Appendix II: A Spiritual Experience

This is an abbreviated and slightly edited version of the Appendix.

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.

In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described.

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 the newcomer is aware of it. She or he finally realizes that a profound alteration has been undergone in day to day reactions to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by the newcomer 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 emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his or her problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided the member’s mind is not closed to all spiritual concepts. She or 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.