

The Witness of the Spirit

by A.W. Tozer

True spiritual experience is an inward awareness of God and Christ, resulting from faith and obedience to the Scriptures.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, John 10:27, John 14:17, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 2:12, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 1:17-18, Hebrews 11:1, 2 Peter 1:3, 1 John 5:10

Topics: "Spiritual Awareness", "Intuitive Knowledge of God"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes that true knowledge of God comes from spiritual experience rather than intellectual reasoning. He explains that this awareness is intuitive and deeply rooted in the consciousness of the believer, which transcends mere thought. Tozer critiques Descartes' philosophical approach, asserting that self-awareness and knowledge of God precede rational thought. The inward witness of the Spirit provides a profound understanding of God that is beyond words, resulting from faith and obedience to Scripture. This experience is the essence of true religion, highlighting the importance of a personal relationship with God.

Transcript

Knowledge by spiritual experience is not mental, it is intuitive. It is consciousness, it is acquaintance with something or someone by direct awareness. It might help the reader to understand what we mean by such words as "awareness" and "consciousness" if he were to ask himself how he knows he exists, how he knows he is himself and not someone else, how he knows he is alive and not dead. The answer is simply that he "knows" these things by conscious awareness of which reason is no part. Let him attempt to prove to himself that he exists, for instance, and he will find that the "he" who is doing the demonstrating must first be aware that he exists before he can begin to prove that he does.

When the French philosopher, Descartes, sought to get to the root of all knowledge he thought away all accepted facts, went back till he found the one irreducible element of knowledge that could not be challenged and came up with his celebrated Cogito, ergo sum, "I think, therefore I am." But let no one imagine for a moment that with his little syllogism Descartes went all the way back. He did nothing of the kind. The truth is that he was by intuition aware of his existence before he ever began to notice that he was thinking. His self-knowledge antedated thought and all he did was to prove to reason that he existed by proof that it could understand: "I think, therefore I am."

This illustrates but does not explain what we mean by religious knowledge by direct spiritual experience. Stated in other language this means simply that there is at the root of true religion an inward witness, an awareness of God and Christ at the farthest-in core of the renewed Christian's spirit given to him by the Spirit of God. This experience results from faith in and obedience to the Scriptures. It is the end result of Bible doctrine but it is not that doctrine. It is a consciousness of God and spiritual things too deep and wonderful to utter or even think.

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