he looked up into the invisible face of Almighty God. It was an awe-inspiring sight. Here was this great man who

had an international reputation as a world-famous preacher. He could move an audience to tears one moment and bring it back to laughter the next. The world had been good to Howard Bannister. God had been good to him, too. And yet, here was he, his handsome face wreathed with tears of joy, as he poured out his heart and soul into the Realm of the Spirit of God this beautiful Easter morning.

He brushed away the tears, for he knew the hour of his great triumph was at hand. There he was—down on his knees—opening up his very soul that the invisible Power of the Spirit of God might fill him with spiritual strength to deliver his message—the most momentous message this world had ever heard.

Then he closed his eyes, and lifting them towards the skies, he prayed:

“SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD—IN THIS, THE GREATEST HOUR THIS WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN, MAKE ME A BIG ENOUGH MAN TO BRING TO A SUFFERING, BLEEDING HUMANITY, YOUR POWER. FOR FIFTY YEARS I HAVE LOVED YOU, PRECIOUS SPIRIT. FOR FIFTY YEARS I HAVE BLINDLY TRUSTED YOU. I COULD NOT SEE THE WAY. I BELIEVED IN JESUS CHRIST INSTEAD OF BELIEVING IN YOU, GOD. BUT YOU, GOD, IN YOUR INFINITE WISDOM AND POWER, WIPED AWAY THE SCALES OF SUPERSTITION AND TRADITION FROM MY EYES AND NOW, GLORY BE TO GOD, I HAVE SEEN AND KNOWN THE FULLNESS OF THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN MY LIFE. I DON'T NEED TO PRAY TO YOU, GOD, BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I KNEEL HERE, HUMBLE, RESIGNED, AN EMPTY AND BROKEN VESSEL MADE MEET FOR YOUR USE. SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, I GIVE MYSELF ANEW TO THIS SERVICE AND WHOLLY SURRENDER EVERYTHING I AM AND EVER CAN BE, THAT THIS WORLD MAY AT LONG LAST KNOW

THE SECRET OF THE ABIDING POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. THANK YOU, PRECIOUS SPIRIT FOR EVER MANIFESTING YOUR POWER TO ME. THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING ME TO BE THE ONE THROUGH WHOM THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD WILL BE KNOWN TO THIS WORLD. I'M GOING TO GET UP FROM MY KNEES NOW, MASTER, AND I GIVE TO YOU ALL HONOR, POWER AND GLORY FOR WHAT SAN FRANCISCO AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL WITNESS THIS DAY."

Rising from his knees, Howard Bannister sat in a chair and turned on the loud speaker which was connected with the speaker's pulpit and the main auditorium.

Alan Fordyce was speaking:

"I AM GIVING YOU ALL A SPECIAL INVITATION NOT TO LEAVE YOUR SEATS UNTIL REQUESTED TO. AFTER THE SERMON THIS MORNING THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES. YOU WILL ALL BE ASKED TO VOTE ON A VERY IMPORTANT SUBJECT, WHICH WILL BE REVEALED TO YOU IN DR. BANNISTER'S SERMON. PLEASE NO ONE LEAVE, FOR SAN FRANCISCO WILL WITNESS TODAY SUCH A DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD THAT NEITHER THIS NOR ANY CITY HAS EVER SEEN BEFORE. YOU DOUBTLESS WONDER WHERE DR. BANNISTER IS. I KNOW. HE IS IN HIS STUDY DOWN ON HIS KNEES BEFORE GOD, BREATHING IN THE COMPLETE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, WHICH FULLNESS WILL BE MANIFESTED TO YOU DURING THE SERMON."

Alan Fordyce sat down and the choir swung into an Easter anthem which Bannister, in his study, was listening to.

After the anthem, the announcements were made, the offer-

ing was taken up and the congregation rose to sing a hymn. It was Dr. Bannister's favorite hymn. He had asked Bowers to have it sung before the moment when he entered the pulpit.

*"LEAD . . . KINDLY LIGHT, AMID TH' ENCIRCLING
GLOOM; LEAD THOU ME ON;
THE NIGHT IS DARK, AND I AM FAR FROM HOME;
LEAD THOU ME ON;
KEEP THOU MY FEET, I DO NOT ASK TO SEE THE
DISTANT SCENE; ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME."*

As the congregation arose to sing to the full-organ accompaniment of the great Skinner, tears again began to fall down Howard Bannister's handsome face. But they were tears of happiness and joy—not tears of sorrow. Closing his eyes once more, standing head erect in the middle of his study, he stretched both hands out as far as he could, and followed the congregation in that hymn.

*"OH YES, MASTER—THAT'S IT. YOU LEAD ME ON.
THE NIGHT IS DARK AND I AM FAR FROM HOME,
BUT MASTER, SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD . . .
YOU LEAD ME ON . . . THE GLOOM OF THIS SIN-
CURSED WORLD IS DEEPENING. THE SHADOWS
ARE FALLING . . . BUT YOU, GOD, LEAD ME. YES,
THE NIGHT IS DARK, AND I AM A LONG WAY
FROM MY HOME . . . BUT, SPIRIT OF THE LIVING
GOD, YOU LEAD ME ON. YES, THAT WAS IT. KEEP
THOU MY FEET . . . I DO NOT ASK TO SEE THE
DISTANT SCENE . . . JUST ONE LITTLE STEP AT
A TIME . . . THAT WILL BE ENOUGH FOR ME,
MASTER."*

Then came the second verse. The tears of joy and happiness increased and Bannister, taking out his handkerchief, wiped them away. Yes—there it was—that second verse:

*"I WAS NOT EVER THUS AND I DID NOT AL-
WAYS PRAY THAT YOU, SPIRIT OF GOD,*

SHOULDST LEAD ME ON. OH NO. I LOVED TO CHOOSE AND SEE MY PATH . . . BUT NOW . . . WHY, MASTER . . . YOU LEAD ME ON. MY HAND, MY MIND, MY SPIRIT IS JOINED TO YOURS, AND THROUGH MY SPIRIT, WHICH IS ACTUALLY YOUR SPIRIT, YOU WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE THIS MORNING. I SHALL NOT SPEAK . . . OH, NO . . . I USED TO WANT TO GO THE WAY THE BIBLE AND THE METHODIST CHURCH WANTED ME TO GO . . . BUT NOW? . . . WELL, MASTER . . . YOU LEAD ME ON. I LOVED THE GARISH DAY, AND, SPITE OF FEARS PRIDE RULED MY WILL . . . BUT THEN, SPIRIT OF GOD, YOU WON'T REMEMBER PAST YEARS . . . WILL YOU?"

The congregation was singing the last verse now. The tears had stopped. Soon Howard Bannister would ascend that platform and deliver to this San Francisco audience a message which would rock it to its very foundations. And he was anxious to go. He was, like the old fire-horses we used to have, champing at the bit. He was impatient, impatient to tell these men and women about his discovery of the actual Presence and Power of the Spirit of God . . . right here and now, in the lives of them all. Then he listened to the last verse, and kept company to it by continuing to pour out his soul to Almighty God. For God and Dr. Bannister had become very close friends now that Bannister really knew who God is.

Through the loud-speaker the last verse came:

"SO LONG THY POWER HATH BLEST ME . . . SURE . . . OH, YES . . . SO VERY SURE . . . IT STILL WILL LEAD ME ON, O'ER MOOR AND FEN, O'ER CRAG AND TORRENT . . . TILL THE NIGHT IS GONE . . . OH, YES . . . THE NIGHT WILL SOON BE GONE NOW . . . THE DARKNESS OF A NIGHT WHICH, ALTHOUGH GOD LIVED IN THE MIDST OF THAT DARKNESS, THE WORLD COULD NOT SEE HIM, BECAUSE OF THE TRADITIONS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCH. THEN, SPIRIT OF GOD, WILL COME THE MORNING . . . AND WHAT A MORNING THAT WILL BE. YES . . . THOSE ANGELS' FACES, SPEAKING FIGURATIVELY, WILL SMILE . . . WE SHALL KNOW THEN, MASTER, AS WE ARE KNOWN, AND THAT MORNING IS NOW HERE. WE SHALL KNOW BECAUSE WE SHALL, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HAVE OUR CONSCIOUSNESS AWAKENED TO THE FACT THAT ALMIGHTY GOD . . . THE GREAT CREATIVE SPIRIT OF GOD . . . ACTUALLY LIVES AND ABIDES IN EACH ONE OF US NOW . . . WITH ALL THE SUPERLATIVE POWER OF THE COMPLETE SPIRIT OF GOD."

It was time for Howard Bannister to enter the auditorium, so, opening the little side door which led into the large rostrum, he quietly entered. His handkerchief was in his hand. His proud, handsome face with its shaggy hair, was lighted up with a smile that did not come from the sorrows of this earth. The audience knew he had been crying. As he entered the pulpit, a stillness like that of death swept over the congregation.

Still holding his handkerchief in his hand, Bannister stood erect, and quite still, looking directly into the faces he knew so well.

He loved them all. They had been good to him. Not one thing had Bannister ever asked this audience to do that it had not very cheerfully done. He knew, as he stood there silently before them, that he was in the company of friends. Not a member of that congregation but what would have given his all for Howard Bannister. For they knew the earnestness of the man. They knew his honesty of purpose. They knew that they could depend upon him to play fair with them. If Howard Bannister made a statement to them from the pulpit it was because he honestly believed that statement to be true.

Expectancy hovered over that silent crowd. One could have heard a pin drop, so deep was the silence. Still standing there,

Bannister laid his handkerchief on the pulpit. There was no Bible there this morning. He had asked that it be removed. Then, running his right hand through his shaggy hair, he took a step forward, and as every ear was awaiting his message, he began to speak:

"Beloved, there are mingled feelings of sorrow and joy in my heart this morning. Sorrow is there because of the golden opportunities I have missed during the past fifteen years in which you have seen fit to allow me to be your pastor. If, by giving my life, I could recall those opportunities, I should gladly do so. But those golden opportunities are gone beyond recall. They are lost—hopelessly lost. And the sorrow I feel as I stand before you this Easter morning lies very deep. God alone knows what fifteen wasted years have meant to you. God alone knows the trust I have betrayed. I promise you that never again shall I betray that trust. I give you my word that my heart is almost breaking as I, your pastor, the one you have trusted, realize how I have ruthlessly betrayed that trust.

"Beloved, I am not fit to stand before you after what I have done. There is a redeeming feature, however, which helps to take the sting out of the sad realization of my perfidy. I was honest with you. I shall be more honest from this moment on, if it should be that you decide you still want me as your minister, after the shameful manner in which I have used you.

"But there is joy, too, in my heart. And the joy is greater than the sorrow. This joy is welling up and bubbling over at this moment. For now I know that I shall be able to make amends for the shameful manner in which I have wronged every one of you.

"When you good people called me from my former pastorate in New York fifteen years ago, I responded to that call with eagerness. I remember the first sermon I preached to you that Sunday morning, exactly fifteen years ago today. It was a similar morning to this morning. All San Francisco was happy in the delightful sunshine which comes from Almighty God,

just as it is happy, though confused, this Easter morning. In that sermon of acceptance, I said this to you: *'JUST AS LONG AS I AM PASTOR OF ALL SOULS CHURCH, I SHALL BRING TO YOU THE TRUTHS OF GOD AS THOSE TRUTHS HAVE BEEN REVEALED TO ME.'*

"I told you then that I should not allow myself to be influenced by creed, dogma, or by anything else which might hinder my giving you the plain untarnished truths of God, as I saw and understood those truths. I repeat that statement to you now.

"And yet, never did a greater traitor to the cause of God ever enter a pulpit, than I am. Never did a minister have more golden opportunities to truly reveal God to his people than I have had. Yet I have let you down most shamefully.

"For fifteen years you have sat in those seats. You have drunk in every word I have uttered to you. You gave me hundreds of opportunities to make God real to you. And I flung these opportunities back in your face. I dishonored God. I was not true to you, and I was false to myself. All unknowing, perhaps, but I have been false and untrue to you, nevertheless. As your pastor, you came to me and looked for the truths of Almighty God.

"Sunday after Sunday, week after week, month after month, and year after year, you have offered yourselves to me, and you gave me a thousand opportunities to tell you something which would make God a living reality to you. Yet you went away disappointed. But you did not leave this church. You kept coming back. You kept giving me another chance. And like a fool I could not see it.

"You asked me for the truths of God and instead of giving you those truths, I gave you an old pagan superstition which was hoary with age long before either Jesus Christ or the Christian religion were ever heard of. You asked me for bread—I gave you a stone. You asked me for a fish—and I gave you a scorpion. You came to me that I might tell you the sublime truths of God—and, instead, I told you a story which I now

know must be an insult to God and which certainly is blasphemy against God.

"Tonight, if I am still your pastor, I shall bring to you, not only the truths of God, but the Power, the whole Power of the Spirit of God. That is not all—I shall show you how you may use that Power for the achievement of every good thing your hearts can desire. For it is in the province of God—yes it is the pleasure of God, that every good thing you can desire should be yours here and now.

"That is what you wanted me to tell you fifteen years ago. You still want me to tell you that. Thank God I can tell you that today, for my eyes have been opened by the Power of the Spirit of God. More important than that, though, is the menace which has appeared upon the world's horizon. That menace today is dealing out horrible death, suffering, pestilence, and brutality. Yet there is not a single church or church member in existence who knows enough about the Power of God to do one single thing towards bringing that horrible despot to his knees.

"Beloved—this man has challenged God. He has made the fatal mistake of thinking that if he gets a great enough military force, he can take control of this earth out of the hands of its Creator, and rule this earth himself by brute force. And, let me repeat, there is not a single religious organization on the face of the earth which knows enough about the Power of God to stop him."

