

SWINBURNE: PRINCIPLE OF CREDULITY

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In this paper, I propose to bring into focus Richard Swinburne's principle of credulity which he has discussed in chapter 13 of his book "The Existence of God". Swinburne is essentially an externalist who believes that a well-justified case can be made for theism by rational argument. Taking religion as an explanatory hypothesis of the world, he makes an assessment of it entirely on rational grounds. In "The Coherence of Theism" he has developed an argument that the belief that there is a God is not demonstrably incoherent. Whereas the major concern of his book "The Existence of God" is to look for evidence which could adequately answer the question whether the theistic hypothesis is true or false.

Swinburne, while rejecting the Kantian Humean epistemology as a mistaken approach,¹ has asserted that reason can reach justified conclusions on such matters as religious faith-claims. His argument draws strength from modern science, especially from theoretical physics which has the power to reach well-justified conclusions on the basis of systematic reasoning. He, however, finds it necessary to explain that he does not follow the pre-Kantian rationalist approach which used to insist that reason can reach indubitable conclusion about the existence of God. He is of the view that any conclusion we draw about the existence of God as a result of discursive reasoning would be a probable conclusion. In his view, the claim that God exists is a contingent claim; it is a proposition not necessarily true, rather contingently true.

The case Swinburne has made for the existence of God is fundamentally inductive in character. The whole argument both in its totality and sub-elements is developed in terms of probability calculus and has been expressed by means of Bayes' theorem. Hence belief in God is interpreted as an explanatory hypothesis which

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taking account of the huge variety of phenomena ranging from the existence of the universe, its conformity to order, from the existence of animals and humans to the existence of great opportunities for co-operation in acquiring knowledge and moulding the world, from the pattern of history, the occurrence of miracles to the occurrence of religious experiences lead to a personal explanation of the universe.²

Swinburne is of the view that theism may not make the occurrence of these phenomena very probable, but nothing else makes their occurrence in the least probable.³ Since theism is the only candidate which provides possible explanation for these phenomena, it is to be regarded as the most plausible explanatory hypothesis.⁴ The next move of his argument is to point out that the combined weight of all other evidence, including evidence based on arguments such as the teleological, the cosmological, and the argument from miracles, does not make the theistic hypothesis very probable. It is the evidence of religious experience which, when combined with other evidence, makes theism more probable than its rivals.

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Before giving an account of Swinburne's thinking on religious experience and his principle of credulity, I think it is important to look into his classification of religious experience into five broad based kinds. He has made the classification keeping only those experiences in view which belong to a theistic world-view. A brief explanation of the types of experience is given as follows:

- (1) Experiences in which the believer perceives a supernatural object (*e.g.*, God) in perceiving perfectly ordinary natural phenomena fall under this category. The believer, while looking at the night sky, all of a sudden may become conscious of the holy presence.
- (2) Experiences in which believers encounter very unusual public objects, the appearance of a person like Jesus Christ to his disciples as has been described in Luke (24:36-49). St. Paul's experience on the road to Damascus also belongs to this kind.
- (3) Experiences which do not involve taking public phenomena in the religious sense. The subject claims to apprehend the divine by means of sensations private to himself. But this experience can be described with the help of normal sensory vocabulary which we use for describing those

events which belong to the world of senses. The example is the dream of Joseph described in Matthew (1:20). Joseph in his dream saw an angel who made him aware of certain matters. What made this dream a religious experience was Joseph's view that the angel-in-the dream was a real angel and what he said was really a public phenomenon which could be described by using normal public language.

- (4) Experiences in which the subject encounters some kind of audio-visual sensations analogous to normal sensations, but this analogy does not go further as in giving us information about their content and depth. The sensations we come to have in such experiences turn out to be absolutely private to ourselves. Our everyday vocabulary fails to describe such an experience, yet the subject thinks that his experience is describable provided he could find a vocabulary that is spiritually rich enough to capture some of the events of his spiritual odyssey. The maximum help they usually find comes from poetic language.
- (5) Experiences wherein the subject absolutely leaves behind every sign belonging to the spatio-temporal dimension of the world. The mystic finds himself at a stage where nothing is left – no sensations, no perception and absolutely no vocabulary to express his encounter with God, with timeless reality, with a void filled with spiritual bliss. During such experiences every idea or concept which presupposes multiplicity of objects as well as the subject-object dualism is wiped out. The temporal is gone and what remains in this experience of unification is the eternal One. This overwhelming experience of unification leads to the clouds of unknowing and the darkness of eternal ineffability.

