WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN

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"A word to honest doubters"

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BOOK ONE

Doubt

IN SO FAR as we mortals dare venture an opinion concerning the invisible realities of life, it can be said with certainty that never have there been as many believers in our country as there now are. But neither have there been as many doubters.

A generation or two ago this was quite otherwise. Then there were only a very few doubters. All the rest believed in the truth of Christianity, accepted the Bible as the word of God, and Christ as God.

Now, however, doubt is more common than many suspect, among the educated as well as among those whose knowledge is very limited.

Some folk view our age with dark misgivings because of the skepticism which prevails. And it is true: doubt is more than terrible mental distress; it is an internal cancer, which eats away the vitality of the nation as well as that of the individual. However, we should bear in mind that much of the faith in the Bible and in Christianity which formerly existed was of little value. It had been taken over from the environment, in most instances without a personal experience of salvation, and was, consequently, impersonal and traditional.

It is conceded that this traditional faith in the Word of God possessed a certain value, both to the individual and
to the nation. Undoubtedly it put a damper upon ungodliness. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that no one is saved merely by holding the Bible to be the Word of God. We now see clearly how impersonal and impotent this "faith" was. By far the greater number simply took over their faith from their environment. A changed environment, therefore, was all that was necessary in order to undermine their "faith." As soon as the environment began to sow the seeds of doubt in their hearts by means of the daily press, literature, popular science, etc., it became apparent that a large proportion of our people was quite defenseless.

By heritage, training, and tradition most of them, no doubt, desired to retain their "faith." But they simply could not. They were not prepared to meet doubt.

Further reflection will make this very clear to us.

The Christian truths, like all religious and moral truths, are of such a nature that it is impossible to demonstrate them in the same way in which a proposition in mathematics or physics can be demonstrated. The mathematical, logical, and general historical truths are of such a nature that every normal, intelligent person must accept them. Moral and religious truths, on the other hand, are not necessarily valid to every thinking person. Only by living in the realm of morality and religion can a person ascertain the validity of moral and religious truths.

It is difficult for a man who does not live a moral life to feel the validity of moral truths. He will readily doubt even such an elementary truth as the qualitative difference between right and wrong. In like manner religion easily becomes unreal to the man who does not live a religious life.

This is especially applicable with reference to the Christian truths. No portion of reality contains so many intellectual difficulties and has so many incomprehensible aspects as Christianity. If a person does not know Christian life from personal experience, intellectual difficulties will quickly make him skeptical of Christianity.

As soon as their environment becomes antagonistic toward Christianity, these people, having no weapons, are unable to defend themselves. Let us illustrate briefly.

People say: "There are so many religions. How is it possible to know that Christianity is absolutely the only true one?"

If you should answer naively and confidently: "The Bible says so," the other would promptly reply: "Very well, but what of it? The Koran, the Bible of the Mohammedans, says that Islam is the only true religion."

If you answer again: "Yes, but the Bible is the Word of God," the other will say: "How do you know?"

"Everybody has told me that—my father, my mother, my teacher, and my pastor."

"Well, how do they know that the Bible is the Word of God?"

"They have been told so by their fathers and mothers, pasters and teachers. Furthermore, the whole church teaches that the Bible is the Word of God."

"Yes, but the church is made up of human beings. They are fallible."

"But the apostles who wrote the New Testament say that it is the Word of God."

"True enough, but they, too, were only human. They no doubt meant what they said and wrote, and they finally gave their lives for their faith; but who can guarantee that they did not deceive themselves and that they were
not mistaken? That has happened to well-meaning and
credulous people both before that time and since.

"Furthermore, as you know, all the higher religions have
their sacred writings, which their followers believe to be
from God, and therefore, the Word of God. By what
right are the sacred writings of Christianity accorded an
exclusive place? Ought we not rather put them all on
the same plane and assume that none of them is of divine
origin, especially since they are mutually contradictory
and can not, therefore, all be from God? It is most
reasonable to presume that none of them is of God.

"Most likely the origin of all of them can be traced to
individuals who believed, each within his own religion,
that what they wrote was a direct revelation to them
from God.

"An examination of the contents of these sacred writ-
ings makes this still more apparent. This applies to the
sacred scriptures of the Christians as well as to the others.

"In the first place, there are mistakes and inconsistencies
in the Bible. If it were the Word of God, ought it not
at least be inerrant?

"Furthermore, the Bible contains many thoughts that
are human and imperfect to the highest degree and can
not, therefore, be divine. It speaks about a God who
has become so angry because of man's sin that He can
not pardon before He sees blood. And if He can not get
the blood of the guilty, He takes that of the innocent.

"It says also that God is triune, i.e., that there are
three eternal persons in God: Father, Son, and Spirit.
And yet there are not three Gods, but one.

"It says that only a few are saved. All the rest God
condemns to eternal suffering. These must be human
thoughts about God; because if God is perfect love, He
can not punish any one forever. Not even a human
being would do anything as horrible as that, even towards
his worst enemy.

"And note all the things that are said about Christ. He
is God and man in one person. He is conceived of the
Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He died vicariously
for the sins of the whole race. He arose bodily the third
day after His death.

"It was thought formerly that this was absolutely unique
and that the Bible alone contained such accounts. But
modern research in the field of comparative religion has
shown that similar things are told also about the founders
of other religions. All students of the subject agree that
these accounts must be looked upon as myths and legends,
which arose in a natural way about these great religious
personalities. By what scientific right can the correspond-
ing accounts about Jesus be put in a class by themselves?

"In general it can be said that the supernatural miracle
constitutes the one great difficulty in the Christian faith
and philosophy of life. The miracle is the crux of all
the intellectual difficulties.

"The difficulty in connection with the miracle is this:
No science today recognizes the miracle, neither natural
science, historical science, nor the science of comparative
religion. Still worse is this: The dominant scientific
thought of our day not only denies the reality of the
miracle, but also its very possibility. That is axiomatic
in this scientific method. It declares outright that the
miracle is incompatible with scientific research.

"Modern historical research, for instance, says that
every historical source which contains accounts of miracles
must on that ground alone be considered only a second-
rate source, even if it otherwise has all the distinctive
characteristics of a primary source.
"The same science says further that everything is relative, that is, finite. Therefore there is no such a thing as absolute truth, as maintained by Christianity. Every historical truth wears the garb of its own day, and must be changed and improved upon as time passes and development progresses. The Christian truths must subject themselves to similar alterations.

"Present day science says also that everything is relative; therefore no unicum, nothing absolutely unique, exists, either in nature or in history. For that reason Christ can not be absolutely unique either. Everything has an analogy, Christ, too, must have one.

"That Christ should be the Perfect Man, not to speak of the God-man, as maintained by Christianity, is, therefore, a scientific impossibility.