Bannister was warming up to his subject at this point. His huge six feet of virile manhood was quivering. He was tense. There seemed to be a strange Power which had taken complete possession of him. As his words fell upon the waiting ears of that congregation he loved so well, they were eagerly devoured.

"I said I had accepted the challenge of Adolf Hitler. I have. But before I could accept that challenge, it was necessary that I at least knew the true God. It was necessary that I become possessed of a Power against which these brutal insane mur-

derous forces cannot stand. That Power I now have. That Power I did not get through either the Christian Bible or the story of Jesus Christ.

"Beloved—the story of Jesus Christ is not true. It is one of the greatest fables this world has ever had foisted upon it in the name of God. Here is where I have grievously wronged you. When you asked me for the truths of God—when you came here so often, anxious and eager to hear those truths of God—I gave you the story of Jesus Christ. While your hearts were hungering for Spiritual Truth direct from the author of all Truth, I told you that if you believed that Jesus Christ was God, and if you believed that he was killed on a cross for your sins, you would some day, beyond the sky, and after you were dead, be rewarded for your deeds here and now. I now retract every word I have ever told you about the unique deity of Jesus Christ. For the story of Jesus Christ is fiction. From now on I bring to you the Power of the Spirit of God.

"The manifestation of Adolf Hitler calls for a more potent Power than the relating of a mythical fable in the name of God. This manifestation calls for the actual manifestation of another Power, so much higher than the powers of the military might of the German war machine that, when this higher Power is thrown against the power of brute force, that power must fall.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the story of Jesus Christ and him crucified contains no such power. It is not of God, nor does it have any of the truths of God in it. It is an old heathen tradition, known to millions long before either Christ or Christianity were ever heard of.

"Therefore, the story of Jesus Christ being untrue, as long as I am pastor of this church that name will never be uttered in All Souls again. You will notice that the Bible, which usually lies on this pulpit, is not here any more. You will never see it again as long as I am your pastor. Instead, you and I will learn the truths of Almighty God from Almighty God

direct. That will be far more effective than either the Bible or Jesus Christ.

"Now, granting for the sake of argument, that the Christian Bible is the word of God and the story of Jesus Christ is true—let us grant that, for the sake of argument. Jesus Christ died two thousand years ago and has never been heard from since. There is no way, then, that you and I can contact Jesus Christ. But if you and I can come into personal relationship with the Spirit of God here and now, is not that far better than studying a book which is so full of contradictions and impossible stories that nobody in his right mind can make head or tail of it?

"Beloved—I have made a discovery. It is the greatest discovery man has ever made. I shall tell you about that discovery tonight. What is it I have discovered? There are two things: First, I have discovered that the Christian theory of God is absolutely untrue. It is, I repeat, an old pagan religion dressed up in another form. With the theory of Jesus Christ as Almighty God being entirely false, the Christian Bible falls with that story.

"The second discovery I made is the most stupendous discovery this world can ever know. For I have discovered that all the Powers of Almighty God are available to each and every one of us, not above the skies, *BUT HERE AND NOW*. What does that staggering statement mean? It means just this—it means that every member of this congregation has, at his or her disposal, *ALL THE POWERS OF ALMIGHTY GOD—AND HAS THOSE POWERS HERE AND NOW*.

"Now let me ask you . . . if what I have just said is a provable fact and unless I could prove it I should not have said it . . . is it not entirely possible for this church to stop Hitler dead in his tracks? If we have, here and now, all the Power of Almighty God at our disposal, and if we can use that Power . . . is there anything we cannot do? That, beloved, is the discovery I have made.

"I have talked with God. I have received the fullness of the

Power of God in my life. That Power you, too, have, but you don't know that yet. You will see it in action in this church tonight."

Wiping the perspiration from his forehead, Howard Bannister continued:

"My subject this morning, as you have seen advertised, is: *'DID JESUS CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?'*

"I shall answer that question now. You want to know whether he did or not. You want the truth about God, even if that truth is contrary to every Methodist dogma and doctrine you have ever heard of. You know as well as I know that it will take the true Power of God to straighten this world out, and you know as well as I know that this church, nor any other church of any denomination, possess no such Power as that. Therefore, their conceptions of God must be untrue. Let me tell you now whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead or not.

"The corner-stone of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity crumbles. Prove that Christ did not rise from the dead, and you prove that Christianity is but a superstition—a superstition born of ignorance and credulity, of piety and fraud, of weakness and cunning, of priestcraft and persecution—a superstition that must disappear as fast as its real character is found out.

"The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead is far older than Christianity. Thousands of years before the preaching peasant of Palestine was born, India, Egypt, Babylonia—all the ancient countries, indeed—knew the story of the resurrection. These countries, whose religions were of great antiquity, had numerous gods. They had virgin-born saviours who were the sons of their gods. These saviours, while they lived, preached and worked miracles, and after their death, they arose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

"All the doctrines of Christianity are far older than Christ and all that can be said in favor of the resurrection of Christ can be said in favor of the resurrection of a dozen other saviours.

"About twelve centuries before Christ was born—and there is no certainty that he was ever born—Chrishna, the crucified Hindoo saviour, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Attended by celestial spirits, amid the wondrous illumination of heaven and earth, Chrishna, the saviour of men, slowly rose from earth to Paradise, while witnesses exclaimed with joy: 'Lo, Chrishna's soul ascends its native skies.'

"Five centuries before Christ, the great Buddha, the founder of Buddhism—a religion that now embraces one-third of the human race—lay dead in India. From heaven's supreme God came the command: 'Rise, Holy Love!' Then the shroud of Buddha unrolled itself; by divine power the lid of his coffin was removed; and Buddha, the Enlightened One, the saviour of mankind, released from the grip of death, rose to heaven's glory.

"Ancient Egypt worshipped the risen Osiris. Mr. Bonwick, in his 'Egyptian Belief', says, 'It is astonishing to find that, at least five thousand years ago, men trusted in Osiris as the "risen saviour" and confidently hoped to rise, as he arose, from the grave.' Among the Greeks, Aesculapius, the son of God, the saviour, the divine healer—he who was called the 'Great Physician'—after being put to death, rose in triumph from the grave.

"The resurrection of gods was a fundamental idea in the religions of all the nations by which the Jews were surrounded. With these religions, the Jews were familiar, and from them they borrowed many ideas. For example, the worship of Adonis, the virgin-born saviour of the Syrians, was well known to the Jews long before the time of Christ. The Jews themselves worshipped Adonis. This was a part of the idolatry into which they were continually lapsing. In the Hebrew, the word 'Adonis' means 'Our Lord' and this god had an altar in the very temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The resurrection of Adonis was annually celebrated in Judea—in Bethlehem, indeed—even as late as 386 A.D.

"St. Jerome says: 'Over Bethlehem, the grove of Tammuz,

that is, of Adonis, was casting its shadow! And in the grotto where formerly the infant Anointed, Christ Jesus, cried, the lover of Venus was being mourned.'

"And observe the significance of this declaration. In the grotto, the cave, where Jesus cried, Adonis, says this Christian Father, was mourned. For centuries the church had a tradition that Christ was born in a cave. Among the Fathers of the church, who believed that tradition, was St. Jerome, the learned ecclesiastic who translated the Latin Vulgate of the Bible and thus gave the Christian world its 'Word of God.' This saint tells us that nearly four hundred years after the birth of Christ, the death and resurrection of Adonis, the mythical saviour of the Syrians, were observed in the very cave where the Christian saviour was believed to have been born.

"But there is another thing worth noting in connection with the death and resurrection of Adonis, and that is that according to the learned author of that masterpiece of scholarship—'Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions'—the celebration of the resurrection of Adonis became the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Is there any wonder that orthodox churches are silent about the science of comparative religions, when that science proves that our reputed divine religion is but a pagan superstition under another name?

"I have preached to you, my friends, the uniqueness of the deity of Jesus Christ. I have preached his resurrection. I here and now retract every word of it.

"For if the story of the resurrection of a god who was the son of a god is far older than Christianity, if thousands of millions of people in India, Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome lived and died in the conviction that saviour gods had risen from the dead in their behalf, and if these resurrection stories were well known to the people among whom Christianity arose, how can we be certain that the account of Christ's resurrection is not the ancient myth told again?

"The worship of Osiris continued for about six thousand years. During that time, thousands of millions of Egyptians

implicitly believed that he had risen from the dead. Christianity is less than two thousand years old; and the resurrection of Christ is rejected today by nearly every human being who has impartially examined its claims, just as it is being rejected by me.

"By what criterion, then, shall we decide that the resurrection of Osiris was a fable, while the resurrection of Christ was a fact? Buddhism is at this hour the religion of five hundred million human beings. Christianity in all its forms cannot number one million intelligent believers—people who know what they believe, and why they believe it; people who have examined the foundations of their faith, and are satisfied that those foundations are sound.

"By what standard, I ask again, are we justified in determining that the Buddhists are mistaken about the resurrection of their saviour and that the Christian belief is founded upon a revelation from God? Is a religion false merely because it happens to be another man's religion? Is my religion true simply because it is mine?

"Buddha, according to Buddhism, arose from the dead five hundred years before Christ was born. Does that make the story of his resurrection false? Buddhism is the religion of more than twice as many people as seriously profess Christianity. Does that prove that Buddha did not rise from the dead, but that Christ did?

"Why, my Christian friends, do you reject as false the divine resurrections of the old religions, and accept as true the resurrection story of the religion of yesterday?

"Will you answer by saying that Buddha was only a man, and, therefore, could not rise from the dead; that Christ was God, and as God, conquered the grave? Let me show you that this is the position you must take; I shall also show you that you can not maintain it. If Christ was only a man, his death was only a human death, and therefore could not be an atonement for the sins of the world. Christianity teaches that Christ was God; that his sacrifice was divine and infinite; and

that, as God, he rose from the dead. But if Christ was God, how could he die? How could a few moments' suffering destroy the infinite resources of a God's longevity? How could a God's infinite hold on life be conquered by the frail means used to overcome the life of a man? Nothing could be more flagrantly absurd than the idea that a God was put to death by piercing the hands and feet of a Jewish peasant.

"But let us suppose that God did die. Let us suppose that the Creator of the universe threw his life away, and allowed the crucifixion to reduce him to the cold, pathetic stillness of death. God was dead! They buried him! God lay dead in the tomb! Well, how did he come to life again? Who or what, resurrected him? A dead God becomes a living God—by what means? Could he thrill his nerves with the melody of life when he was dead? Could he, in death, reanimate with infinite designs the brain from which all consciousness had fled? If he could not return himself to life, what in the universe could restore him? There was no other God to resurrect him. He was the only God, and he was dead!

"Think of the audacity of the superstition that would attempt to paralyze our faculties and dwarf our minds, pervert our emotions and benumb our powers of perception, by having us believe that a God of infinite wisdom and power—grand, wondrous and sublime in the wealth of his everlasting mastery of a boundless universe—came down among the ancient Jews; allowed them to nail him to a cross; threw away his life with the recklessness of a gamester; was buried in a hole in a rock just outside of Jerusalem; and there, while dead, infused himself with life again; fled from the tomb and flew back to heaven! No Arabian tale, no story ever invented to scare children, could be more absurdly false than this fundamental fable of Christianity. If Christ was a man, he did not rise from the dead. If he was God, he could not and did not die, and therefore, he could not and did not rise from the dead."

Howard Bannister stopped, mopped his forehead from per-

spiration, and, reaching for the water pitcher which always stood on the rostrum table, drank a cold refreshing drink.

All Souls had seen Bannister in action before. This church had seen him pour out his very soul in their interests time and time again. But they had never seen him in as deadly earnest as he was this beautiful Easter morning.

Fire was flashing from his steel gray eyes. His handsome face was transfigured with a determination to carry his point, never seen by All Souls before. They knew that Howard Bannister had returned from his vacation a changed man. Always powerful in his pulpit, this day he seemed to be imbued with a Power from on high. His every motion, his every word went directly home into the hearts of more than two thousand anxious souls who hung on his every word.

These souls automatically knew that Howard Bannister was speaking the truth—and that was what they wanted. That was what they had been paying him ten thousand dollars a year for. They didn't care whether he ripped Christianity to shreds—just so long as he gave them the actual truth. For they knew, as all should know, that there is no system of religion higher than truth.

And then a strange thing happened. Something never before witnessed in any church in America.

As Howard Bannister stood there catching his breath, spontaneously that huge audience burst into applause. Bannister was dumbfounded. The shouts and the hand-clapping made the very rafters ring. Cheer drowned out cheer. Tears were rolling down the cheeks of Howard Bannister, for never in his wildest moments had he ever dreamed that his Easter message would bring such a demonstration. He had suspected that he might be called before the bishop in charge of the diocese. But he did not think of that now—for in the face of this amazing demonstration no Methodist bishop could stop his tongue. If the bishop interfered with Howard Bannister, the Board of Trustees would remove All Souls from the Methodist jurisdiction. Bannister knew that.

The demonstration continued for fully five minutes, and during those five minutes, history was made in All Souls church. Yes—it was made throughout the whole Christian world. For if the members of All Souls were this eager for the truth and if this demonstration meant that they knew truth when they heard it, every Christian church in America would follow suit, in the moment these truths were given to their respective congregations.

And Bannister's heart was glad. Tears continued to stream down his handsome face as he held his hand aloft for silence.