A careful look at these experiences will show that they can safely be divided into two sets. One set covers experiences from (1) to (3) and the other set takes view of those experiences which falls within the purview of (4) and (5). The experiences (1) to (3) can be described as common variety of religious experiences and the last two as the more extraordinary variety of experiences. Now the question is: Can we treat these two sets of experiences epistemically on a par and also can we apply one epistemic principle to both of the sets? We shall take up this matter in due course. For the present our main concern is to bring into focus Swinburne's principle of credulity and to see how he makes use of this principle.

(3)

The principle of credulity mainly draws on Chisholm's theory of perception which emphasizes that perceptual experience of X (in the absence of special considerations) provides good grounds for a belief that X is present. Taking a line from this theory Swinburne argues that if "you have the experience of its seeming to you that there is a table there, then it is good evidence for supposing that there is a table there."⁵ The quite simple formula according to him is that the way things seem provides good enough grounds for a belief about the way things are. This formula can be presented in the following words:

If it seems (epistemically) to a subject that X is present, then probably X is present.

Here the use of word "seem" (epistemically), means that the subject is inclined to believe what appears to him on the basis of his present sensory experience. To elaborate his point of view, the example Swinburne gives is that if I say "the ship is moving", it means that I am inclined to believe that the ship is moving and my inclination to this belief is supported by my present sensory experience. Then comes the contrast between the epistemic sense of the 'seem' and the comparative sense of 'seem'. This contrast highlights the comparison between the way an object looks with the way other objects normally look. For instance when I look at the sky in the evening, I perceive a brighter star, but with my perceiving the brighter star, I shall also perceive the second thing – Venus near the earth. Thus my experience of looking at the evening skyline will carry a comparative sense. In the same manner, when a Christian believer says: 'It seemed to me that the Virgin Mary talked to me,' the believer is using 'seemed' epistemically. But if instead he tells us, 'The figure seemed like a beautiful lady bathed in a white light,' the believer is using 'seem' in the comparative sense.

As a next move of this argument, Swinburne makes the point that if it seems to you that there is a table there, it is good evidence for supposing that there is a table there. Swinburne points out that if you are having the experience of its seeming to you that I am here giving the lecture and it is good grounds for you for believing that I am giving here a lecture, then it quite legitimately follows from this [on the basis of the Principle of Credulity] that in the absence of special considerations, all religious experiences ought to be taken by their subjects as genuine. It means that the believer has substantial grounds for belief in the existence of God, etc. Further to this Swinburne seems to claim that propositions such as:

- (1) I Talked to God last night.
- (2) I saw Poseidon standing by the window.
- (3) I became conscious of a timeless reality beyond myself.

are epistemically on a par with the following paradigmatic proposition:

- (4) I saw a table there.

But despite the fact that the principle of credulity allows the epistemic parity between propositions (1) to (3) and proposition (4), the question remains: Is it logically right to insist on epistemic parity between a physical object statement which can be confirmed or disconfirmed and the metaphysical object statement which can neither be confirmed nor refuted? We shall take up this issue in the sequel. First we should carefully listen to his argument.

The argument he gives is that if we do not accept the principle of credulity we would end up in a "sceptical bog". Although Swinburne does not throw enough light on this claim, what one can assume on the basis of his overall thesis is that without this principle we would not be able to find a way out of our own experience; thereby we would not be able to make judgements about the world around us. We would be confined to the way things look to us. And if we remain restricted to how things look to us, the natural outcome of this attitude will be scepticism. Swinburne seems to suggest that his principle helps us avoid scepticism in making justified judgements about the way things are.

Further, Swinburne examines the view that some people hold, that the principle of credulity should not be applied to religious experience. He insists that any attempt to restrict this principle only to the experience of ordinary things would be arbitrary. In this regard he has two objections to give due consideration.

The first objection mainly draws on the views that the principle of credulity is not an ultimate principle of rationality, but itself needs to be based on inductive justification. Giving a more particular shape to this objection, Swinburne says: "... a philosopher may claim that the fact that it appears that X is present is good grounds for supposing that X is present only if we have evidence that when in the past it appeared that X was present, it proved to be."⁶ The argument goes on. It is all right to take something as a table if it looks like a table on the grounds that the appearance of something like a table has proved reliable in the past. But this inductive reliability and evidential support is not available in the case of religious experience.