"In order to gain a scientific appreciation of Christ, we must resolutely divest Him of everything absolute and unique and, by means of the scientific principle of analogy, put Him in the category in which He belongs, among the other religious geniuses whom we are accustomed to designate as founders of religions."

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Every one who has to some degree felt the force of these intellectual difficulties asks: Is it possible to reconcile Christian faith with scientific thought?

To many this becomes an unhappy dilemma, from which they know no other way of escape than by brutally cutting the Gordian knot. Some choose science and bid farewell to Christianity. Others choose faith and throw scientific thought overboard.

In both groups there are, no doubt, many who wish they were back in the simple faith of childhood or that of the uneducated, undisturbed by reflection.

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BOOK TWO

From Doubt to Faith

There are two kinds of doubters.

First, there are those who love to doubt, because their skepticism shields them from the accusations of conscience. They will not give up the selfish life they are living, either in coarse and open sins, in ordinary love of the world, or in the self-sufficiency of outward morality. When their conscience disturbs them, doubt is the best means they have of pacifying it.

That is why we see people defending their skepticism as a precious possession, with which they would not part. They select literature which strengthens their doubt. They seize every opportunity to debate questions pertaining to Christianity. Even if they do not succeed in convincing their opponent in debate, they themselves at least feel more secure every time they have been able to bewilder their believing opponent and drive him to the wall.

I would like to say at once to every doubter of this type who may happen to be reading this little book: It is not to you that I venture to proffer my help.

You wish to debate. You expect me to take up all these questions for discussion. But I shall not do that. I do not believe that argumentation is the way to over-
come doubt. The doubt of which we are speaking here can not be overcome by logical arguments.

Experience alone can lead our souls from doubt to certainty.

The doubters to whom I venture to proffer my help are of a different description.

They are in distress because of their doubt. They are tired of painful uncertainty. They long for the peaceful rest which calm and impregnable assurance affords.

But every time they think they have found solid ground upon which to stand, they sink back again into the bottomless sea of doubt.

Their inner uncertainty becomes even more distressing to them whenever they come in touch with friends and companions who have found God.

To the latter, God is no longer a problem, the unrealized object of their thinking, seeking, and longing. To them, God is a living reality. They have experienced God. Theirs is the assurance of experience with its peace, joy, and power.

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It is to these sincere, seeking, but distressed doubters that I venture to offer my assistance.

I, too, have passed through the various stages of doubt. I have felt its anguish. But I also know a way out of doubt and into faith, a way which is open to all doubters. And this way does not do violence to any of our human faculties, not even to our reasoning powers.

This way was pointed out by Jesus over 1900 years ago. He put it in these words: “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17).

Here He promises to give personal assurance on the basis of experience. He names only one condition: if any man willeth to do God’s will.

In these words Jesus tells us something very important about doubt and the cause of doubt. Many are of the opinion that the cause of their doubt is their great knowledge or the keenness of their intellects. Others are more modest and think that their doubt is due to the fact that they lack knowledge and do not have a sufficiently keen intellect.

It is due to none of these. The cause of your doubt is something entirely different. You lack certain experiences. That is why you find yourself in doubt and uncertainty.

In offering you my help to overcome doubt, I shall not meet your doubts with logical arguments. I shall rather, as well as I can, point out the experiences through which you must pass in order to cope successfully with doubt. At the same time I shall try to indicate the course you must pursue in order to gain these experiences.

If you will follow this course and thus gain these experiences, you will find that your experiences themselves will dispel your doubts. Life itself will do it in its own simple way.

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My first bit of advice is this: Read the New Testament.

Indeed, you say, if I could only believe what it says, I would be helped. But it is the very message of the Bible about which I am in doubt. I do not deny the Bible. On the contrary, I desire to be a believer, but I can not make myself believe. I doubt it instead of believing it.

To this I would reply: I know that such is your
condition. I am well acquainted with it and shall not take too much for granted.

I presuppose that you doubt the supernatural origin of Scripture and likewise that you doubt most, perhaps all, of the miraculous accounts in the New Testament. Nevertheless, I ask you to read the New Testament.

Jesus never required His listeners to accept and approve beforehand of a greater or lesser number of dogmas about himself. He urged them rather to come to him, hear his voice, and follow him.

What happened? All who honestly did so, experienced Jesus and soon became personally convinced of the truth of what he said about himself. When they later gave expression to that which they had experienced and of which they had become personally certain, the result was the New Testament Scriptures.

Read this marvelous collection of writings and you will see how remarkably the statements of these various authors concerning Jesus coincide.

Since that time millions of people have met Christ and experienced His wonderful person; and when they desire to give expression to that which they have experienced and of which they have become certain, they can find no better words than those which are used in the New Testament.

After a while these people felt the need of expressing in short statements the main substance of what they had experienced when they met Christ. These sentences are called church confessions. Of these I would mention first and foremost the Apostolic Creed, because it is held in common by all Christian church bodies in the world.

Note the facts with regard to the doctrines which this common confession of the church contains. These doctrines are not set forth by the Church as something which the individual must accept. The dogmas do, however, give expression to those things with reference to Christ of which an individual does become certain when he experiences Him as his Saviour.

Jesus has always, now as nineteen hundred years ago, named only one condition upon which He will help us to gain personal assurance. And that one condition is this: “If any man willeth to do God’s will, . . .”

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Now take your New Testament and read it for the purpose of ascertaining the “will of God.”

But, you say, it is so difficult for me to read the New Testament. All the accounts of miracles and many other questionable thoughts and expressions distract and even offend me and make it difficult for me to read with a calm and open mind.

My friend, I remember this well from the time when I was a doubter. My advice to you is that you omit reading, for the time being, everything which is too offensive to your intellect. Read the remainder. It is fully sufficient to help you out of doubt and into personal assurance with respect to the Christ and the whole Scriptural testimony concerning Him.

Even if you omit the things I have mentioned, you will find on practically every page of the New Testament something which you must without doubt recognize as the “will of God.” By that I mean eternal truths, independent of time, place, and persons; as true today as in the time of Christ, as true at the North Pole as at the Equator, as true and eternally applicable with reference to kings as to beggars.

Permit me at this point to mention just one such
saying of Jesus: "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" (Matthew 7:12).

Do this, Jesus says:

You will now understand better perhaps why I said in the foregoing that I do not expect to help any other doubters than those who are in distress because of their doubt and who desire, if possible, to escape from it regardless of cost.

To do unto others whatsoever you would that they should do unto you is no mere child’s play, no lazy man’s task. Jesus says: Do it! That means: Do not only think about it, speak about it, debate it, long for it, and dream about it; do it.