Then he continued:

"There is another point I wish to bring before you. Suppose that there was a Jewish reformer named Jesus two thousand years ago; suppose his enemies succeeded in bringing him to the cross; how can it be known that he died in the crucifixion? According to the Gospel of Luke, Christ was on the cross about three hours. If Mark is correct, he hung on the cross about six hours. It is altogether improbable that a man should have died of crucifixion in that length of time. Crucifixion was a long-drawn-out agony. The victim died, not from the loss of blood, but from the protracted nervous strain and from hunger. Frequently, the crucified lived on the cross for several days. A Negro slave, crucified in Jamaica in 1760, lived on the cross for two hundred and ten hours—nearly nine days. In Kitto's 'Biblical Encyclopedia,' a standard orthodox work, it is said that 'We may consider thirty-six hours to be the earliest period at which crucifixion would occasion death in a healthy adult.'

"Now if a healthy man would live at least thirty-six hours on a cross, how shall we explain the death of Christ in three or six hours? Was Christ a weakling? Did he lack average health and endurance? Why did he die in so short a time?

"Again, we are told that the soldiers broke the legs of the thieves, who were crucified with him, but his legs were not broken. This makes it more difficult to believe that he should have died so early; and quite reasonable to suppose that these

unbroken legs may have enabled him to get away later on!

"It is said, however, that he was speared in the side and that blood and water came from the wound. But nothing is said as to the seriousness of this wound. It was only in the side, and there is no intimation that it touched any vital organ, or was more than a slight flesh wound. Moreover, science, voicing its conclusion in Dr. Schmiedel's article on 'John, Son of Zebedee,' in the 'Encyclopedia Biblica,' declares that, 'In spite of all efforts, no one has yet been able to show that blood and water actually do flow from a wound of this kind.' The Gospel fabulist was not up in his physiology!

"When told that Christ was dead, Pilate marvelled that he should have died in so short a time; and when the crucified was taken from the cross, he was not examined by physicians to ascertain whether he was really dead. No effort was made to determine whether the last spark of life had fled. No restoratives were administered. In view of these facts, who shall say that Christ was dead? How can we know that he had not swooned? How can we be sure that his disappointment and his pain had not banished consciousness from her throne while life remained? How can we be certain that he was not buried alive, but unconscious? He was not buried in the earth. He was laid in a sepulcher in a rock. Against the mouth of this tomb a stone was rolled. If he was yet alive, he had air to breathe, and in a few hours he may have recovered consciousness. Perhaps the stone that stood between him and freedom was not too large for him to roll away; or his disciples, returning to the tomb in the night, may have heard his cry for assistance, and helped him to make his escape.

"On the other hand, if he was dead, they may have stolen away his body and buried it where none might find his grave. Either of these suppositions is infinitely more probable than that a dead man or a dead God rose from the dead. Men in pain have swooned; men have been buried alive; dead men have been stolen from their graves. These things are natural—within human experience. But all experience denies that a dead man

ever became alive again; and the whole universe mocks the superstition that a God could die!

"Do I hear some Christian say that the Roman soldiers guarded Jesus' tomb and that, therefore, his disciples could not have stolen his body? Matthew is the only writer who mentions the Roman guard; and he assures us that the guard was not placed at the tomb until the second night. During the whole of the first night there was no guard at the grave. What was there, then, to prevent Christ's escape, if he were alive, or his body being taken away, if he were dead? Nothing! Admitting, therefore, that soldiers were stationed at Jesus' grave on the second night, as Matthew says; admitting also that they sealed the tomb, and stood guard until they were officially relieved of their watch, the story of the resurrection gains nothing, for he may have escaped or been stolen away, during the first night, when, as yet, there was no guard about. In such a situation, we might reasonably suppose that the soldiers arrived a day too late and that they guarded an empty tomb.

"But there is something else to be said in connection with the guard. Who went to Pilate and asked him to set a guard at the sepulcher? The chief priests and Pharisees—the Jewish Sanhedrin. Why did they ask for a guard? Matthew says they said to Pilate: 'Lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead.'

"Mark well this fact—the day after the crucifixion of Christ, the idea of his being stolen from the grave was, according to Matthew, in the minds of the Jewish leaders. Is not that significant? In assuring us that the Jews feared that the body of Jesus would be stolen, the 'inspired' writer unwittingly suggests the solution of the empty tomb!

"But was there really a guard at the sepulcher? Matthew alone says there was. The testimony of the other Gospels proves that there was not. That testimony is negative, positive and conclusive;—negative in that neither Mark, nor Luke, nor John knows anything whatever of the guard—positive, in that,

according to Mark and Luke, the women brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus, which they would not have done had they known that Roman soldiers stood guard at his grave—conclusive, in that the women on reaching the tomb, said among themselves; ‘who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?’ The women saw no soldiers at the tomb, either to guard it or to roll from its portal the closing stone, because there were none there.

“That the story of the watch is a myth is further proved by Matthew’s statement that the Jewish priests bribed the soldiers to say that, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept.’ The Roman soldier’s devotion to duty has never been surpassed in the military annals of the world. Moreover, under the inflexible discipline of Roman militarism, the soldier who slept on duty was unceremoniously executed. Yet Matthew would have us believe that for a bribe, Roman soldiers not only sold out their honor, but exposed themselves to the certainty of immediate and ignominious death! This is not only a libel alike on the integrity and sanity of the martial character of Rome; it is an insult to the common sense of the world.

“If yet further testimony be required to prove that there was no watch at the tomb, it is found in the fact that, according to the Gospels, nobody felt the need of one. Why? Because the disciples believed that Christ was dead and that he would remain dead—because they knew nothing of his resurrection, and were not looking for it. Luke says that when the women told the disciples of the resurrection, ‘their words seemed to them (the disciples) as idle tales and they believed them not.’

“Why did the disciples refuse to believe? Let John answer: ‘For as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead.’ To whom is John referring particularly? To Peter and ‘the disciples whom Jesus loved’ and with them all the disciples. According to the Synoptic Gospels, Peter was the prince of the disciples; according to John, the chief disciple was the disciple whom Jesus loved—that is to

say, John. These bosom companions of Jesus went and beheld his empty tomb. They were amazed to find it empty. Why? Because 'they'—the foremost disciples who must have understood the mission of their master's life—'knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead.'

"Now let us ask: If the most intimate disciples of Christ, those who knew him best and were most devoted to him—those who had followed him throughout his whole career—if these had never heard of his coming resurrection, where did the Jewish priests get their suspicion that his disciples would claim he had risen from the dead? Did Christ go and apprise his enemies of a stupendous secret which he kept carefully guarded from his friends? The ministry of Christ lasted for one year—or for three—the Gospels are so full of contradictions that nothing definite can be learned from them—and during that time, according to John, his disciples never heard from him that he was to rise from the dead. Yet the priests at Jerusalem, whom he had scarcely seen, knew all about the Christian doctrine of the resurrection! If the disciples were in ignorance as to a proposed resurrection, nothing could be more reasonably certain than that the priests and Pharisees had never heard of it; and if these men of the Sanhedrin knew nothing of Christ's teaching that he would rise from the dead, they certainly did not ask Pilate to set a guard at the tomb.

"I am, of course, aware that, according to Matthew, Jesus had said to the scribes and Pharisees: 'For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.' But there are four decisive facts which prove the spurious character of this supposed prophecy. These facts are, first, that our knowledge of the origin of the Gospels makes it quite unreasonable to rely upon anything they contain as being the words of Christ; secondly, that this prophecy was unknown to the disciples, since, as the Gospels show, they did not anticipate the resurrection; thirdly, that according to the prophecy, Christ compared his prospective stay in the earth

with the myth of Jonas' sojourn in the whale—likened his resurrection to an event that never happened; and fourthly, that whereas, according to the prophecy, he was to be in the earth three days and three nights, the Gospels represent him to have been in the grave only one night and a few hours alike of the preceding and of the following day—that is to say, perhaps thirty hours in all.

"He was buried on Friday evening; his grave was empty at sunrise on Sunday morning, if not, indeed, according to Matthew, at the end of the Sabbath, on Saturday evening. By no possibility, therefore, can his stay in the sepulcher be harmonized with the duration of Jonas' alleged confinement in the whale, since thirty hours or less cannot be made to cover a period of three days and three nights.

"But the sleeping sentries suiciding for priestly gold to spread the rumor that a grave was vacated, not by a risen God, but by a stolen corpse, is but one of the fond fancies of 'The Gospel According to St. Matthew.' In his exuberant imagination, the writer of this pious piece of priestly pap, assures us that when Christ was crucified many unusual phenomena occurred. An earthquake rent the veil of the temple in twain; rocks were torn asunder, and opened the graves of sleeping saints. Thereupon, these saints 'arose', and standing upright or sitting in their tombs, politely waited until Christ had risen from the dead, when they left their graves, 'and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.'

"The resurrection of these 'saints' born from death into life in the shattering rumble of an earthquake, stands on precisely the same authority as the resurrection of Christ. So there was not one resurrection only; there were many.

"But who were these resurrected saints so deferential to Christ that they remained in their open graves from Friday evening until Sunday morning? How long had they been dead? Did they come from their tombs in their putrefying flesh? In the bareness of their clattering bones? Or merely as unsubstantial ghostly forms? Were they clothed or nude? And

who were the 'many' to whom they appeared? Did they die again soon? If they came from a world of endless joy, why did they not leave mankind some record of their appearance there and their experience in the realm of the dead? Is it not strange that the history of the time is silent about Matthew's earthquake; that the Jews never heard of the rending of the sacred temple's veil; and that the appearance in Jerusalem of a band of resurrected saints—corpses infused with life for exhibition purposes—neither excited the slightest commotion, nor drew from the pen of any writer of the time even the passing notice of a single line? How shall we explain the fact that three of the Gospels and the universal voice of history have absolutely ignored these stupendous miracles? Very simply. They never happened except in Matthew's perfervid imagination!

"Let me say here, that in assuming that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear, I do so merely for convenience. As a matter of fact, nobody knows who wrote a line of any of the Gospels. It is certain that they were not written by the disciples of Christ, or by anybody acquainted with Christ or his immediate followers. They are not the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but Gospels 'according' to these persons.

"These superscriptions did not originally belong to the Gospels; they were added by the church; and whether Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were ever more real than the imaginary characters of fiction, nobody will ever know. Where these Gospels were written and when, are matters of equal uncertainty. There is no evidence, whatever, to show that they were in existence during the first century after the supposed events they pretend to describe. Emerging from the darkness of early Christian times, wholly anonymous in their character, composed of myths and legends that had floated for ages in the fancy of ignorance and credulity, selected from a spurious mass of pious drivel, declared divine by superstitious priests and the votes of quarreling religious councils, embellished with frauds by forging hands in the interest of the

church—such were and are the Gospels; and the doctrine that they are the inspired word of God is a fond religious fiction that rests on no authority whatever, but rests solely on the lies of priests. But, for convenience, I assume that they were written by those whose names they bear.

“The story of Christ’s resurrection is proved to be hopelessly false by the clamoring tongues of its many contradictions. Was Christ embalmed before he was buried? John tells us he was. According to John, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus embalmed him with a mixture of ‘myrrh and aloes of about a hundred pounds weight’—enough to embalm a dozen bodies!

“According to Matthew, he was not embalmed; and Luke’s story plainly shows that there was no embalment. Luke says he was wrapped in linen and laid in the sepulcher and that the women who saw him so laid away, returned to prepare spices and ointments which they brought to the tomb later. But why should the women who, according to Luke, saw the body laid away, prepare spices to embalm it if they knew that it was already embalmed as elaborately as John describes? According to Luke, the women prepared the embalming spices before the Sabbath began—before sunset on Friday; according to Mark, they did not buy them till after the Sabbath had ended—after sunset of Saturday. Surely no one will ever accuse the Scriptures of monotonous harmony!

“How many women came to the sepulcher? John says that one came—Mary Magdalene. Matthew says there were two—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. Mark holds that there were three—Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. And Luke insists that there were at least five—‘Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with them’. Four inspired writers yet not one of them can tell us how many women came to the sepulcher of a risen God!

“At what time did the women come to the tomb? Matthew says they came ‘in the end of the Sabbath’—at sunset Saturday

evening. Mark says they came at sunrise on the first day of the week—on Sunday morning.

“When the women came to the tomb they found it empty. The stone had been rolled away. The grave clothes lay where they had been cast. Jesus was no longer in the grave. How long had the sepulcher been empty? Nobody knows. No writer ventures the information that he was present when it happened. The resurrection stands without a single witness. All that the Gospels tell us is that when the women visited the tomb Jesus was not there.

“When the women came to the sepulcher, whom did they meet? Matthew says they met ‘the angel.’ Mark says they met ‘a young man’. Luke is certain that they met ‘two men.’ You are all wrong, declares John; they met ‘two angels.’ Matthew, where was the angel when the women met him? ‘He was sitting on the stone outside the sepulcher.’ Mark, where was the young man? ‘He was sitting in the sepulcher, on the right side.’ What did the women do when they were told that Jesus had risen from the dead? Answer, Matthew. ‘They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy and did run to bring his disciples word.’ Mark, is that what they did? It is not. Tell us, then, what they did. ‘They went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher, for they trembled and were amazed, neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid.’

“These are the last words of the Gospel of Mark, as it existed in the early centuries. The last twelve verses of that Gospel as we have it, are acknowledged by Christian scholars to be a forgery. They are not found in the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel. Yet I shall make use of these verses, for, though forged, they are a part of the Bible.

“Note the last contradiction to which I called your attention. Matthew says the women hurried from the tomb to tell the disciples of the resurrection; Mark says they fled in fear and for that reason said nothing about it to any man. Both of these statements cannot be true.

