

APPENDIX TWO:

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The terms “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening” are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming “God-consciousness” followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule.

Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time.

Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a

profound alteration in his reaction to life;
that such a change could hardly have been brought
about by himself alone. What often takes place
in a few months could seldom have been accomplished
by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions
our members find that they have tapped
an unsuspected inner resource which they
presently identify with their own conception
of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power
greater than ourselves is the essence of
spiritual experience. Our more religious
members call it "God-consciousness."

Most emphatically we wish to say that
any alcoholic capable of honestly facing
his problems in the light of our
experience can recover, provided he
does not close his mind to all
spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated
by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty
with the spirituality of the program.
Willingness, honesty and open mindedness
are the essentials of recovery.
But these are indispensable.

"There is a principle which is a bar
against all information, which is proof against
all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man
in everlasting ignorance—
that principle is contempt prior to investigation."