

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.

(See BB 85:2)

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.

(See BB 14:2, 57:2)

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;

(See BB 25:2, 50:4, 84 Top [9])

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.

When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself.

With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected

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inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves. (See BB 55:3, 161 Top)

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.

Let's look first at the case of the one who says he won't believe- the belligerent one. He is in a state of mind which can be described only as savage. His whole philosophy of life, in which he so gloried, is threatened. It's bad enough, he thinks, to admit alcohol has him down for keeps. But now, still smarting from that admission, he is faced with something really impossible. How he does cherish the thought that man, risen so majestically from a single cell in the primordial ooze, is the spearhead of evolution and therefore the only god that his universe knows! Must he renounce all this to save himself?

T&T 25 Step Two

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.*

(See BB 13 bottom - 14, 163:2)

"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."

-Herbert Spencer