"As we are considering what is called the evidence for the resurrection, let me tell you something about evidence in general. It is a rule in the logic of evidence that the more unusual, the more important, is the fact sought to be established, the greater in amount, the more precise and conclusive in character, must be the evidence required to establish it. An ordinary fact is established by ordinary evidence. An unusual fact, a fact of vast significance, a fact involving life, liberty, reputation, can be established only by a great amount of evidence—evidence of the best quality, evidence that will bear scrutiny and analysis. A modest amount of evidence would be sufficient to prove that a man in good health rose from his bed and dressed himself this morning. Why? Because the fact is one of the most common occurrence. But how much evidence do you suppose it would require to convince an intelligent court that man walked down the street on his ears, and that he walked faster than a healthy athlete who followed him could walk on his well-developed legs? Such a proposition could not be proved at all. And why not? Because the thing alleged is unnatural, unreasonable, impossible, and therefore, false!

"A court could more easily believe that a hundred or a thousand witnesses had been deceived by optical illusion, or that they were lying, or that they were insane, than that a man could walk a mile in a few minutes on his ears.

"If, moreover, in trying to establish such an unusual proposition, the witnesses did not agree as to the facts; if they contradicted one another in vital essentials as to time, place and circumstances; do you think the court would conclude that the thing has actually happened? Such a case would be an exact parallel to the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The thing affirmed as a fact is unnatural, unreasonable, and, according to every canon of human experience, impossible. Therefore, no amount of human testimony can make it credible. If all the writers of the New Testament were in absolute agreement about it, that would not even tend to make it true;

and when we find the writers who deal with it contradicting one another vitally, the story proves itself to be hopelessly false.

"But there are other contradictions.

"Let us return to them. Where did Mary Magdalene first meet Jesus after his resurrection? John says she met him at the tomb. Matthew says she met him while on her way to tell the disciples. Was she alone when she met him? According to John she was. According to Matthew she was not. Did Mary Magdalene know Jesus when she met him? Matthew tells us that she did, that Jesus saluted her, saying, 'All hail!' John assures us that she did not know him, that she thought he was 'the gardener.'

"Did Mary Magdalene touch Jesus when they met? Yes; according to Matthew, she 'came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.' No, according to John. Jesus said to her: 'Touch me not for I am not yet ascended to my Father.'

"Where did Jesus desire to meet his disciples after the resurrection? Matthew declares he gave Mary Magdalene the following message: 'Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.' Luke avers that the words of Jesus to his disciples were, 'Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be embued with power from on high.'

"Where, then, did Jesus first meet his disciples after his rise from the dead? Matthew is certain that it was on a mountain in Galilee. Luke insists that it was in Jerusalem and John adds that it was behind closed doors, where the disciples had met for fear of the Jews. Galilee is at one end of Palestine, and Jerusalem at the other. The two points—one in the North and the other in the South—are separated by what was then known as a three days' journey. Now as Luke and John declare that Jesus met the disciples on the evening of the day of his resurrection, it is certain he could not have met them in so short a time at a point so far away. If Luke and John are correct, the meeting did not take place in Galilee; if Matthew was well informed, it did not occur in Jerusalem. A little less

'inspiration' and a little more truth might have saved the reputation of these writers.

"When the disciples saw Christ, were they agreed that it was he? They were not. Matthew tells us that some doubted. Here was a man with whom they had been associated for one year—or for three years—a man with whose person, whose voice, they were entirely familiar, a man whom they revered as their teacher and leader and yet, when they saw him, they were not satisfied that it was he; they looked on him, talked with him—and doubted.

"There are Christians who contend that Christ did not retain his physical body. They believe that he arose in spirit form only. But the Gospels teach that he arose in his body of flesh and blood. According to Luke, he said to his disciples: 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.' And did he not, according to John, invite doubting Thomas to feel his several wounds? And does not Luke insist that he ate some broiled fish and honey-comb just before his ascension? To argue after all this that the resurrection was spiritual only is to turn the Gospels into a wild burlesque.

"There remains the testimony of St. Paul.

"Paul tells us that Christ's first appearance was to Cephas, that is, Peter. This is contradicted by all the Gospels. His second appearance, according to Paul, was to the twelve disciples. But there were at that time only eleven disciples—Judas had hanged himself. Of the treachery and suicide of Judas, Paul is utterly ignorant. Paul says that Christ's third appearance was to 'above five hundred brethren at once.' But not one of these gentlemen has anywhere testified that he saw the resurrected Jesus; and of this appearance to the multitude, the Gospels are wholly silent.

"To certify that Paul is quite mistaken here, we may observe that there were not five hundred Christian brethren in the world at that time. 'After that,' says Paul, 'he was seen of James.' The Epistle of James knows nothing at all about the

resurrection; and no appearance to James is mentioned in the Gospels. 'And last of all,' declares Paul, 'he was seen of me, also.'

"It may be so, Paul, but you are the only witness in your behalf. No other writer knows anything whatever about any appearance to you.

"The testimony of Paul is in hopeless conflict with the four Gospels. While the Gospels quarrel with one another, Paul quarrels with them all.

"While the four Gospels teach that Christ rose from the tomb in his body of flesh and blood, and while two of them declare that with that body he ascended into heaven, Paul challenges the Gospels with this positive pronouncement: 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' Very well, Paul; but if this is so, will you be so good as to explain to us what Christ did with his human body when he got beyond the clouds?"

* * *

Howard Bannister had finished his sermon. Standing there before those people he loved so well, one could sense victory in his face. Perspiration was dripping from his forehead and his shirt and collar were as limp as if he had fallen into the water. Standing there, his massive frame quivered with tenseness as he said, "For once in my life, I have told my people the truth about Jesus Christ; now you know whether He rose from the dead or not."

Opening his coat, he withdrew from the inner pocket a long envelope and holding it in his hand, he said:

"This envelope contains my resignation as pastor of All Souls Church. It is made effective at 12:30, just fifteen minutes from now. I'm going to ask the Board of Trustees to step from the directors' room, where they are now gathered, onto this platform. I shall then hand them this letter of resignation. The members of this congregation will please remain seated, for it will go into executive session with the Trustees and your pastor at this time.

"In making this momentous change—in bringing to you the truths of God nude of fable and fiction—I want there to be no question as to whether this church agrees or disagrees with the stand I have taken. I have, therefore, asked the Trustees to call this special executive session and you will be asked to express your desires. The question is simple: do you want your pastor to teach you the power of the Spirit of God in accordance with the sermon this morning, or do you want him to continue preaching Jesus Christ as God, as he has done for the past fifteen years?"

Hearing their pastor over the loud speaker, the Board of Trustees were filing through the little door to the right of the rostrum leading out of the directors' room. They took their places on seven chairs seated in the middle of the rostrum. Alan Fordyce, the assistant pastor, stayed in the pulpit, occupying a seat to the right of where Dr. Bannister had been speaking.

With the resignation in his hand, Bannister walked out of the pulpit, down onto the main platform. Approaching Dr. Wilson, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, he handed him the long white envelope.

"As Chairman of the Board of Trustees, I am handing you my resignation as pastor of All Souls Church. This resignation takes effect almost immediately. As has been the custom in this church on all matters of importance, an executive meeting with the congregation has been called. I request, therefore, that you call this meeting to order and we enter an executive session at this time," said Dr. Bannister, as he took a seat to the left of the Board of Trustees.

Dr. Wilson arose and, taking a few steps forward, faced the audience and opened the letter of resignation.

"Ladies and gentlemen of All Souls Church," he began, "as our pastor has informed us, I now hold in my hand his resignation as pastor of All Souls Church. This meeting will please consider itself in order while I read this letter of resignation."

Then he read:

"To the Board of Trustees of All Souls Methodist Church—Gentlemen: For some time I have recognized that fact that religion today is incompetent to deal with the momentous problems with which this world is faced. I have tried to discover the reason religion, which is supposed to be the truths of God, is so utterly incapable of making any effect whatsoever for good on this world, and I have carefully thought and pondered the serious question of why, in the face of the barbarous despotism of Adolf Hitler, the Christian church can do nothing towards stopping the horrible slaughter of human beings in Europe and in Asia.

"After long years of careful thought and much research, I have decided that the fault lies in the conception of God being brought to this world by the Christian church. I have decided, further, that to offer Jesus Christ to this world as Almighty God is to offer the world a pagan myth and an old religious fable of the Dark Ages, and I can no longer preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified in this or in any other church.

"There has been revealed to me, however, what I believe to be the actual truths of God. Those truths came to me as a blaze of illuminating light. Under those truths and through the power of those truths it is possible to stop Hitler dead in his tracks and to eliminate from this earth every last vestige of hate, injustice, insecurity, and to replace these things with infinite love and peace.

"I, therefore, request an expression of opinion from this congregation and it must be unanimous. I want to know whether this wonderful congregation wants me to discard the Christian Bible, with the fable of Jesus Christ, and preach instead, the omnipotent truths of the Spirit of God as that Great Spirit exists here and now on this earth. There is a great Light shining in the darkness, but the darkness comprehends not that Light. I should like to preach that Light.

"If this congregation is willing that I stay here as its pastor, preaching the truths of the Spirit of God as those truths have been revealed to me, I shall be happy to stay.

"If, however, the congregation prefers the story of Jesus Christ and the Christian Bible, it will have to secure another pastor.

"Here, gentlemen, is my resignation. Take it and do with it what you will."

Addressing the congregation once more, Dr. Wilson said, "I should like to say to our people that on Friday your Board of Trustees met in executive session with Dr. Bannister. He laid all his cards on the table. He told us exactly how he felt about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Christian Bible and the Christian religion. He told us the innermost convictions of his soul, and he convinced the Board of Trustees that to continue preaching the Christian Bible and Jesus Christ amounts to spiritual suicide. The Trustees agreed with him and they were unanimous in their decision that he discard if he felt like it, any reference to Jesus Christ or the Christian Bible in this church. All Souls Church is not dependent upon the dictates of any denomination. While it is a fact that we operate under the Western Methodist Conference, we feel that All Souls Church is a body unto itself. This church is only interested in doing something to make God a living reality in this world.

"The final decision, however, must lie with this congregation. It is my pleasure then, to submit to you the following resolution and you can move its adoption or its nonadoption.

"The resolution your Board of Trustees has prepared reads as follows:

"*'IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED* that the resignation of Howard Bannister as pastor of All Souls Church be not accepted. It is further moved that Howard Bannister be allowed to preach the truths of the Spirit of God as those truths have been revealed to him, without any reference to Jesus Christ or the Christian Bible.'

"As is usual in matters of this kind, the congregation will

vote by standing to its feet. All in favor of rejecting the resignation of Dr. Bannister, please rise."

There followed then a demonstration of unanimity seldom accorded any pastor in any church. As one man, the vast congregation stood to its feet. Cheers rent the auditorium. Tears were streaming down the faces of every member of All Souls Church. Cries of "We want God; we want God" could be heard above the din of the cheering and hand clapping.

In vain did the Chairman of the Board of Trustees attempt to bring quiet. It was not until Howard Bannister, rising with outstretched arms, appealed to his congregation, that quiet was restored.

That the whole Board of Trustees was visibly moved was very evident. Turning to the congregation once more, Dr. Wilson said, "Those who are opposed to this resolution have a right to be heard from. Will such members as are not in favor of discarding the Christian Bible and the story of Jesus Christ, please rise to your feet?"

Not a single soul in that audience arose. Once more the tumultuous ovation broke out. It continued for fully thirty minutes.

Rising to his feet, Howard Bannister once more stretched his long arms aloft and requested quiet. Tears were streaming down his face as he addressed his congregation.

"My friends, you can never know what this moment means to me. You can never know the joy and the sorrow which I feel at this amazing expression of confidence in me. You fully realize what this means, of course. From now on this church will preach the Power of the Spirit of God. Its members will be required to live their lives in full recognition of the Power of the Spirit of God. With a failing impotent Christianity all around us, it is high time that some church discard completely the pagan tradition which has brought death and decay to our Christian church and in the place of that tradition, begin to preach and live the actual presence of God.

"As you probably know, my life is lived only for one purpose; that purpose is to make God a living reality to you. In order to successfully do that, it is essential that my conscience be clear. It is essential that I know by actual experience whereof I speak when I preach to you.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot conscientiously preach the so-called gospel of Jesus Christ to you any longer, for I am convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that the story is not true. There are many wonderful things in the Christian Bible. There are many wonderful lessons which can be learned from the story of Jesus Christ, whether it be fact or fiction. The beautiful Beatitudes of Luke,—they teach wonderful lessons. The Psalms are beautiful writings, but neither the Beatitudes of Luke or the Psalms of David in themselves possess any power which can stop Adolf Hitler, and that is what I am primarily interested in.

"If, then, the story of Jesus Christ cannot stop Hitler—if that story cannot bring peace to this earth—there must be somewhere a conception of God that can.

"When I say to you that the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness comprehends it not, I am telling you an absolute fact. Sad and horrible as world conditions are today, there is, beloved, right at the heart of these world conditions, a Great Light. That Light is shining today. That Light has always been shining. But because the darkness of religious superstition and myth has been so great, this world has been unable to see that great liberating Light, which is the Spirit of God.

"Millions of earnest, God-fearing men and women have asked our Christian denomination for the truth concerning God and the Christian church. Being utterly unable to bring those truths as offered to these earnest millions, the fable that Almighty God was killed on a cross at Calvary two thousand years ago was offered instead. Now I ask you as sensible thinking Americans, can that theory of God bring peace to this earth? It has been preached for two thousand years now.

Yet in spite of all that preaching, this world is closer to complete annihilation today than it ever was.