Hence it will not be all right to use the principle of credulity for religious experience; it should be restricted to ordinary experiences like the experience of a table. Swinburne rejects this restriction on two grounds:

- (1) People are ordinarily justified in taking what looks like a table to be a table 'even if they do not recall their past experience with tables'.⁷ What he wants to emphasize in his argument is that evidence from memory is a tricky problem. There is a lot of circularity involved in memory-claims. An inference from past experience to future experience will only be justified if our memory does not play tricks on us and, further, if we are able to recall our past experiences correctly. In our daily life we hardly depend on inductive justification in making judgements about things. We simply believe that in the absence of special considerations things are the way they seem to be. Swinburne argues: "And if it is justifiable to use it (the principle of credulity) when other justifications fail in memory cases, what good argument can be given against using it in other kinds of cases when other justifications fail?"⁸
- (2) The other difficulty with the memory-based inductive justification argument, according to Swinburne, is that it clearly needs to be modified in those cases where a person has no past experience of something, say X, but does have the experience of the properties in terms of which that thing (X) is defined. A paradigm example is our knowledge about a centaur which has been defined in Greek mythology as an animal with head, trunk, and arms of a man and body and legs of a horse. Now we have not seen a centaur before, but we have had experience of the properties ascribed to it on the basis of our experience with man and horse. If some one claims that it appears to him that a centaur is present, Swinburne believes, he has good reason to suppose that that is the case. On this view Swinburne suggests a change in the memory based justification argument as follows: "... the fact that it appears that X is present is good grounds for supposing that X is present only if we have evidence that when in the past it has appeared that X or any other property by which X is defined is present they have proved so to be."⁹ If this modification is accepted then Swinburne argues the memory justification argument holds no force against

religious experience. What he wants to emphasize by this claim is that if A has previous experience of those properties which can adequately define X, then A will have no difficulty in recognizing X when it appears to him that X is present. As the corollary of this argument, Swinburne makes the point that on the basis of his experience of properties at a different level of human existence, a believer can very easily come to have a clear idea of God. And if he sometimes happens to have an experience of the presence of God, he will easily recognize whether he is in the presence of God or some great demon.

The other attempt to restrict the application of the principle of credulity draws on the distinction between experience and the interpretation of experience. Someone like Chisholm might argue that this principle should be used only when one experiences some 'sensible' characteristics or properties like red, green, soft, hard, cold, hot, left or right. Chisholm's standpoint is that if something appears to be green, triangular, or hot, one can rightly infer that it is. But if what seems to be is a Russian ship or a wooden table, then one cannot infer that it probably is since there is a matter of a interpretation involved in it. In the same way, one can argue that since interpretation is involved in our experience of God, we cannot infer from the appearance of God that God exists. This means that the principle of credulity is of no use in the case of religious experience. However, according to Swinburne, this argument is built on a dubious line of distinction drawn between experience and interpretation. According to Swinburne, there is no way of making such a distinction in a non-arbitrary way. He says: "There is no reason of principle of why we should not grow so adept at spotting Russian ships, or Victorian tables, or blue-dwarf stars, or elliptical galaxies that we can recognize them at once, without being able to say what we see which make us identify them as we do."¹⁰ On these grounds, Swinburne asserts that the second objection to the original principle also crumbles.

Of course, it is time to look at those special considerations which, in Swinburne's view, defeat our perceptual claims and thereby limit the application of the principle of credulity. Swinburne has enlisted four such considerations.

- (i) That the subject was unreliable or that the subject had an experience under unreliable conditions like delusion or hallucination, or was under the influence of LSD. If this

was the case, then was have good inductive ground to reject his perceptual claims.