Note the words of Jesus: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

If you will begin to do this, you will gain some entirely new experiences, experiences which will help you out of doubt and into personal assurance. The reason that people doubt Christianity is simply this: They only think about it instead of living it. "The life is the light of men" (John 1:4). In the darkness of doubt also it is life, the living of life itself, which brings light.

Permit me to outline briefly the experiences you will have.

If you begin seriously and earnestly to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, you will experience, in the first place, that you do not do it. Not one day, not a half day, not even an hour do you do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

In the second place, you will experience that you can not do it. You are not able to do it.

In the third place, you will experience that the reason you are unable to do it is simply that you do not desire to do it. It is too irksome, too unprofitable, too painful. After you have tried to do it several times in succession, you get tired of it and slip back into your usual life of comfort and ease, following the well-known proverb: Each man for himself first.

If you are sincere, you will have found in your experience, in the fourth place, that you are evil. You feel the moral truth in the statement of Jesus that men are evil, and you are inwardly convinced that your way of acting is morally reprehensible; but you continue to lead a selfish life, nevertheless, in spite of your most sacred convictions, because you desire to avoid the effort, the sacrifice, and the suffering involved in doing the right thing.

You are now ready for more new experiences. You will, in the fifth place, experience how dishonest you are in the midst of your selfishness. You desire very much to have people believe that you are not selfish. You are glad when people misunderstand you and think that you are performing an act of self-sacrifice, when your own inner self tells you that selfishness is the impelling motive. When you have done a selfish and evil deed which has come to the knowledge of men, you notice how you try in every way to make your act appear laudable, or excuse it in order to make men believe that you did not do it for selfish reasons but with good intentions, or, at worst, that you did it in foolishness or thoughtlessness. To admit that you were selfish is much harder for you than to admit that you were foolish, although the latter also may be hard enough.

In the sixth place, you will experience that you are not true to yourself. You begin to notice now that you
also try to represent your own acts to yourself in a better light than truth would permit. You employ many arts and artifices in order to pacify your troubled conscience. If you have spread evil report about somebody, you excuse yourself by saying that what you said was at least true. If you have told a lie, you excuse yourself by saying that it was a "white lie." You consider that permissible. If you have been angry or sulky, you either blame others for irritating you or lay the blame on your temperament.

If you have had these simple but fundamental moral experiences, you have become personally convinced that Jesus was right when he deliberately characterized us in these words: "Ye . . . being evil" (Luke 11:13).

Without doubt, this evaluation of us human beings by Jesus has hitherto been a thorn in your eye. You have felt it as an exaggeration and therefore not true. With many other superficial people you have said: "Men are not so bad after all. There is much good in all of us."

You are now through with such superficial thinking. Nobody needs to force you now to believe the words of Jesus: "Ye . . . being evil." You are personally certain of the truth of this "dogma." You are so thoroughly convinced that even though all the "optimists" in the world might deny these words of Jesus, it would not alter in the least the certainty which you now possess.

If you have followed this advice and read the New Testament, Jesus appeals to you now in a new light. Morally, you have become mature enough to see the uniqueness of the person of Jesus.

You see now with new eyes that Jesus during his whole life did unto others whatsoever He would that they should do unto Him. Jesus actually lived this during His entire life. He did it; He did not only talk about it.

You knew before that Jesus was the noblest man known to history. But it did not really make much of an impression upon you. Now, on the other hand, you have the moral qualifications for evaluating this aspect of Jesus.

Indeed, you now discover that that perfect mind which was in Jesus is the most incomprehensible thing about Him. From the experiences you have had with your own selfish life and your own evil mind you have become psychologically or, rather, morally qualified to evaluate the absolute uniqueness of His human life.

After you yourself have tried to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and not succeeded in doing so for even one whole day, you ask yourself: After all, who was Jesus, who was able to do this very thing throughout a whole lifetime—without a single misstep or mistake and in such a natural and matter of fact way as though there were no other way of living life!

You now have the inner qualifications for experiencing the miraculous in the person of Jesus. The real miraculous, the real supernatural aspect of Jesus is His mind of absolute goodness. Here you are face to face with the supernatural, the absolute. You are now in possession of an inner, direct, personal assurance concerning the most unique miracle in our universe. Can you prove that the mind of Jesus was supernatural? Can I prove it to you?

No; but remember that I said at the very beginning that doubt can not be overcome by logical arguments, but by experience only. All I promised you was that I would point out the experiences you would have to go through in order to rid yourself of doubt and receive personal assurance.
And that is what I have done. When you with your own moral experience stand before Jesus as He is presented to us in the New Testament, as I in the foregoing have outlined, you will, as millions before you have done, experience the mind of Jesus as a miracle, a supernatural mind.

Note now that you can become assured of this miracle, this fundamental miracle with respect to Jesus, even though you still doubt the miracles which it is said Jesus performed.

Your skepticism is now really doomed. It will not be long until you will be rid of all your doubts.

When a person has experienced something of the miraculous, the brunt of his difficulties in connection with miracles is broken. This follows according to the laws of psychology. There are many things which to us seem self-contradictory and absurd as long as we only think and speculate about them. But as soon as we experience them the inconsistency vanishes. It may be impossible for us for some time to come to explain all of our experiences, but all inconsistency has disappeared because of the very fact that we have experienced these things. Our mind is so constituted that it submits to the facts of experience even while it is still unable to think through or explain the experience.

If somebody had said a generation ago that some day it would be possible to sit in a remote nook in Finnmarken and hear a divine service conducted in Our Savior's Church in Oslo, people would have said that such a thing was absurd and inconceivable. Now no one says anything about the impossibility of it.

As long as our minds have no experiences to build upon, we feel compelled to declare things inconceivable. But as soon as our minds have experienced actual facts, our whole intellectual basis is changed, and inconsistencies and absurdities vanish.

So also with the miracle.

So long as we only think about the miracle, it appears inconceivable and absurd. But when we experience the miracle, we have actual facts with which to deal and our mental attitude with respect to the miracle is changed. Confronted with experience, the mind withdraws its previous protest and begins its usual work, that of assembling and co-ordinating the facts of experience and classifying them in their proper place among other experiences, as far as this is possible.

If you have experienced that miraculous aspect of Jesus which is fundamental, namely, that His inner being is different from that of all the rest of us, that He, according to His ethical nature, is essentially different from all other people, you have also reached a new position with regard to the other miraculous aspects which you meet in His life and person.

Here, too, your intellectual difficulties will gradually disappear. A great deal which formerly seemed absurd to you will now be self-evident and natural. And that in spite of the fact that you can by no means explain everything.

Let us look at this for a moment.

If you have experienced that Jesus according to His inner, ethical nature is essentially different from all other men, it is no longer an inconsistency to your mind, but, on the contrary, something very reasonable when the New Testament states that He has a different origin from
all the rest of us. Neither is it an inconsistency to our minds when He Himself says that He existed before His life on earth—as the eternal Son of God.