"Members of All Souls Church, I am not interested in any religious philosophy which cannot demonstrate the Power of God on this earth now. Nor am I interested in any religious teaching which promises much after we die, but holds out little hope here. I do not believe that those who know God are to be considered pilgrims along a thorny road, weighed down by the burdens of the sins of the earth, yet having no Power in themselves to remedy those sins. Rather am I interested in a philosophy of God which can prove itself on earth and which possesses enough Power to drive every ungodly force from the face of this earth.

"The congregation of All Souls Church has spoken. It has been unanimously decided that my resignation be not accepted. I accept the verdict. From now on, All Souls Church will bring to this world the most revolutionary Power the world has ever known. It will preach and demonstrate the Power of the Spirit of God. As a result of your decision, this Easter morning, the whole Christian structure of religion and all other religions may be completely revolutionized.

"Instead of theories of God and traditions about God, this world will know the actual Power of God. When that happens, world marauders like Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and perhaps others, will be utterly unable to stand against the transcendently beautiful Power of the Spirit of God.

"Tonight this church will make the first demonstration of the Power of that great Spirit. I suggest that the congregation be here quite early.

"Now there is just one more thing. Naturally, news of the action of this church this morning will be flashed all over the world. Members of the congregation will be subjected to almost merciless questioning. Keep a smile on your faces and tell your questioners that the pastor of All Souls Church believes that the Power of God is greater than the military

might of Adolf Hitler, and we are going to bring Hitler to his knees by the Power of that Great Spirit."

Turning around to the pulpit in which was seated Dr. For-dyce, Bannister motioned him down to his side. Then he went out through the little door leading into his study.

The momentous service was over.

CHAPTER TWELVE

HOWARD BANNISTER WAS CORRECT when he stated that the action of All Souls Church that morning would create a sensation. The evening editions of the San Francisco papers carried eight-column headlines which read something like this:

"BANNISTER SAYS CHRISTIAN RELIGION HOAX."

"ALL SOULS BREAKS FROM METHODIST CHURCH?"

"BANNISTER KICKS BIBLE OUT OF CHURCH."

Then followed long articles describing the sensational service at All Souls Church that Easter morning.

At his home, the pastor was besieged by telegrams, long distance calls, news agencies and press associations. Before two o'clock every radio news service had broadcast the news of that action of All Souls Church. Inside of a week, every paper in the United States had featured the story.

Consternation, of course, reigned among the churches. Some prominent ministers took issue with Bannister and the Methodist Church later sent a delegation of three bishops to meet with Howard Bannister and the Board of Trustees. Being one of the largest financial contributors to the parent body, the Methodist Church naturally was dismayed at the prospect of losing All Souls Church, yet they knew that Howard Bannister was fully supported by the Board of Trustees and by the unanimous vote of that large congregation. They also knew there would be no compromise between Bannister and the parent church.

The investigating board of three bishops, after making a telephone appointment with Howard Bannister in his home, met in the church study before the evening service. They had

come by plane. When the secretary announced them, Howard Bannister said, "Show them in."

Bannister met them at the door of his elaborately furnished study, shook hands all around, and invited them to be seated. He didn't give the bishops a chance to open the conversation, however, but started the conversation going himself.

"I think I know what the object of this call is, gentlemen, and to save any unpleasantness and argument, let me say to you that this church is prepared to withdraw from the Methodist Conference at once. Whatever action I have taken has been done after much thought, and the die has been cast irrevocably. Naturally, I am sorry to see this church break away from the parent organization, yet no other step is possible."

One of the bishops, Henry Tomlinson, was a stout, well-nourished individual with a very florid face.

"But, Dr. Bannister, do you realize what this means to the Christian religion? Do you realize that you have disturbed the faith of millions? Why, man, you have done irreparable damage already to the cause of Jesus Christ, which cause we believe in, regardless of what you may say."

Howard Bannister rose to his feet.

"Bishop Tomlinson, I prefer that there be no discussion or argument concerning the merits or demerits of Jesus Christ and the Christian religion. By this time you know my stand on that subject very well. I see no reason to continue this interview. Our attorneys will draw up the necessary papers, severing all connections with the Methodist Church, and from this moment on, All Souls Church expects to operate as a separate and distinct entity. Time will tell, gentlemen, which of us is correct. In the meantime, may I bid you all a very pleasant good-day."

There was no question but that this interview was at an end, for Bannister pushed one of the desk buttons and as the secretary entered, he said, "Miss Johnston, will you please show these gentlemen out?"

Later a few church magazines and periodicals let loose a

blast of vitriolic comment against Dr. Bannister, but most of such periodicals came out in his favor. As a matter of fact, he was absolutely amazed when he read the favorable comments coming in the wires of some of the brightest minds in America. They honored him for his courage and for having faith in his convictions. They freely admitted the absolute inability of the Christian religion to cope with world conditions today. One prominent Methodist theological seminary passed a resolution which had the effect, too, of completely discarding the religion founded on the Christian Bible and the story of Jesus Christ.

Certainly Howard Bannister had split the Christian religion wide open. It began to look very much as if the cards were stacked against those who insisted that the only way peace could be brought to this earth was by believing in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Altogether Bannister was stunned when he saw the mass of evidence of religious leaders who agreed with him one hundred percent. He had expected criticism, but no praise. As it was, the praise by far outweighed the criticism. It was instantaneous.

This heartened Howard Bannister very much. He argued that if the majority of Christian ministers and churches were behind him, then it should not take very long for America to replace the pagan traditions of Jesus Christ with the actual Power of the Spirit of God. Howard Bannister knew that once that was done, this whole world would be revolutionized, for Almighty God would live among men on the earth and every individual and every nation would know to the very full what the Power of the Spirit of God on this earth actually means. That was all Howard Bannister wanted. That was all he had ever lived for. That was why, in this moment of seeming defeat, he had achieved his greatest triumph, and the foundation stone had been laid for a new world religion which recognized no crucified God, but which did recognize the Power of the living Spirit of God, the Creator of this universe.

* * *

Mrs. Bannister was not much of a church goer. She was active in church affairs, of course, but seldom did she attend church herself on Sundays. She said she preferred to supervise the cooking of the Sunday dinner. She was a good cook, too.

On this Easter Sunday morning after the stupendous morning service, Bannister had invited Dr. Fordyce and his wife to his home for dinner.

As Reuben drove the Cadillac across the Bay Bridge, Bannister turned to Alan Fordyce and said, "Do you suppose that we can get a big picture of Adolf Hitler in time for the evening service?"

"Why, I imagine we can, if we get busy right away—did you say a picture of Adolf Hitler?"

"Yes, and I want a big one. I should say it should be about eight feet wide by ten feet high. If you'll call up Larry Englebright, I think he can arrange to have one made and have it set on a big easel in front of the pulpit where everyone can see it in time for the evening service tonight."

Larry Englebright was connected with the art department of one of the large San Francisco newspapers and had been a member of All Souls Church for many years.

"I'll call Larry just as soon as we get to the house," said Alan Fordyce.

"I have never seen or heard tell of such a demonstration as we witnessed this morning, Howard," said Mrs. Fordyce.

"Yes, it was unusual, I'll admit, but it was just what I expected. You see, Lucille, I think I have gauged public opinion correctly. I think I know how hungry this world is for the actual truths of God, and if I do, then the time most certainly is ripe for humanity to discard all pagan traditions about God and to accept in their place a sane, logical conception of Deity which all thinking Americans will be glad to accept and use. This business of telling men and women that they were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and doomed to hell when they die, is very much passé today. Men and women have no use for that philosophy because there is no justice in it. If men and

women are condemned to eternal punishment because of something someone else did, before they were born, well, they just don't want that kind of religion. But I think, Lucille, this world is in such a desperate condition now that it recognizes that it has to call upon some higher Power or it might very easily be destroyed by the murdering, military might of the greatest maniac this world has ever known.

Alan Fordyce was like a young lamb skipping about in the meadows. He had been raised in a very orthodox Methodist home. His father and mother were farmers in the state of Nevada. They did not have very much of anything and it had been a struggle for them to put their son through theological seminary. Somehow they had succeeded and Alan had left this seminary full of old Methodist traditions and fervor.

All Souls Church had engaged him on the recommendation of Howard Bannister, and perhaps once a month he had preached the evening sermon. It did not take Alan Fordyce very long, however, to discover that the farther he kept away from Calvary's Cross and the blood of Jesus Christ, the better off he would be. He was passionately fond of Howard Bannister and years of association with this famous preacher had broadened his view considerably.

Finally, he had admitted that the narrow Christian conception of deity was, in all probability, utterly false. Bannister had watched him expand and a friendship had grown up between them which was very deep.

About fifteen minutes later, Reuben brought the car to a halt in front of the Bannister home and Dr. and Mrs. Fordyce, with Bannister, went in. Of course, Mrs. Bannister was very anxious to hear what had happened at the church that morning. She knew, however, by the smile on her husband's face, that all had gone well.

"They voted unanimously to throw out the Bible and all reference to Jesus Christ, and they gave me such a demonstration—well, if ever I wished you had been in church, it was this morning. Alan will tell you about it after dinner. It was

the greatest expression of confidence in Almighty God I have ever seen."

They sat in the large living room until dinner was announced, and little Marge piled up on her Daddy's knee. The title "White Monkey" had stuck to her and now she was Daddy's little white monkey. She did not seem to object very much to this because it seemed to make little difference what her Daddy called her, just so long as he loved her as she knew he did.

The famous Bannister dinner of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding was served, after which the Bannister family and its guests went out to the patio and sat there discussing the momentous Sunday morning service. Fordyce, in the meantime, had made arrangements with Larry Englebright, who had assured him that he would have the Hitler picture framed and on a large easel in front of the pulpit before seven-thirty that night.

"My curiosity is getting the better of me, Howard. What do you want with a huge portrait of Adolf Hitler in church tonight?"

Bannister thought deeply for a moment. Then he replied, "Isn't Adolf Hitler the greatest menace on the face of the earth today?"

"Most certainly he is, Howard."

"Then, if we are to bring Adolf Hitler to his knees through the Power of the Spirit of God, I should like to have Hitler in person in All Souls Church tonight. That, however, will be quite impossible, so we shall have to do the next best thing. We shall have a photograph of him big enough to be seen from the last row of pews."

"Do you suppose they'll accuse you of being a Nazi or anything like that?" asked Alan Fordyce.

"Well, they may wonder when they first enter the church and see that big photograph, but before the service is over, they'll have few ideas like that, I promise you," returned Bannister.

"Don't be asking any questions about the service, Alan. This

is my surprise. I think when you see what I shall do tonight you will admit that it is apt to be very effective."

They sat there on the patio. Then Bannister excused himself. He wanted to be alone in his church study for a couple of hours before the evening service. He also wanted to be in the church to supervise the placing of the large picture of Adolf Hitler. He was doing a daring thing, and he knew it. Yet this daring thing he was doing proved to be the first step in a movement which, before it was through, had completely eliminated Hitler and brought permanent peace, prosperity and happiness to this war-weary earth.

Arriving at his study, Bannister entered, took off his hat and coat and sat down in his red leather upholstered chair. He began to think. That was one thing that Howard Bannister knew how to do. He knew how to think a problem through to its logical conclusion. He never had been willing to accept any premise advocated by anyone without thinking it through. This was the technique he had used in discarding completely from his ministry all reference to the Christian Bible or Jesus Christ.

He thought it through. He thought it out. He could not correlate the absence of God from a world which so badly needs God. He argued that wherever there was a concentration of brute force, with its accompanying misery and suffering, there also should be a concentration of a superior spiritual force. He tried hard to think through and discover where such a spiritual power could come from. He carefully analyzed his own Christian religion from its very hazy inception up to the present day. He knew the record was one of complete and abominable failure. That told Howard Bannister very plainly that either one of two suppositions is true; either there is no spiritual power in the Christian theology of Jesus Christ, or there is a power there which the church has not been able to discover.

Bannister leaned very heavily to the first theory. He recounted the crucified gods of antiquity. He recalled that every

fundamental of the Christian religion was known to the pagan religions thousands of years before Jesus Christ was ever heard of. He knew the story of the flood was a second-hand story. He knew, also, the origin of the four gospels, and why they were in the Christian Bible. He knew well the complete history of the Roman Catholic Church, which had given Christianity to this world. Thinking these things through to their logical conclusion, Howard Bannister had become absolutely convinced that the entire Christian theory of God was nothing more nor less than a pious fraud instituted by pagan priests in the Dark Ages of a superstitious past.

As he sat there thinking in his study this Sunday afternoon, he was more than ever convinced that he was correct. He figured out that a Power great enough to create such a marvelous piece of mechanism as a human being, must live in that mechanism. He decided it would be illogical to think that Almighty God created such a colossal scheme of things as the celestial sphere above and the earth below, taking leave of this earth and heavens above and leaving them to shift for themselves.

In his thought he saw little children come into existence. He watched them grow up. They married; they raised children of their own. Was this haphazard? Howard Bannister did not think so. His capacity for thinking things through to their logical conclusion had brought him to the place where he believed in the existence of the Creator in the creation. He did not believe that this creation exists without the power of the Creator being in it. Then, he argued, because of the false theories of God, false religions, that is, the eyes of the human race might have been completely blind to the existence of God, the Creator, in each one of us and in each form of life which manifests on this earth.

Howard Bannister figured that all life was involved in, and a part of, one great ocean of life which he called God. Yet he knew of no religious organization on the face of the earth,

certainly no denomination in the Christian religion, which directed the thoughts of its followers to looking for God in themselves. One system of religion told them to look to the Cross of Calvary, while another great religion told them to look to the Cross of Chrishna. Another one came along and told them that Mohammed was the only begotten son of God.

Howard Bannister knew that thirty-five or more different gods, saviours, and Messiahs had been offered to this world, and he knew that everyone of them had been rejected as the Christian Jesus had been rejected.

