What do you do if the explosion of the spirit strikes you? First, I believe you must go to your most trusted friend, not to talk, but to sit in silence—in the presence of the other—then to another human being. And the truth of the presence may be the only truth that is verifiable.

Next, you must allow your friend to care for you. This is no silence. Nor can it come too quickly. This requires that you give permission to the other to enter your shattered world. And with the silence, you must carry with you the great failing of your way home. You trusted friend is there to listen, is not therapist, counselor or father confessor (at least not then) and listens to you talk, listens to the starkness of your confession that your religious house of cards proved to be just that, listens to the pain of your isolation—for you are in an empty, flat land by yourself with not so much as four pegs to pitch a tent for shelter. He listens to the description of your futureless future. And the echo of the question—"What is there now?"—continues to sound in your emptiness.

But your friend does not answer your questions; eventually you do. Yet no one can tell you when the answer will happen. First, there may be nothing more than the establishing of a routine; but even routine requires a degree of faith. Later, there may be a divine word, an acknowledged truth then as such. From deep within, from the center of your center, may come the word: "Life shall go on." And you know the words are true and your house of meaning receives another plank.

If and when the house is completed, that is, if and when there is a day when you can say: "I believe that the following truths give me meaning, and makes sense out of existence, and are the grounds on which I will stake my life," if there is a day when this can be said again, after an explosion of the spirit my hope is that your statement of what you believe would include the following:

First, a trust in God, trust in God as personal and loving, God who loves you, who understands and who cares for you. Believing that God understands and loves us is the life force that prevents us from collapsing. Secondly, a realization that Jesus of Nazareth reveals God to us. We are not blocked or stumped in our search for the knowledge of God. Jesus' love and forgiveness is the indicator of God's love and forgiveness. Believing that Jesus reveals God to us is the life force that guards our spirits from collapsing. Thirdly, a trust that God is present with and in us, and that his spirit, his power, and his love are with us and in us, his people. We are not alone, we are not deserted, we are not forgotten, if we shall ever be called for. Believing that God's presence is with us and in us is the life force that builds us up as a community of people seeking to be faithful and prevents us from despairing.

To be able to base your life on those three assertions and know they are true is to return from the land of shadow and mist into the sunlight of a new day. The person who experiences the bankruptcy of spirit that we have spoken of and who later recovers that spirit, who begins again and whose faith grows from infancy to maturity, has a lot to tell us. My guess is that such a person would share with us such thoughts as:

No one else can say what's true for you. All truth is self-validating.

Many truths that are not yet perceived as truth, can remain on the shelf: it may be claimed later on.