If such is the case, neither is it an inconsistency that His birth took place in a manner different from ours. When the New Testament says that He became incarnate by a creative act of God's own Spirit, our minds say: that is only natural; that is the way it would have to be.

And if there is a fundamental difference between His inner, ethical person and ours, it can not be an inconsistency when the New Testament says that He is endowed with power different from any that we have. Why should He not by means of this power be able to intervene both in the spiritual as well as in the natural realm? If He is in possession of a power different from any which we possess and by means of which He governs His own person, why should He not be able to deal with the natural world in a way different from that in which we are able to deal with it?

Moreover, if He is in possession of a unique inner life, it can not be an inconsistency when the New Testament says that in death, too, He was different from us, in that He broke the usual bonds of death and arose bodily from the grave on the third day.

In a similar way I could go through all the miracles which we are told Jesus performed, but it would take us too far afield. Let me, therefore, only point out again that it is my personal experience of the miraculous element in the person of Jesus which has given me a new attitude with regard to the various other miraculous accounts. It is only in connection with the person of Jesus that these miracles become plausible—I might almost say self-evident.
I am prepared to hear someone say: I have tried to pray, but not with the result of which you speak. I have received no answer. And I have prayed very earnestly. I cried to God the time my mother was struggling with death, the time my own child lay writhing in pain. In my distress I cried to God to intervene and help them out of pain and me out of doubt, that I might be certain that He is and that He hears and answers when we human beings pray. But there was no answer. And that was the greatest disappointment of my life, you add disconsolately.

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With this, too, I am well acquainted. The experience you have had is not new to me. When I was a doubter, I had a similar experience. Permit me to tell a little about it; perhaps it will be of some help to you. For a long time I was an irreligious doubter. I thought that if there were a personal God, He did not concern himself about each and every individual. However, the more I studied the religious history of the human race, the clearer it became to me that religion is a phase of human soul-life which resides inherently in man in the same way as poetry and music, and which will not permit itself to be removed from life.

I observed that there were, indeed, irreligious individuals, but not irreligious peoples. I observed, further, that the irreligious individual is an artificial product, found only among sophisticated and hyper-cultured people in divers periods, especially periods of decadence. I also saw that this artificial product was the result of the suppression of innate religious tendencies, either on the part of the parents of the children while the children were still young or on the part of individuals themselves at a more mature age. In the latter instance the suppression was accomplished, as a rule, by great effort, the individual quelling his religious feelings and longings by means of a so-called intellectual or scientific view of life.

I observed, furthermore, that even in irreligious individuals the inherent religious desires are so strong that sophistication must give way to nature. The religious longings of these people often protrude through their "intellectual" unbelief.

Moreover, I saw that religion does not by any means degrade an individual. On the contrary, I was forced to admit that religion is the most exalting element in all human history, even though in exceptional instances it has been corrupted and therefore has less successfully accomplished its purpose.

I observed that nations were sound and strong as long as their religions were vital, and that they became unfitted for life when religion became an empty form to most of their people.

And I saw, further, that the religious individuals were the noblest our race had produced, and that in religion they possessed a means of elevating others which I could not find elsewhere.

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These and similar reflections opened the way for the native religious tendencies which I, too, possessed, but which had been suppressed for a long time. The desire to be in touch with the eternal began to assert itself. This soon led me to think of prayer.

I had to admit to myself that the "intellectually" and "scientifically" established view of life which I had adopted had left a peculiar feeling of emptiness within me. This feeling soon began to pass over into restless-
ness. Now and then I felt an inner anxiety which I could not understand and which was, therefore, the more annoying.

Gradually it dawned on me that I had, after all, pursued a wrong course in thinking that a man could and should live his life without conscious fellowship with God—without religion.

I now said to myself that my inner emptiness is due to the fact that my soul-life lacks the religious element. There is something about religious meditation and especially religious prayer which will fill the great void in my soul. My soul-life will become harmonious and balanced again when I become established in fellowship with God.

I began to pray.

Notice now the attitude I had when I began to pray. In the first place, I did not believe in answer to prayer on God’s part. I denied the very possibility of God being able or willing to give any heed to what a capricious individual might happen to ask of Him. I saw in prayer nothing but a purely subjective movement in my soul upward toward the eternal. I had no other effect of prayer in mind than a purely subjective one: that my soul might become concentrated upon God and the eternal. I looked upon that as a sound and profitable diversion from my soul’s concentration upon temporal and corruptible things.

In the second place, and in this connection the most important: I did not turn to God to speak candidly and confidentially with Him. It was by no means my intention to cease my worldly and selfish life. On the contrary, my attempt to pray was a semi-conscious or unconscious effort to find peace and rest in order that I might keep up my worldly life, undisturbed by the more or less clear reproaches of my conscience.

That is the reason why I was unsuccessful in prayer. I did not get in touch with God. My prayer was a monologue, a soliloquy. It did not rise to heaven; but was like the smoke from Cain’s sacrifice, which lay close to the earth.

My attempt to pray was, accordingly, very brief. The little sincerity that was left in me revolted against a religiosity of this kind, against such fellowship with God.

* Permit me now to tell you what happened when I really began to pray in such a way that I received an answer and entered into fellowship with the unseen God.

That did not take place until I was in dire need.

It was no longer merely a question of a little inner emptiness or restlessness, or some little outward need or sorrow or reversal from which I desired to be freed through my supplications. Now it was my sin that made me restless. And it finally made me so restless that I did not dare to live in it any longer.

I tried first to break with my sinful habits. I dare say that I made a serious attempt, but I failed completely. The more I saw of my own life, the clearer it became to me that my real sinfulness lay in my self-loving and self-centered heart. It did not take long until I had to admit that I was utterly helpless in my struggle.

Then it was that I turned to God in earnest prayer.

I had turned to God before for the sake of a little religious diversion and for relief from the feeling of emptiness and restlessness which annoyed me.

Now I turned to God in order to speak candidly and confidentially with Him. The first thing I said to Him
was this: "Lord, speak Thou to me. Speak to me in such a way that I will understand that it is Thou who speakest. Tell me what Thou hast to tell me about my life and my heart. I do not come to Thee with the intention of deceiving Thee, but to be reconciled to Thee and to be saved from my sins. Do unto me whatsoever Thou wilt. I have no demands to make upon Thee. I only pray Thee to save me. Use whatever means Thou mayest find necessary."

That is the substance of what I said to Him; the wording may have been slightly different.

And I received an answer.

Not exactly what I had thought beforehand it would be. But from that moment He gripped my soul so powerfully that I could not deny the fact without being untrue to myself.