"Still," thought Howard Bannister, "God Almighty must live. God Almighty must live in me. He must live in every human being on the face of this earth."

If this be a fact, he figured, certainly humanity was in complete and utter ignorance of the presence of the creative spirit of God in each member of that humanity. Something, he figured, had taken men's eyes away from the true dwelling place of God and directed them to a false dwelling place.

Looking through the windows of his study, he saw the beautiful Chinese elm trees which were growing outside the church. Rhododendrons, thousands of them, in the beautiful gardens surrounding the church. Wild canaries flitting through the air. Swallows building their nests in the eucalyptus trees.

"Oh yes—God lives and God lives here and now," said Howard Bannister to himself.

Sitting there, he allowed his thoughts to concentrate on the evening service. He had promised his congregation that in this evening service tonight he would demonstrate the Power of the Spirit of God over the military power of Adolf Hitler. For nearly two years now, this marauding despot had ruthlessly trod upon the individual and freedom and lands of other nations. At this moment the Swastika was flying from the capitols of sixteen nations which heretofore had been free to govern themselves. This mad despot had ruthlessly overrun these lands and seemed to be on a fair way to overrun the

whole earth. He had been able to accomplish these nefarious ends only because he had built the greatest fighting machine in history.

Of course, to Bannister, it was a mathematical certainty that Hitler could conquer the whole world, provided that he had enough submarines, dive bombers, tanks and flame throwers. That is—he could conquer the world if the power of brute force is the greatest power on the earth. But suppose there exists another Power, a Spiritual Power, a Power which is the Spirit of God—then what?

Bannister was convinced that this Power existed. He was up against the problem of how to call this Power to the attention of his church and effectively put it into operation against the brute physical power of Adolf Hitler. That was his problem. He was absolutely convinced that it could be done, for the simple reason that it took an Invisible Spiritual Power to create life, whereas it only takes a human power to build a tank or a submarine.

So, as he sat there in his study this Sunday afternoon, he had one big problem to face.

But he had thought that out to its logical conclusion, too, and he was very happy as he realized that nothing but ultimate and complete success could possibly reward his efforts.

Otherwise, there is no God, he figured. If it is not possible to stop the ravishing of the nations by a Power higher than human power, then certainly the world might well forget all about the existence of any Deity. But the flowers outside, the little birds flitting around, the two thousand and more human beings which would pack his church tonight, all bore eloquent testimony to the fact that there does exist a far greater creative power than the destructive human power of Hitler.

Bannister's problem was to show his congregation in just a few hours, where that Power existed and how to throw it into play.

* * *

At seven-thirty All Souls Church was packed to the doors. Thousands of people were sitting outside on the lawn where loudspeakers had been installed. Three radio stations had asked for the privilege of broadcasting that Sunday night sermon. Word had leaked out that Howard Bannister was going to bring to this earth the actual and literal Power of God, and would demonstrate that Power in his church that evening.

Word had also gone out that he had ordered a huge framed photograph of Adolf Hitler placed in front of the pulpit. One major network, although it was Sunday evening, had cancelled its regular commercial program, in order that the people of the United States might hear the message that this famous preacher was about to deliver. Telegrams from all over the United States continued to pour into his study.

Ministers in small cities; the heads of theological seminaries; business executives; physicians; every conceivable type of American citizenry had telegraphed to Howard Bannister congratulations on the new conception of God he was bringing to this world. Most of the telegrams complimented him on his courage in telling the falsity of the story of Jesus Christ as Almighty God. There were more than three thousand telegrams lying on his desk before the evening service started at eight o'clock. The response to his daring exploit was meeting with success beyond his wildest dreams.

And now the hour of his final triumph was at hand. Dr. Bowers had taken his seat at the organ one half hour earlier and was treating the congregation to beautiful organ melodies while it waited. Bannister had requested that the Board of Trustees take their places on the rostrum for this one Sunday evening. It would strengthen him and constantly remind him that not only the directorate but the entire congregation of All Souls Church stood one hundred percent behind him.

At eight o'clock sharp, Bannister came through the little door of his study, followed by Dr. Alan Fordyce. They both took their seats in the pulpit. The service opened with the

singing once more of Bannister's favorite hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light."

During the singing of this hymn, and all through the preliminaries, he sat silent in his chair, while Dr. Fordyce carried out these preliminaries. His head was resting on his left hand. He was deep in thought. He had an opportunity now seldom before given to any preacher. His was the task of bringing to this sin-sodden earth the liberating Power which would save it from itself.

The picture of Adolf Hitler in the front of the church, just over the pulpit, was the topic of much conversation. What did it mean? Howard Bannister was going to do something sensational, but just what could it be? However, Bannister knew, and the congregation knew that he knew.

The preliminaries, which had been cut short, were now out of the way, and Dr. Fordyce had left the pulpit, taking his place with the Board of Trustees on the rostrum just below the pulpit.

Slowly Howard Bannister arose. There was a grim look on his face. Fire flashed from his steel gray eyes. Those who knew him best stated later that his whole personality seemed to be illumined by a higher Power than this earth has ever known. Then he did something unusual. He walked out of the pulpit, down onto the rostrum and stood to one side of the huge photograph of Adolf Hitler.

It was a strange sight, that. Here on the platform of one of the most influential churches in America, stood a huge picture of Adolf Hitler, and to one side of it stood the tall, gaunt frame of the man who was endeavoring to throw the Power of the Spirit of God against the instigator of the greatest wave of crime and murder this world has ever known. The audience had an opportunity to compare the faces of the two men. On Hitler's face was depicted hate, rage and infamy, coupled with an exaggerated egotism which he foolishly believed was omnipotent. On the face of Howard Bannister was a grim smile which reflected that infinite faith in the triumph

of right over wrong. One could not look at the grim, tall, gaunt figure without instinctively knowing that all the Power of the realm of the Spirit of God was centered in that man that night.

The man in the photograph had attempted to drive the very name of God from off the face of the earth. He was God. He was the greatest man the world had ever known. The German people were the master race. They were superior to any other nation or race, and through the power of the great military might of Germany, this insane leader would subdue the whole world and then he would be God, actually and literally.

Bannister was in a humble frame of mind as he stood there about to prove that the invisible spiritual Power of God is a far greater power than the brute force typified by the picture on his left. This man did not consider himself to be God. He considered all men equal. He had no tanks, no submarines, no flame throwers, no bombing planes. In fact, he had no material weapons of any sort. But he had a far more potent weapon. He possessed the Power of the Creator of this universe—the Spirit of God.

What All Souls was to witness this Easter Sunday evening was an acceptance by Howard Bannister of the challenge hurled at this world by Adolf Hitler. It was to be a battle between the invisible Power of the Creator of this universe, and the visible, material power of one man obsessed by the insane idea that he was more powerful than Almighty God, the Creator of this universe.

Standing there with the finger and thumb of his left hand tucked in his watch pocket, Bannister began the sermon which was to live and be remembered down through the ages. He began the sermon which, for the first time in the history of the human race, was to disclose to this world who and what God really is, and how the Power of God can be used to dethrone would-be world conquerors.

His words came slowly:

"Fellow Americans, members of All Souls Church, this photograph to my left is a picture of a man who has challenged God. Standing to the right of this photograph is a man who challenges the man who has challenged God.

"There are but two forces or powers in this universe. One, the power of wrong, the other the power of right. The spirit, manifesting through the man whose photograph you are looking at, is the very antithesis of the Spirit I stand for. This man on my left knows only hate, insane lust for power and brute force. He loves to see horrible death-dealing bombs dropping out of the sky and blasting into eternity hundreds of thousands of his fellow human beings. He delights to see his submarines send to the bottom of the ocean, ships of other nations with their cargoes of human lives. This man, if you can call him a man, delights in the suffering of his fellow human beings. He is never happier than when his dive bombers are blasting churches and other famous landmarks out of existence. For some unexplained reason, this maniac at my left has delighted his unbalanced mind by bringing to the Jewish people atrocities absolutely incredible and indescribable. There is nothing good one can say about this human being. He is the consummation of the concentrated essence of murder, rape, lust, brutality and physical death.

"This man, I say, has challenged Almighty God. He disputes ownership of this earth with God. He did not make this earth nor is he capable of creating a single thing. He cannot even bring a baby into existence, yet this monster at whom I am pointing, has the brazen audacity to state that through the power of his military might, he will rule this universe and leave Almighty God completely out of the picture."

It was a dramatic moment when Howard Bannister stepped in front of the huge picture of Adolf Hitler. Pointing his forefinger, with outstretched arm, directly at this photograph, he said in a voice that made All Souls Church ring to the ceiling:

"Mr. Hitler, I challenge you!"

There was a brittle silence through All Souls Church and on

the lawn outside, and from coast to coast, as Howard Bannister made this statement.

Then, taking his place to the right of the photograph, he continued.

"My friends, there is no merit of any sort in Howard Bannister. There is, however, a Power on this earth, and in Howard Bannister, which can make this individual to my left disappear as the snows on the Sierra Mountains disappear before the summer sun. There is a Power on this earth, ladies and gentlemen, which is so dynamic in itself that all other powers and forces fade into insignificance beside it. It is because of that Power I challenge Adolf Hitler, for that Power is the Spirit of God.

"Unfortunately, this church, along with other Christian churches, has offered to this world in the name of God, what now proves to be only a religious superstition of the past and which has no truth in it whatsoever. I allude to the generally accepted theory of the Christian church that Almighty God, the Creator of this universe, was put to death on a cross, some two thousand years ago—and has never been heard from since.

"In my sermon this morning, I exploded sadly but very effectively, that pet pagan theory of the Christian church. I do not desire to ever refer to it again. It has done too much harm. It has kept the real truths of God from this pain-racked earth and the crime of the Christian theory of God will never be expiated. Had it not been for this theory of God, this man whom you see to my left would never have dared to raise his unholy head in defiance of the Creator of this universe. The crime of Christianity lies in the fact that while it pretended to bring the truths of Almighty God to this earth, it presented no more nor less than an old religious fable, which was known and taught to millions of people thousands of years before Jesus Christ was ever heard of.

"In justice to the Christian church, I must say that the story was honestly believed and honestly preached. The manifestation of this madman to my left, however, calls for the mani-

festation of the true Power of the great Creator of this universe. The history of the Christian religion and other religions very effectively prohibits our looking to any of them for a power which can successfully challenge this madman whose picture you see here on the rostrum of All Souls Church.

"Now, the question is, does such a Power exist? Of course, I shall not argue that point with you at all, because every thinking American knows that somewhere there must exist an invisible spirit of creation which not only created this universe, but which gives life to each one of us every hour of the day and night.

"It has been a distinct shock to this nation to discover that its pet Christian theory of Almighty God is naught but an old traditional religious fable told again. This, however, should not cause too much sorrow to the Christian church, because if its philosophy of God is untrue, the true philosophy of God still remains undiscovered. Once that philosophy is discovered, and once the actual truths and Power of God are known on this earth, then, of course, that Power can be successfully used against this world disturber whose photograph you see here.

"Now, if the Christian theory of God and the theories of the other major religions are not true, where, then, is God to be found? This world has looked in every conceivable place for God except in the one place where that great Spirit lives. Christianity has told us that it is now two thousand years, almost, since Almighty God walked upon this earth. Let me say to you, beloved, that Almighty God, as a man, never walked upon this earth, but Almighty God, as 130,000,000 men and women, is walking this earth here and now.

"Yes, you have guessed it. There is one sure place where the Presence and Power of Almighty God is to be found and that place is *IN YOU*.

"In other words, there exists in each one of us a Life Principle which is God. We have lived our lives all unconscious of that fact. No one ever told us about it. The Christian church told us that all the fullness of God was wrapped up

in Jesus Christ and no one could ever know God unless he or she believed in Jesus Christ. He, however, if he ever lived, died two thousand years ago, and has never been heard from since.

"Let's look at the creation of a human body for just a few moments, then you will know what I mean.

"One hundred years ago not one of us was in existence. We had not been born. We had never been heard of. We just simply did not exist. Then what happened? Our parents met, they fell in love, they were legally married according to the laws of the land, and shortly after it was discovered that you and I were on the way. Now the philosophy that any human being was born by the impregnation of a ghost, whether he be a holy or an unholy ghost, is so foolish that it will not be considered by me.

"In ancient Greece so many unmarried girls claimed a ghost, usually a holy ghost, to be the father of their child, that a law was passed prohibiting any unmarried woman from making such a foolish claim, on pain of death.

"Let us come back. You and I were on the way. Let's analyze what actually took place. In accordance with the law governing child birth, your parents and mine, in their love for each other, physically united themselves. By this act, which was a physical act, they made it possible for two little germs out of millions, to unite. The spermatozoa of the male and the ovum of the female. Now let me point out that this is all our parents could possibly do toward the building of a human body. A physical connection was made whereby one physical protoplasm, the male, was placed where it could unite with another piece of physical protoplasm, the ovum of the female.

"I want you to grasp here the fact that when this had been done—when these two germs had physically been placed in a position where they could unite, your parents and mine could not go one step farther than that. They had nothing whatsoever to say about the building of that body. They did not know, nor could they tell, whether a male or female child

would be born. They had complied with the law of God, and as a result of their compliance with this law, nine months later there was born a human soul.

"Let us consider for a moment the amazing wonder of the simple little example I have just given you. It is crude, I know, but it is so simple that I may be able to explain to you through it, the existence of the Spirit of God in you. I am speaking to you now in terms you can understand.