At first there were many difficulties indeed. Often He did not hear me at all, or the answer was so indistinct that I was not certain of it in my own mind. But from that time nothing could scare me away from Him or cause me to lose courage. Had I not said that He might use whatever means He might find necessary? I had to rest satisfied with what He did, even though I did not always understand His ways with me.

When He delayed answering me, I was impelled more than ever to examine myself diligently before Him, asking myself if there was anything wrong with my life or with my heart which He by this means desired to point out to me.

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We have now reached the point which is to determine whether you are to remain a doubter or be delivered from skepticism.
respect there is no difference. We must all pass through the narrow gate of repentance if we desire to have fellowship with God.

You recall, no doubt, that on Good Friday Jesus was sent from Pilate to Herod. Herod was much pleased at this. For a long time he had been desirous of seeing Him because he hoped to see Jesus perform a miracle before his eyes. The account of their meeting closes with these characteristic words: “He questioned Him in many words; but He answered him nothing” (Luke 23:9).

The man who turns to Jesus without seeking salvation from his sins receives no answer to his prayers even if he prays, as Herod did, in many words.

If you are among these, do not go away and say, as so many do, that Christianity is only imagination and vain talk; and that you may cry, even cry aloud and weep in your distress, but receive no reply. Do not allow such cheap talk to mislead you. Give heed to the plain words of Jesus: “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.”

From the moment that you turn to Christ for the purpose of making an honest accounting of all your sins and of being saved from your former manner of life, you will be answered by your invisible Saviour. Even though the answer may come in a way somewhat different from what you had thought, you will, nevertheless, receive the answer you need. And it will be one which will both frighten you and beckon to you at the same time.

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Permit me at this time to repeat my advice to every honest doubter: Begin to read the New Testament and begin to pray.

Speak candidly and confidentially with God about your daily experience in trying to do the will of God, as I mentioned above. It will lift you up into a natural and unstudied relationship of confidence with God. You will feel secure and happy as you withdraw from the multitude and from the tumult of life and, having entered into your secret chamber, pour out your heart to God, telling Him of your selfishness, your sins of omission, the sins you have committed, and, worst of all, the insincerity of your attitude toward your fellow men, toward yourself, and even toward God Himself.

You will now have additional new experiences, which will enable you to learn experimentally what the very essence of Christianity is and thus obtain true Christian assurance.

As you read from the New Testament about Christ and live in fellowship with Him, confiding to Him each day the facts concerning your inner as well as your outward life, you will, like all the rest of us, experience that there arises in your heart a singular attitude of confidence toward Him.

He who has seen the sunlight has no need of any one explaining to him that it is light and not darkness. Likewise, he who in prayer enters deeper and deeper into fellowship with Christ as He is given to us in the New Testament has no need of any one explaining to him that he is in fellowship with God. He apprehends here the life, the words, and the mighty acts of the Absolute One.

Confronted with the Absolute, there is only one thing for man to do: submit in unconditional obedience and yield in absolute confidence. That every one knows who
in sincere prayer has studied the New Testament witness to Christ. The confidence which Christ thus wins from us makes it natural for us to rely on what He says. Before, on the other hand, we would have thought that we had been compelled to submit to His sayings, so often paradoxical and incomprehensible.

If we have experienced what Søren Kierkegaard expresses in the words, “before God we are always in the wrong,” then we know Christ as our real, true Lord. And to submit to Him does not make us stunted or spineless beings. On the contrary, we feel it as an inner emancipation to be permitted to submit to Him in unfuffled confidence and obedience. The more wholeheartedly and unreservedly we submit to Him, the more we succeed both in finding ourselves and in being ourselves.

As already indicated, the fellowship with God which I have described so far is replete with severe struggles. There is not much joy, peace, or assurance. During this period your spiritual life will, as a rule, vacillate strongly between fear and peace, anxiety and joy.

There are times when God is experienced as being so near that your soul leaps with joy. At other times your soul is quiet, dead. You feel nothing and will nothing. It is a peculiarly negative condition, in which you feel almost entirely unconcerned about your relation to God. At other times, again, you feel sick and sore at heart.

It seems to you as though God has forsaken you. The worst of it is that you think yourself are to blame, because of your own unfaithfulness and disobedience.

The remarkable thing now is that the nature of your doubt has changed. You are amazed and can scarcely recognize either yourself or your doubts.

Heretofore theoretical doubt and mental antagonism toward the Christian faith have been uppermost in your soul. Now, however, you are really not much concerned about intellectual difficulties. Possibly they have not all as yet been solved in your own mind. Nevertheless, they now occupy your thoughts but very little.

As a matter of fact, entirely new problems have arisen, which occupy your soul’s entire attention and engage all its strength. The distress of your conscience now completely overshadows the previous distress of your intellect. The distress of your conscience became great when, as I mentioned above, you began to see your selfishness and your sentimental insincerity in excusing and defending your sinfulness instead of confessing it openly both to yourself and to others. Later this distress became even greater.

At first your soul, impelled by great anxiety, devoted itself to fervent prayer and intimate communion with God. The truths of the Bible made a deep impression upon you during this time. Everything was new and fresh. Your soul was like wax. The least impression left a clear, distinct mark.

Your former sins, too, had been given a shock, so to speak. The painful distress which you had experienced had left a distaste for the lust and sweetness of sin. For this reason temptations had but little power during this period. Consequently, it was not difficult during this time to retain tranquility of conscience. There was a marked change both in your life and in your heart.

However, as soon as the strong emotions subsided, you began to experience something very different. The desire to sin reasserted itself with redoubled strength. Even though you desisted from carrying it out in word or deed,
you saw, nevertheless, that you did not hate sin, but loved it.

During this time you read the New Testament, perhaps every day. But, honest as you now were with yourself, you were compelled to admit that you had no desire to do so. Newspapers interested you a great deal more. You read them with eagerness. You prayed to God also, perhaps every day. But you had to force yourself to do that too.

Others thought well of you. They saw, of course, the great change which had taken place in your life. But the more highly they thought of you, the worse you yourself felt about your own condition. You felt that there was something false and hypocritical about yourself, which pained you almost more than everything else you now were experiencing.

To make matters even worse, you felt cold and indifferent in the midst of it all. To begin with you were deeply grieved because of your terrible spiritual condition. But gradually this sorrow vanished completely, and, instead, you now felt cold, callous, and unconcerned.

The worst of all, however, was that little by little you began to doubt your own sincerity. Never before had you known that you were such a vacillating and fickle character. At times you were much concerned about salvation from sin and from your own insincerity. At other times, again, you felt such a desire toward sin that you would sacrifice nothing for the sake of becoming a new man.

Then when you turned to God each day to receive the forgiveness of sins, you felt that to do so was blasphemy toward a holy God. You asked yourself incessantly if God could forgive a man who secretly loves and clings to the sin for which he was asking pardon. Would it not be a violation of the moral law on the part of God to forgive such a person?