"Up to the time of the actual birth of that baby, when the doctor cut the umbilical cord, that child derived its nourishment and sustenance from its mother. It was not a living soul until after the doctor had spanked it on the back and it inhaled its first breath of air. With the first breath of air, or life, that child became a living soul. When the last breath of air, or life, goes out of that body, it becomes a dead thing, fit for nothing but to be taken out and buried.

"In the translation of those two little germs from what they were into a complete human body, many amazing things happened.

"First, let me call your attention to the fact that after our parents had done all that they physically could do toward complying with the law governing child birth, there came into the picture another Power. There stepped into the picture at that point, an Intelligence so divine and so absolutely amazing that it was able, without human hands to transform two tiny germs in nine months' time into a living human soul.

"Let me ask you what sort of an Intelligence do you think that must have been? Your parents had nothing whatsoever to do with the building of that body, but some Creative Intelligence did have all to do with it. No scientist or physiologist or biologist can explain the transition of two tiny pieces of protoplasm into a human body. No chemical laboratory can duplicate that amazing work. It took the actual and literal power of God to form that child, with its bones, its muscles, its inherent ability to think, to reason, and to see, and finally, to bring it to manhood or womanhood.

"Now, I want to ask you here if the invisible Creative Power of the Spirit of God (for that is what this Power is), after it had demonstrated its marvelous powers of creation by changing two little germs into a human body, left that body completely at birth?

"When the Spirit of God had brought life, human, physical life, plus the invisible life of God, into that body, do you think after the child was born, that Almighty God said to your parents, "There is your baby—I made it for you, but it will have to paddle its own canoe from now on'?

"That cannot be true, because the creative building processes—the marvelous intelligence of the Spirit which is God, continued to operate and manifest in that body from that day to this. Where is the baby of forty-five years ago? It does not exist. It has changed completely into a full grown man or woman, which is absolute, definite proof to me that the invisible Power of the Spirit of God still lives in, and operates in that body of ours from the cradle to the tomb. Yes, it even operates in the physical body of this madman whose picture you see before you.

"We have an accident. We break an arm or a leg. We call a physician who makes a mechanical adjustment. He X-rays the fracture, and by mechanical means manipulates the two ends of the broken bone into a position as close to its natural position as he can. And then what does he do? He does nothing. He is not a physician of the Life Principle. He is a physician or surgeon of a physical body in which the Life Principle, or the Spirit of God, has taken up its existence. The bone in itself has no thinking ability to repair itself, and yet six weeks later the arm or the leg is repaired stronger than it was before.

"Now let me ask you—did the attending physician bring the healing Power into that body from his office? Did he get it out of a bottle? Most assuredly not. The Power to heal that broken bone is inherent in the body itself. Therefore, this same Spirit of God which took those two little bugs

forty-five or fifty years before and transformed them into a living soul, still is living in that physical body, or the bone could not have knitted and been healed.

"I have not too much time this evening to elaborate, but this simple illustration has brought home to you the fact, the staggering fact, that as long as you live on this earth, the Power of the Spirit of God—the life which is God—actually lives and manifests in you, and if you do not use that life, that Spirit of God, for the accomplishment of any right thing you desire, you are not living as you should live, with all the Power of the Spirit of God in you and behind you."

Stopping for a moment, Howard Bannister walked over to the table and drank a glass of cold water which had been placed there for his convenience. His handkerchief was still in his right hand, and he continued to wipe the perspiration from his face, for he was speaking in deadly earnest. Every word of his message went home to the souls of his listening audience and to the millions listening to him over the air. This was an explanation of God they had looked for all their lives. This explanation located God.

What Howard Bannister had done was this: He had explained by a simple illustration how all the Power of the great God of this universe lives in each human, physical body through life.

Taking his place once more beside the picture of Adolf Hitler, Bannister continued his sermon.

"Now, there is, somewhere in this universe, in fact it permeates the universe, the Spirit of Life which must be the Spirit of God. We have seen how this creative Spirit of God not only brings a human being into existence, but takes up its abode in that physical body. Now is that all there is to God? If it is, it is abundantly sufficient to solve every problem on this earth and to bring this maniac on my left to his knees. For, beloved, it took an Infinite Intelligence to perform the amazing chemical equations and problems which were per-

formed in the evolution of two little germs into a human body. It took an infinite wisdom. It took an infinite love, and, what's more important, it took all the Power there is in the Creator to do exactly what was done in your life. Truly, then, we all may say the Power of the Spirit of God, with all that Power implies, actually and literally lives in us.

"Now let us consider another phase of this question. We know now very definitely that Almighty God, the Creator of this universe, or at least a little part of Almighty God, actually lives in us.

"Now, then, can we use all this wisdom, this Power which is God, seeing that we possess it? It is at this point that the Christian church went off at a tangent. It told us God was every conceivable place except in a human life. But can we use this Power? Can it be intelligently directed against the brutal conditions which exist today? Can the Power of Almighty God, for instance, be thrown against such a man as that?"

At this point, Bannister looked at the picture of Adolf Hitler and pointed his finger at it.

"It is my contention, ladies and gentlemen, that if you and I possess in us any part of the Life that is God, we also possess the infinite Power of God, too. It cannot be any other way. Our bodies are actually and literally the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. They are the individual homes in which Almighty God has taken up his abode, and remember this; just as long as you live, all the Power of the Spirit of God lives in you and is subject to your call. As a matter of fact, it exists in you for no other purpose than to bring to you an infinite abundance of happiness, peace and love and material as well as spiritual possessions.

"That to me is Almighty God. The Christian religion can teach Almighty God on a cross at Calvary if it wants to; it can eat the flesh and drink the blood of a dead God every month, if it cares to. It can sprinkle holy water over automobiles and apartment houses to its heart's content, if it wants

to. As for me, and my house, we will live with the present consciousness of the Spirit of the Eternal God in us here and now."

At this point Bannister stood silent for a moment. The perspiration was still dropping from his face, so he removed his long frock coat and handed it to one of the Board of Trustees, who took it into his study, and then took his seat again on the platform.

It was a strange sight to see Howard Bannister preaching as he was, in fashionable All Souls Church in his shirt sleeves and with a huge picture of Adolf Hitler standing beside him.

It was a sight never seen in that church before and it is one that probably will not be seen again.

Bannister continued:

"We find ourselves, then, in this position: Every member of this congregation and every member of our radio congregations, finds himself or herself entertaining a hereto unrecognized Guest. We find ourselves possessing all the Power of the Spirit of the creative God in us here and now. Now, the question is—how can we throw that Power into action? How can we use the Power of the Spirit of God in us to actually and physically demonstrate the things we need? I am not talking about our own personal material problems now. What you and I lack is a small matter compared to the greater problem which confronts humanity. Here on my left is the man who is threatening, through brute force, to annihilate civilization. That man says there is no God outside of himself. He knows nothing about the staggering Power of the Spirit of God which lives in us. Possessing that Power, however, and knowing that we possess it, there is only one problem confronting us this evening. How are we going to use the Power of the Spirit of God in us to bring this creature to his knees?

"In other words, how can you and I draw upon the invisible Power of God in us, and how can we use that Power against Adolf Hitler so that his reign of terror will be stopped and

peace restored to this earth again? One of the easiest things I know is how to actually use the inherent Power of the Spirit of God. It is the most simple thing I know. Yet this world has existed for thousands of years without knowledge of how to do that.

"Christianity has told us to pray. If you get down on your knees and ask Almighty God to stop this war, He may do it. That is the Christian theory. But if Almighty God lives in you and in me, are we not talking to ourselves in addressing God in that manner?

"Religions have been praying for thousands of years, millions of their followers have begged, coaxed and tried to cajole Almighty God into granting their petitions. Yet all the while, unknown to them, the God they vainly looked for in the skies, was living in their very bodies and the skies remained silent.

"I said the easiest thing I know is how to literally use the Power of the Spirit of God against undesirable conditions.

"Let me tell you how it is done.

"IT IS SPOKEN INTO EXISTENCE.

"Let me repeat that. *THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN YOU CAN BE SPOKEN INTO EXISTENCE.*

"In other words, your spoken word directs the Power of the Spirit of God in you in any direction in which you want to send it. In future sermons I will elaborate on this. I have not the time tonight, for we have a far bigger job on our hands.

"We are tonight going to throw the actual and literal Power of God against this great world tyrant on my left. I am going to ask this congregation to speak the Power of the Spirit of God into existence against this person. In asking you to join me in doing that, I do it with the positive knowledge that there is no power on this earth or on any other earth which can stand against the Power of the Creator of this universe—the Power of the Spirit of God.

"Now, in using the Power of the Spirit of God against

Adolf Hitler, we shall speak it into existence. Here is what I want you to do. I want you to rise to your feet, point your right fore-finger at this picture and repeat aloud with me this statement:

"THE SPIRIT OF GOD WILL BRING YOUR SPEEDY DOWNFALL."

"Will this audience please rise. Now, will you please point at the picture of Adolf Hitler."

The audience rose to its feet and more than two thousand arms were outstretched, pointing their fingers at the picture of Adolf Hitler. Then in unison with Howard Bannister, they repeated with a loud voice:

"THE SPIRIT OF GOD WILL BRING YOUR SPEEDY DOWNFALL."

Bannister kept this up for a period of five minutes. In unison, and repeatedly, this statement, ***"THE SPIRIT OF GOD WILL BRING YOUR SPEEDY DOWNFALL"*** was directed against the picture of Adolf Hitler.

At the end of five minutes Bannister requested the congregation to be seated.

Addressing them, he said, "Instead of leaving this church tonight as you usually do, I want the back row of the audience to walk down the right aisle in front of this picture of Hitler. And I want you to stop for just one moment, look the picture straight in the eye, and pointing your finger at this madman, repeat the statement I have just given you. It will take a little time to do that, but I want every one of you to do it. After the back row has come down the right aisle, let the next row follow. You may leave the church through the left aisle."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IT WAS A STRANGE SIGHT All Souls Church was witnessing. Complying with Bannister's request, the people seated in the back row began to slowly walk down the right aisle toward the front of the church. They ascended the platform, stopped before the picture of Adolf Hitler, and with right arm outstretched and finger pointing directly at him, they repeated the statement Bannister had requested.

The amazing thing about this new innovation in religion was the fact that most of the people in All Souls Church that evening were not satisfied with pointing at Hitler and repeating the statement once, they repeated it several times. And they said it as if they meant it, too. There was no room for any question as to the intentions and purposes of that congregation that night. They saw the logic in Bannister's argument.

If the Spirit of God was an invisible dynamic power living in them and if they could speak this Power into action, they certainly were doing it that night. What they actually were doing, is this: They were directing against Adolf Hitler and all that he stands for, the greatest flow of Spiritual Power which has ever gone out from any congregation in the history of this world. Instead of closing their eyes and bowing their heads while the preacher mumbled a short prayer asking the Almighty to bless the sick at home and everyone else in sight, this congregation was putting the Power of God to work. They were translating the silent Power of God in them into action by the spoken word. Those spoken words were backed up by all the Power of the Great God of this universe. It would be utterly impossible for this effort to fail. The supreme Wisdom and Intelligence and Creative Genius

of Almighty God would know how to solve the problem after they had spoken the word of God into existence.

This staggering spiritual Power had formed their bodies from two tiny germs. It had grown those bodies from babyhood to manhood and womanhood. Were it not for the Spirit of Life in those bodies, none of them could have taken another step.

Here was the first demonstration, the first attempt on the part of any church to actually and literally manifest the Power of God against world conditions which threaten to embroil all humanity. Instead of petitioning some far away unknown God in the skies, these people recognized through the simple logic of Howard Bannister, just exactly where the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Life, exists. The earnestness with which this statement was thrown against Adolf Hitler and the Power behind the statement boded ill for Hitler and his policies.

How long would it take to bring Hitler to his knees? These good people of All Souls did not know nor did they care. They knew that they had started a flow of Spiritual Power against Hitler's inferior military power and they knew that the end would be speedy and sure.

Two hours later the church was still packed to the doors. The thousands who had listened to the sermon on the lawn were entering the church and joining in this amazing demonstration of the Power of God against Hitler. Those living in the Bay area, who had heard the sermon over the radio, got out their automobiles and drove to All Souls Church. They wanted to have a part in this great work of God. Some of them were church members. Many who were not church members desired to have a part in it, too.

It was a motley crowd—colored shoe-shiners, business men, street car conductors, clerks working on soda fountains, every conceivable type of humanity, made its way that Sunday evening to All Souls Church. There they could actually and literally do something to stop Adolf Hitler. In that church

they could throw all the Power of the Spirit of God in them against this world tyrant. That is what they wanted to do. For they knew, and knew full well, that if the Power of God were actually and literally thrown against brother Hitler, there would be no need of sending warships or bombing planes over there to help the British. They did not want to see these fair United States bathed in human blood. They saw no way out, however, until Howard Bannister had pointed the way to them this Sunday night.

As news of this amazing demonstration continued, more crowds gathered at the church. The stream of participants kept steadily increasing. Down the outside aisle of the church they would walk, and, standing before this huge photograph and looking it straight in the eye, they would point their finger at this maniac and say: "*THE SPIRIT OF GOD WILL BRING YOUR SPEEDY DOWNFALL.*"

Then they would leave the church and tell someone else, who, in turn joined the throng which was making its way in ever increasing numbers, to All Souls Church. Soon the news spread all over San Francisco and Oakland. It was getting out of their control. So, Bannister asked the Board of Trustees to meet with him at once in his study.

Dr. Fordyce was left on the platform to keep an eye on things.

Entering the study, the Trustees threw their arms around each other, and with tears streaming down their faces, embraced Howard Bannister, too.

"This is the happiest day in the history of All Souls Church," said Dr. Wilson.

"I have never seen anything like this in my life," said banker Evers.