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My doubting friend, when you have experienced a little of this, you have, in the midst of all your doubt and distress, reached a stronger faith in God than that of which you yourself are fully aware.

Faith begins, as you know, in all of us as faith, first and foremost, in God's holy law, His ethical will. It was so in the case of God's own people, Israel. They had to learn first to believe God's holy law.

Note now, my friend, how you have learned that very thing by the wisdom and grace of God. You have received direct, personal assurance that what Christ has said to you is the will of God. You have submitted to God's will. You have admitted that its demands upon you are absolute, that you are unconditionally and absolutely under obligation to live according to it. When you observe daily that you do not do it, you feel that you are totally condemned; you even despise and detest yourself. And you consider it out of the question that God will or can have anything to do with you so long as your moral condition is such.

Now begins in earnest that spiritual cry which is common to all who have begun in truth to have fellowship with Christ in prayer and the reading of the New Testament: "How can I find a gracious God? My sin! My sin! How can I secure the forgiveness of sins?"

Note what fellowship with Christ has accomplished in you. Before, the question of the forgiveness of sins was the simplest thing in the world to you. You thought that as soon as you confessed your sins, God would, of
course, forgive—and that matter would be all very nicely taken care of. It had often irritated you to see people go around tormenting themselves with fear and anxiety lest God should not forgive them their sins. They appeared to you to be morbid souls, who had lost the ability to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials.

Now you look upon this matter differently.

Now the question of the forgiveness of sins is the most difficult one you have faced in your whole life. Theoretical and intellectual difficulties have been reduced to mere bagatelles in comparison with the doubt and anxiety which now torment you. You may even smile at times, perhaps, when you recollect that not long ago there was a time in your life when the question of the divinity of Christ, His supernatural birth, and His bodily resurrection were your greatest difficulties.

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If you have had these experiences, my doubting friend, you are prepared to receive full assurance concerning Christ and His wonderful salvation. Up to this time you have not been prepared.

This is a fact which is frequently overlooked. In our day, especially, it seems as though people have forgotten that there is no other way of becoming personally certain of Christ and of the Christian faith than this: the way of the sinner, the way which leads through complete despair of self.

Christ Himself knew full well that there was something about His person which would be and must needs be an occasion of stumbling. Therefore, too, He said upon one occasion: “Blessed is he whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me” (Matthew 11:6). As early as at the time of His birth the following prophetic words were spoken of Him: “This child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34).

This was revealed already in the days of His flesh.

Publicans and sinners, who realized their sinfulness, found in Him no occasion of stumbling. In their distress they turned to Him, drawn by the truth which brought them low into the dust, guilty before the face of God, and attracted by the mild and tender love which He showed toward every sincere soul that willingly accepted the sentence of condemnation which the truth decreed.

These publicans and sinners received Him as He was, without criticizing Him or desiring to change Him. There were things about Him, of course, which they did not understand, and which they found might even be occasions of stumbling. But this did not affect their faith in Him.

As soon as they had submitted to the truth of His word and had come to a realization of their complete helplessness, but also by His creative word had been raised up to a new life, with peace in their hearts and a new mind to do the will of God, He became the authority to Whom they submitted in all things and in Whom they confided.

We see, on the other hand, that the religious leaders of the people, the Scribes and the Pharisees, did find occasion of stumbling in Jesus. They criticized Him in many ways. They named very exacting conditions upon which they would recognize Him as the Messiah. They were not satisfied with His personal life, His teachings, or His conduct among the people.

But then we also see that these people, with few exceptions, never became concerned about their sins when they heard Jesus preach. The Gospel records show us this
very clearly. Jesus Himself has given us His general view of the whole matter in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

Here we are at the deepest root and the first hidden beginnings of the Christian faith.

Jesus is such that He must be an occasion of stumbling among men. To the ordinary, average person He is unreal and doubtful from first to last: with respect to His divine origin, His supernatural birth, His miraculous works, His vicarious suffering and death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, and His return to judgment.

This is also the reason why many in our day, as in the time of Christ, go away from Him in indifference and live their lives as though Christ had never lived—just as the large majority of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus did. Others can not go away from Him so easily. Like the Scribes and the Pharisees, they keep circling about Him. But they are not satisfied with Him. As He confronts them in the New Testament they will not acknowledge Him as their Saviour.

Some of them, too, have the boldness to tell us openly what changes they must make in Him before they can make use of Him as their Saviour. In the first place, He must not be eternal God. He must not have been conceived and born in a supernatural manner. He must not have performed any miracles; and His suffering and death must have no vicarious significance. Above all He must not be risen from the dead. And faith in such a “Saviour” has been called Christianity!

But this is historical deception, the more reprehensible because it has been perpetrated by men with scientific training. They should know that Christianity is a historic religion, with its own definite historical characteristics. Christianity is an historical fact. And we treat facts scientifically, not by telling what they ought to be, but by showing what they actually are.

Christianity has always been faith in Christ, not a Christ such as the Pharisees and other scribes desired and demanded that He should be, but faith in Christ as preached by the apostles, whose testimony to Christ as contained in the New Testament is acknowledged by all branches of the church as the inspired Word of God and the infallible guide for faith, doctrine, and life.

That is what historic Christianity has been from the beginning and is today.

Yes, they say, but no modern man can believe in such a Christ any longer.

To this the church answers that modern man, highly interesting as He is, is not the only one who has not been able to believe in this Saviour. Exactly the same objection was raised over nineteen hundred years ago: “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?”

The church answers, further, that there have been people in every age who have found occasion of stumbling in Jesus. There is only one possible way for all of them to learn to know Him and to believe on Him as He is given us of God. And that is by becoming convicted of sin. Christ is acceptable and “intelligible” only to publicans and sinners who by Jesus’ word of truth have been bowed down into the dust before the living God, who acknowledge that they are completely lost, and who know of nothing else to do but to throw themselves into the open arms of Jesus.

* * *

Permit me now, after this digression, to return to your experiences, my doubting friend.
I pray you, remember our agreement: I did not take it upon myself to prove to you the truth of Christianity. I promised to point out the experiences through which you would have to pass in order to become personally convinced of the truth of Christianity. I also promised to show you what to do in order to gain these experiences.

I have now followed you step by step into the world of experience which opens itself to you through earnest prayer and the reading of the New Testament. We have now reached the point where you in fellowship with your Saviour have become a helpless sinner, who from the depths of the soul cries out for full assurance that all sins be forgiven and that you be received into fellowship with God.

Gradually there has grown up within you an attitude of confidence toward Christ which you beforehand had not thought possible. He is now your highest, your absolute authority. You acknowledge that what He has said is divine truth. You feel that the gentle tenderness and mercy which He bestowed upon the helpless sinners who came to Him is a constant balm and healing to your weary and aching soul.