Bernard Heyneman, the advertising man, was beside himself with joy. "Oh Boy! This means that Adolf Hitler and his bunch of vultures will be out of the picture inside of one week."

Bannister himself looked very tired. It was the moment of

his greatest triumph. Yet he was serious. A strange light shone on the handsome face. Yet he seemed unusually quiet. His face was pale.

Speaking up, he said to his Trustees, "Gentlemen, we have witnessed here in this church tonight the coming of the Spirit of God to this earth. Our Methodist friends have expected Jesus Christ to return to this earth on the clouds of heaven. They have expected him to demolish the might of Adolf Hitler by bringing with him vast hosts of angels. They are disappointed now. They have learned the lesson the whole world will soon learn. That lesson is: All the ills, all the sin, all the crime, all the undesirable conditions which exist on this earth can be banished, not by the descent of Jesus Christ on the clouds of heaven with a host of angels, but by the Power of the Spirit of God which exists right here on this earth and in every human life, *SPOKEN INTO EXISTENCE*.

"Gentlemen, I suggest that this church remain open day and night until Hitler is brought to his knees. I think you will find that other churches will be forced to throw overboards their pagan conceptions of God, and do exactly as this church is doing. It will be hard work for them to do that at first, but the weight of public opinion, plus this remarkable demonstration, will force them to do it. If they do not do this, they will go out of existence, for this movement, born in this church this night, will be joined by millions of honest, straight-thinking American citizens who have no use for churches of any sort.

"It is through them, the common people, that the Spirit of God will operate. As this movement grows, and as the Power of the Spirit of God becomes more and more manifest on this earth, someone else will arise who will lead you, gentlemen, much farther than I have been able to. I know very little about the operations of the Spirit of God. All I have ever hoped to do is to convince this world that that great Spirit of God exists here and now. I think I have done this.

"I feel my work is over. Certainly such a demonstration

as this cannot ever stop until the world knows at long last the truth of the existence of the great God in its midst. After Hitler is done, you will find men and women arbitrating their quarrels. Strikes will be unknown. Poverty will be unknown. We shall have no need for prisons or lunatic asylums, for the glory of the knowledge of the Spirit of God shall cover this earth as the waters cover the sea.

"I want you to promise me that you will not close the doors of this church as long as this demonstration continues. I want you to promise me that All Souls Church will make it as easy as it can for other denominations to exchange their impotent theories of God for the actual and literal Power of God. Will you promise me that?"

The members of the Board of Trustees looked at Howard Bannister. Each one shook hands with him and gave him his solemn promise that they would do everything in their power. And they meant it.

"Now will you please leave me, gentlemen?" asked Dr. Bannister. "I want to be alone."

Dr. Wilson looked carefully at his friend and after the rest of the Trustees had gone, he returned to the study. Putting his arms around the great preacher, he said, "Howard, do you feel all right?"

A wan, tired smile lit up the face of the pastor of All Souls Church.

"Yes, Joe, I feel all right. One always feel all right when his work has been successfully completed. Good-bye, Joe. Good-bye. Please leave me now."

Dr. Wilson left, much against his better judgment, although he knew there was nothing he could do for Howard Bannister.

* * *

They found him there two hours later in his study chair, dead. The strain had been too much. His shaggy head was resting on his arms, which were crossed on his desk. There was a smile on his face even in death. 'Twas a hallowed smile,

'twas the smile of a man who had been faithful to his Creator—even unto death.

Over his desk was a motto. It read: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Howard Bannister had laid down his life for the whole world.

* * *

They buried him the following Wednesday. They couldn't use All Souls Church because the throngs throwing the Power of God against Adolf Hitler had multiplied. The procession of Americans using the Power of God against Adolf Hitler had grown and grown. The largest stores in San Francisco and Oakland ordered huge pictures of the German tyrant placed on every floor.

In the Ferry Building, large pictures of Hitler stood on easels. The crowds crossing the Bay would stop in front of these pictures, pause, and pointing their fingers at the picture, would say in a loud voice, "*THE SPIRIT OF GOD WILL BRING YOUR SPEEDY DOWNFALL.*"

Bernard Heyneman had placards made for the street cars, and paid for them out of his own pocket. On the front and in the inside of the different street cars running all over the city, a picture of Hitler with the Bannister statement could be seen. All Souls Church had a stamping concern make one million buttons with a picture of Hitler on them, and the Bannister statement under the picture. These buttons were given away at the church, in the banks, at the Heyneman Advertising Agency and the call for those buttons exceeded the supply. So, more were ordered, the crews of the stamping works working twenty-four hours a day to supply them. No matter where you went in the Bay District, the Hitler buttons were in evidence.

Soon, billboards were seen carrying the same message. The offices of the church were literally swamped with requests for the buttons, and for information regarding this spontaneous

outbreak of the Spirit of God in San Francisco. The Movement spread like wildfire.

One enterprising member of All Souls bought a big Good-year balloon which carries passengers over the Bay area. A long streamer carrying the Bannister statement was attached to the balloon. Millions of circulars, each bearing the picture of Adolf Hitler, were printed, and the now famous Bannister statement appeared under the picture. The large balloon was given permission to drop these circulars over the Bay District. Hundreds of thousands of them could be seen floating down. Then airplanes were engaged to cover the state of California and inside of forty-eight hours every part of the United States knew that this country had at last received a visitation from God. It knew that at last, through human means, the Great Spirit of God was manifesting its Power on the earth, through the lives and activities of human beings.

America knew that at last Hitler and his allies were facing a Power against which they could not possibly hope to stand. Little did they dream, though, how short a space of time would be required to bring this madman and all he stands for, to his doom.

From every part of America came the response. America had caught the vision. It was catching fire for God. And it was doing that in a perfectly natural and normal way. Nothing supernatural about all this. No Jesus descending on the clouds from Heaven. No angels. No sign of Gabriel blasting away on his trumpet. No signs of the dead coming back to life again. The cemeteries were not disturbed. Those who had died remained dead, as dead people usually do.

The vast significance of this outpouring of the Spirit of God was soon grasped by the American people. If Hitler could be brought to his knees through the Power of God used against him by American men and women—could not every other problem in life be settled in the same manner? Could not the paralyzing strikes and the general labor unrest be handled in the same manner?

In Washington, D. C., could not Congress adopt the same means of bringing harmony out of this country's many discords? Could not the President of the United States proclaim a "Day of God"? Not a day of prayer—but a day on which all men and women could actually and literally throw the staggering Power of Almighty God all over this earth?

Of course this could be done. It would be done. For the most significant thing about this outpouring of the Spirit of God on this earth was the rapid manner in which all men and women, even young children, caught the idea.

In millions of American homes, pictures of Adolf Hitler began to appear, and before and after every meal, instead of asking a god who was in "heaven" to bless the food, the occupants of those homes stood for a moment in front of these pictures, and helped bring Hitler to his knees by throwing the Power of God—which was in them—against the German despot.

Truly this was revelation of the Power of God to man. Just as truly it had come from the most unexpected quarter, and in the most unexpected manner. While religionists the world over wondered as they saw what was happening, they finally realized that their theories of Almighty God lying dead in a tomb had been a blasphemy uttered in the name of Almighty God. They were the last ones to join in this demonstration, but as they appeared on Sunday morning to preach to empty pews, the ministers and priests had decided that they, too, had better climb on the band-wagon.

Of course, special permission from Rome, in Italy, was required before the Catholics could officially join in the celebration of the coming of the Spirit of God to the earth. The head of this Italian church did not give that permission, but the same thing happened in the Catholic churches that happened in the Protestant churches. No one appeared to celebrate the "mass". "Mess", was the way one transformed Catholic referred to it. And with their good churches as empty as the Protestant churches were, this Italian system of religion was

finally brought into the fold. It finally threw away its paganism and idolatry, and its members began to get acquainted with the Power of Almighty God in the very same manner the rest of the world was getting acquainted with it.

No special authority designated to the Pope through Peter and Jesus now. No man-written book was considered the "divinely-inspired word of God" now. For every true American was talking with God, and not only that, was speaking the Power of God into existence.

In the homes where poverty had reigned supreme, an abundance began to manifest. The unemployed began to find employment.

The hospitals began to empty themselves, as the sick, finally realizing that the only place Almighty God could be found was right in themselves, began to speak the Power of God into existence for their own health.

Prisons were emptied, as it became manifest that their inmates really had found God in their lives. They would never rob a bank again. There would be no more holdups or murders. For men and women who know of the existence of the Spirit of God in them never do anything which would hurt anyone else. It was quite safe, therefore, to turn these caged human beings loose. And this was done.

It would take too long to tell about the complete metamorphosis. So we shall say it was very complete. There was not a single civic, personal, or national problem which could not be solved by the simple method of speaking the Spirit of God into material manifestation by those whom these problems confronted.

This was religion in action. This was the Spirit of God taking complete charge of human lives and affairs. What a pity someone long before Howard Bannister had not the simple, yet sublime truths of God. What a pity that churches, with their ministers and priests, had not given Almighty God credit before, for being able to manifest His Power in human lives

right here on the earth, where the Power can be more appreciated and where it is most needed.

Of course, had the religious organizations preached that, their existence would have been quite unnecessary. So, choosing to stick by their pagan philosophies and equally pagan ideas of God, these churches had attempted to foist on America an incomplete picture of God—as they thought God should be, according to their own doctrines and dogma. Now, they were reaping the only reward possible. They had disintegrated. For the people had at last been brought to see that Almighty God did not lose His life on a cross two thousand years ago—

*NO—NOT THAT—ALMIGHTY GOD STILL LIVES
WHERE HE EVER LIVED—RIGHT IN THE HEARTS
OF MEN AND WOMEN.*

*AS THE TRUTHS OF GOD WERE RECOGNIZED
ON THE EARTH—THE CHURCHES WENT OUT.*

It would serve no good purpose to dwell on the sadness which fell upon the whole country as the death of Howard Bannister became known. The grief which overshadowed little Marge and Bruce and his wife will never be known.

So, on Wednesday, they shipped his body to Rocky Point, where he was accompanied by his family. There he lies, guarded only by the tall, swaying, nodding, yellow pines. Let us leave him there.

* * *

Reuben brought the Bannister family back to their home on the Oakland side of the Bay. As this grief-stricken family entered Richmond, they heard the newsboys shouting:

“WUXTRY! WUXTRY! HITLER COMMITS SUICIDE! HITLER COMMITS SUICIDE! WUXTRY! WUXTRY! THE WAR IS OVER! HITLER COMMITS SUICIDE! PAPER! PAPER! READ ALL ABOUT THE FALL OF HITLER.”

AUTHOR'S CLOSING NOTE.

On some of our American coins we find these words:—*"IN GOD WE TRUST"*. The author suspects that this trust may have been rather a passive affair to date. Perhaps, in some vague ethereal sort of way, some Americans may be able to say that they trust in God. At best though, while the motive which prompted this inscription undoubtedly was high and noble, this trust does not seem to have taken a very tangible form. It has been a passive, negative sort of thing.

While it is true that Congress opens with a prayer, that is the only time the name of God is officially mentioned throughout the session. This prayer is a very formal affair at that. America today has an opportunity to show whether or not it actually trusts in God, and believes in the Power of God to stop Adolf Hitler. It may—and again it may not. In any event, Almighty God certainly is not taken into consideration by our lawmakers nor the vast majority of our people.

If the United States Government means what it says on its coins, if it really believes in the Power of God (right) over the powers of hate and darkness, if it believes that Almighty God is on its side—I make the following suggestion: Let the American Government have made hundreds of thousands of pictures of Adolf Hitler. Let them be the size Dr. Bannister had on his platform. Let them be sent to the mayors of every city in the United States, with a request that these pictures be prominently displayed where the public may see them.

A copy of Dr. Bannister's statement: *"THE POWER OF GOD WILL BRING YOUR SPEEDY DOWNFALL"* may be printed on these large pictures, and instructions can be sent to these mayors for using this statement of truth. Let one be placed in every government office and in both Houses of

Congress. It may amaze this Government how rapidly the American people will grasp the idea, and, if there be a God, *HITLER CANNOT HELP BUT FALL*, for this would be faith in action.

The vast majority of Americans are not interested in any present system of religion. They are not interested in churches, nor are they interested in what churches teach. They are, however, interested in God. They believe in God. They believe the Power of God exists here and now. If these millions of good honest Americans are given an opportunity to actually and literally throw the Power of God against Hitler without the formality or necessity of church affiliation, they will be more than happy to respond.

I suggest therefore, to the President of the United States, that he, by following the method Dr. Bannister used, make God a living reality here in these beloved United States. A mental assent to the existence of God is not enough. Church membership is not enough. Subscribing to present-day creeds, rituals, and dogmas is not enough to stop Adolf Hitler. It will take the literal Power of God to do that. But that Power *CAN* do it. If the United States really believes in God, let it prove that belief by action.

This would provide an outlet whereby those 98% of our citizens who do not attend church, could use their own method of throwing the Power of God against Hitler. Certainly, no church organization could object to this method. If they did, it would brand their own system of religion false and untrustworthy.

The Author.

Moscow, Idaho
June 1st, 1941

REFERENCES USED AND QUOTED FROM IN THIS BOOK

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BY DR. HINCKLE

* * *

"The Anacalypsis"

BY SIR GODFREY HIGGINS

* * *

"Did Jesus Christ Rise from the Dead?"

BY MARSHALL GAUVIN

Dr. Bannister's Easter Sunday morning sermon
has been based, in part, on Mr. Gauvin's book.

* * *

"Crucified Gods Galore"

BY FRANK B. ROBINSON

The author acknowledges his indebtedness, and
gives his thanks to the authors of the first three
books listed above,