When you read about this or meditate upon other words of Jesus, you experience an inner composure, which refreshes your tired, struggling soul. But you experience this only at brief intervals. You long for an experience such as they had who came to Jesus. He spoke a word to them, a creative word, which lifted them out of their inner distress and restlessness and transformed them into confident and glad disciples.

You surmise that Jesus can and will give you more than you have received. When you read the New Testament and when you read or hear about true Christians down through the history of the Church, you realize that they had more than you have received so far. Not that you are ungrateful for what you have already received. Even though it has so far, in the main, brought you inward distress and spiritual conflict, you would not for the whole world return to your former manner of life. You would not exchange places with foolish men, whose rejoicing is in the things of this world. You would rather sow the seeds of godliness with tears than do that.

You have surmised rightly. You have not as yet experienced the deepest and most mysterious things in Christianity. Your faith is, as is the case with all beginners, essentially a longing, sighing, I might almost say, doubting faith. Exactly as the man in the Gospels expressed it in his cry of distress to Jesus: “I believe, Lord, help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

This longing faith is now to become, through a new experience on your part, a happy, peaceful, and certain faith.

Permit me at this point to say a few words about the attitude you should take while waiting for this experience. First, it is not for you to force yourself into this assurance. That is the work of the Spirit. As the great apostle upon one occasion expressed it: “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16).

You should continue to speak candidly and confidentially with God. Tell Him that you lack that mystical experience of Christ which makes Him a present reality to your soul and thereby imparts to you a deep and abiding assurance. Then ask Him to prepare you outwardly and inwardly in such a way that you might as soon as possible be ready for this experience. Ask Him each
day to direct your attention to everything in your life which either directly or indirectly might hinder the Spirit from making you a partaker in the whole fulness of salvation.

Search yourself daily before God. Pray often the deep and fruitful prayer of the psalmist: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Then, too, you should diligently use the Word of God, whether it appeals to you or not. Whether you think it helps you or not. Before you open your Bible, pray humbly that the Spirit of God may make the Word helpful to you, even though you may not always be certain at the time as to how it is helping you.

Remember the words of Jesus: “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Every time you come in contact with the saving truths of Scripture, a sanctifying influence is imparted to your soul. You are lifted into a different spiritual atmosphere, which is healthful and strengthening to your inner life even though you can not always tell just when a truth has gripped your soul and taken captive your thought.

In the next place, I advise you to participate in the Lord’s Supper.

At this point I am prepared to hear you raise an objection again. You say: “I do not understand the Lord’s Supper, and that would undoubtedly disturb me during the communion hour. In all likelihood I do not have the right conception of the Lord’s Supper either. Perhaps my ideas concerning it are entirely wrong. Is it right to go to the Lord’s Supper when I am in this condition? Should I not wait until these things become clearer to me?”

No, you should not. You have a spiritual right to attend the Lord’s Supper if you are a sincere disciple of Jesus, that is, one who would conceal no sin from Him but openly confess to Him everything that troubles your conscience, one who trusts in Jesus and is assured that what He did and said is right, also in that which He said and did when He instituted the Lord’s Supper.

You do not understand the Lord’s Supper; you are afraid that your conception of it is not right. But Jesus has never demanded of us that we must understand either Him or His Supper. He says rather: “Believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). Tell Him that you are afraid that you do not have the right ideas about the Lord’s Supper. Ask Him, too, to give you the right conception of it as far as it is possible for us human beings to think correctly concerning these high and holy things.

But, above all, remember that it is not a question of your conception of the Lord’s Supper. The important thing here is your confidence in Christ and your obedience to Him.

According to Jesus’ own words, you are to do this in remembrance of Him.

What are you to do? That which Jesus Himself asks you to do at the communion table: “Take, eat! this is My body, which is given for you” as He says concerning the bread. And concerning the cup He says: “Drink ye all of it, for this is My blood which is poured out for you unto the remission of sins.”

If you will do this in obedient confidence toward Christ, you will receive the invisible gift which He once for all has attached to this mysterious act. Even if your conception of the Supper should be correct, that would not make the gift which you receive any greater. And if your con-
ception should be incorrect, that would not lessen the gift which you receive, if you bow in humble submission to Jesus' own words and His own holy ordinance.

Finally, I would advise you to seek the fellowship of people of whom you are convinced that they live wholeheartedly with Christ.

All religions create fellowships. Christianity does so in a special sense. Christ desires to bind together His disciples into a holy brotherhood of the finest and most intimate kind. The followers of Jesus have understood this. From the beginning they have banded themselves together into the communion of saints, in which they share with each other the mutual blessings which they possess in their common Saviour. They meet regularly to read and speak of Him, to pray and give thanks to Him, and to praise Him.

Seek out the church of God and participate in its life and work.

I know very well that you will easily tend to look upon the secret chamber as the only real place for intimate communion with God. But remember that the Christian's life should not, like the mystic's, rotate about one point, the secret chamber. The Christian's life should rather be like an ellipse, which revolves about two fixed points: the secret chamber and the communion of saints. Our inner life with God will suffer to the extent that we neglect these two centers of Christian edification.

In this connection let me give you a more special bit of advice. Seek out one or two Christians to whom you can confidentially open your heart and with whom you can share everything. Pray God that you may find such Christian friends. You will soon learn how important it is for the weak, unstable new life within you to be permitted to live and to grow in fellowship with some one who has perhaps progressed a little farther than you. To be permitted to exchange thoughts and discuss the experiences you have in that new life which you have in common, will not only mean spiritual enrichment to both of you, but will also be a help to you against temptation, especially when you are tempted to discouragement and despair.

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In conclusion permit me to mention the last, the decisive experience, that which leads to Christian assurance in its fulness.

Some fair day, or perhaps some dark night, the miracle will take place in you as it has in millions before you, unexpectedly and, as a rule, suddenly. Most often it is a brief passage of Scripture which becomes "living" to your soul. As through a little window you look through this passage into the world of invisible things. Everything is clear to your inner eye. You see the Saviour, the Cross, and God's eternal love in an entirely new light.

All your doubts and difficulties are swept away. You see now what you have in your Saviour. All your sins and the wickedness of your heart are lost in the boundless depths of grace. They are like sparks from the flue of a steamer as they fall into the great ocean. You are certain that your sins are forgiven, that you are loved of God, that you are His child.

It is all as clear as daylight to you now. You can not understand how you could have lived so long without being able to grasp the simple truth that Christ stepped into your place, atoned for all your sins, and made you free.

You have now received assurance, an assurance of
which you could not have dreamed before. Now all the doubters and blasphemers and infidels in the world could come, if they wanted to, and stand in array before you with all their doubts and misgivings. They would not move you a hair’s breadth. You would only be glad of the opportunity to speak this personal word to them: “You may doubt, blaspheme, and deny as long as you wish. I possess an assurance which is unknown to you. And if you knew it, you would never again say a word against the assurance which the Christians possess. You would rather begin to pray God that you also might experience it. Yea, you would sacrifice everything in order to gain it.”

Having had this experience, you will wonder especially at one or two things.

First, that it was the cross which gave you the assurance. You could never have dreamed of that before. Up to this time the cross had been the most perplexing thing in Christianity. Like many others before you, you thought that the cross was the very thing in Christianity which made Christianity doubtful and was the reason for your skepticism. For that reason you, too, had joined the chorus of modernists who demand that the message of the cross be cut away and that Christianity be presented to the modern mind in a form which can draw men to Christ and not drive them away from Him.

And now it is your experience that it was the cross which brought to your soul the final solution and opened to you all the glories of the kingdom of heaven.

Now no one needs to tell you that the cross is the great heart of Christianity. Now you see that the cross shines forth from every page of the New Testament. And now you understand why the greatest of all the apostles wher-

ever he went, even in the world’s greatest centers of culture, proclaimed nothing else save the cross. He himself expressed it thus: “And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

You now begin to realize what an unholy crime all the modern religious quacks are perpetrating who remove the stumblingblock of the cross from Christianity in order to give it a greater appeal to modern man. The great apostle has expressed himself also in regard to this with all the clearness one could wish for: “For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God . . . But we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23).

The other thing which will cause you to wonder after you have had this experience is that your assurance with regard to the cross and the Crucified One is not based upon a mental solution of the mystery of the cross. Christ’s vicarious suffering and death is still an impenetrable mystery to your intellect. The remarkable thing now is that the unintelligible aspect of the cross no longer causes you any intellectual distress. Consequently, it is no longer a source of doubt.

You possess an assurance which is more fundamental than all logic. You have experienced the cross and now have the direct assurance of experience, which is independent of your intellectual ability to reason out your experience.

* Permit me to add a few words concerning this ex-
perience, not in order to explain it, but to emphasize that it is not something which you are to press out from within yourself by means of auto-suggestion or other psychological hyper-tension.

You should not attempt to do anything aside from what in the preceding I have advised you to do, namely, to make diligent use of the means of grace which Christ has given us, praying each day that you may become a partaker in the full assurance of salvation. At the psychological moment the Spirit will accomplish that miracle within you which will impart to you the assurance described above.

The miracle consists in this, that He in a new way opens to you the invisible, eternal world. It is the work of the Spirit in the dispensation of salvation to establish contact between the eternal and the temporal world, between visible and invisible reality.

This He does by giving the truly repentant sinner that new spiritual sight which "sees" the invisible reality, that new spiritual sense which is capable of functioning in the realm of the eternal. You experience Christ and the realm of grace and salvation of which He is the central figure in a direct, intuitive way. You experience Him as a present, blessed reality. In the moment that you with your new spiritual senses apprehend the invisible world of grace in which the cross is the center, in that moment a new life dawns upon your whole inner and outward being.

You see your relation to God from the perspective of eternity. You now see what the cross of Christ and the death of Christ mean to you. You now see what it means to be "in Christ." You now experience with all your new spiritual senses what it means to be a child of God by grace alone. Your soul is filled with unspeakable joy and

with that peace which "passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

At the same time your attitude toward outward things, toward men and toward the rest of the world about you, has also changed. You have been given grace to look at everything in the light of eternity. And, looking upon your fellow men in this light, you look upon them no longer as individuals who by mere chance happen to cross your path in various ways, nor as people who are a little more or a little less pleasing; you look first and last toward that within them which is eternal and immortal.

That gives you, in the first place, a deep respect for them. In the second place, you become earnestly concerned about these souls who, as a rule, busy themselves during their brief span of life with destroying both themselves and others. In other words, you have begun to look upon life as Jesus did. That means that you go with Him into the work of saving them.

The world of things, too, appears different to your eye when you view it in the clear light of eternity. You will be surprised at the new appraisal of values which you will make as you come in touch again with old, familiar things. You will find that things which you formerly deemed indispensable, no longer mean much to you. In fact, you will feel that some of them are unquestionably dangerous to the new life within you. And therefore you are determined to part with them.

You will have such experiences in connection with your reading, your associations, and your pleasures. From the depths of your heart you will subscribe to the words of the apostle: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).
Are all your doubts and difficulties now solved?
No, likely not. But you have experienced what Jesus promised you; you know that the teaching is of God. The statements of the Bible concerning Christ have become the word of God to you. Through this word He has spoken to you in such a way that you are certain that it is God who has spoken.

You have experienced this word as the transforming word of God, which first changed you from a frivolous to a despairing sinner, who had no peace in sin but had to turn to the living God for salvation, and then transformed you from a despairing sinner to a non-doubting, free, and saved sinner.

This has given you a faith in the words of the Bible which enables you freely and gladly to live and to die by it. The Bible has become the authority to which you submit in all things pertaining to salvation, and according to which you feel safe in living your life.

To be sure, you may still come upon passages in the Bible which give you trouble. The human side of the Scriptures, especially, may give you much intellectual difficulty when you try to co-ordinate in your mind the divine and the human sides of the Biblical word.

But these intellectual difficulties will not cause you the distress that they did before. Your new experiences have helped you. Now you say to yourself that since I have experienced assurance with regard to the vital point, namely, that God has met me in Christ and raised me up to a new, rich, and blessed life, I expect also to receive assurance with respect to the other things about which I still feel uneasy and uncertain. Since I have had the greatest of all intellectual crosses, the cross of Christ, transformed into a source of happy assurance to me, why should I then worry about the lesser intellectual crosses?

Here, too, I have a bit of advice to offer you.
In the first place, be honest with yourself. Do not try to conceal from yourself the fact that you are still uncertain and in doubt about these points. Acknowledge it openly to yourself. Above all, speak with God about it in prayer. Ask Him to give you experimental assurance also with respect to these things, thus solving your mental difficulties and giving you direct assurance.

In the second place, be patient! Take time!
Let God quietly prepare you for and give you those experiences which will dispel also these doubts. And while you are waiting, do not permit yourself to become anxious about these things. Just tell God that they trouble you, and that you are longing for inner peace and rest also with regard to these points.

In the third place, while waiting for this assurance and struggling with these doubts, do not permit yourself to yield to the temptation of denying any part of that which the Christian church has believed and confessed from the beginning.
Confess openly that you do not have personal assurance with regard to certain articles of the Christian faith. But say also that you are in all humility longing and praying that you may share the Christian church's apostolic faith at every point and that you are looking forward with rejoicing to the day when together with the living church of God you can freely confess every article of the Christian faith.