- (ii) That the perceptual claim was to have perceived an object of a certain kind in certain circumstances where such perceptual claims have proved false. We may prove that the perceiver did not have the necessary experience to make such perceptual claims in a particular situation. Swinburne argues further that it often remains unclear what experiences are necessary in order to recognize something. The ability to recognize something, in a given experience, varies widely from person to person. A variation of this would be to show that many perceptual claims in particular contexts conflict with each other. In such cases one cannot use the Principle of Credulity as its use would lead us to claims incompatible with what really exists around us.
- (iii) That the perceptual claim was made about the presence of something which some background evidence showed was not present there. The explanatory example which Swinburne gives us is that "if you claim to have seen the dodo on Mauritius, then *a priori* it is probable although not very probable, that the dodo become extinct in the seventeenth century, your perceptual claims remain overall probable."¹¹ But if you make a claim about seeing a spaceman twenty feet tall walking along the other side of Charing Cross Road, your claim has such improbability that it needs strong evidential support before it is accepted as a probable claim.
- (iv) That the claim to have perceived X may be accounted for in some other way. If it appears to me that some one looking like Y is addressing a meeting, I have enough reason to challenge my experience because of the fact that I know Y is dead. Then I should look for some other reason to account for my experience. The investigation into the matter will show that the person looking and talking like Y is an actor playing the role of the late Mr. Y. It means that there are insufficient grounds to believe that Mr. Y addressed a public meeting on 21st May 1991.

Now, Swinburne is of the view that these special considerations do not apply to the claims of those who claim to have experienced God, or the Ultimate Real. The first challenge may rule out some such claims, but generally most religious experiences are not affected. It can be shown that most people who claim to have gone

through such experiences were neither prone to hallucinations or delusions, nor were they on drugs. The second consideration, Swinburne argues, also fails to defeat the theistic experiential claim. The second challenge actually consists of two points. The first is that religious experiences are usually unreliable because they conflict with each other and hence are incompatible. The second is that in order to recognize God one would have to have previously perceived God. But the question is: How could a person who had not previously perceived God be able to recognize him? Swinburne rejects both of these arguments on the grounds:

- (a) Through devotees of different traditions (theistic?) describe their religious experiences in different religious vocabularies and within different cultural webs, this does not mean that their experiences are incompatible with each other. God may be known and experienced within different cultures in different ways, but the core remains the same. Even if there are some conflicts, they can be sorted out by making some modification in a particular claim or by withdrawing it if needed. Swinburne gives us the example of astronomers who may conflict in their perceptual claims about astronomical observations. But that does not mean that their conflicts lead to a general scepticism. The same is the case with religions. Hence, there is no need for pleading a case for general scepticism as Flew does.
- (b) Responding to the second challenge Swinburne points out that the description of God as an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly free person may be sufficient for the person going through a religious experience to recognize God "by hearing his voice, feeling his presence, or seeing his handiwork or by some sixth sense".¹² Further, he tell us that even if some of us are not good at recognizing power, knowledge or freedom in the human persons we meet, we might well be able to recognize extreme degrees of these qualities when we cannot recognize lesser degrees. However, Swinburne admits that Great power, knowledge, or freedom are not characteristics which we easily learn to recognize by hearing a voice or seeing some object which might be an agent's handiwork or by feeling. Swinburne also expresses some mild suspicion on a subject's claim to have recognized an agent with these qualities.
- (c) The third challenge would be applied only in the case when it could be established on the basis of very strong evidence

that nothing such as God exists. Swinburne believes that the burden of providing such very strong evidence is on the atheist – a burden which he cannot bear. Hence the theistic claim remains intact.

- (d) The fourth challenge to the religious experience would consist of showing that although God exists, God was not the cause of such an experience. Certainly, this is a particularly awkward challenge to meet. Swinburne argues that it is possible that some agency other than God, for example Mary being omnipotent could be the cause of experience. But since she is not the sustainer of the world, she cannot be the operative cause of that experience.¹³ God being the sustainer of the world, is the operator of all causal process which means that God must be among the causes of any experience. That is to say, if God exists, he at least, indirectly, causes everything. Hence, the challenge, according to Swinburne, does not hold much water.

The Swinburne's argument from religious experience is composed of two principles. One is the principle of credulity which we have already discussed. The other principle is called the principle of Testimony which is grounded in the claim' that (in the absence of special conditions) the experiences of others are (probably) as they report'. The special considerations to be taken in view on this principle are whether the subject is generally reliable; whether he is a "habitual liar, or tells lies whenever he can gain attention by so doing, or exaggerates or misremembers."¹⁴ If we arrive at the conclusion that this is the case, then his claims will be viewed with scepticism. Further, we have the veracity test to check subject 's reports. Accordingly, we see whether, as a result of going through religious experience, the subject's life style has changed or not, if he really did experience the sacred Presence, it must have a positive, rather holy, effect on his behaviour. He must be morally upright, socially humble and helpful and spiritually fulfilled. His natural occupation will be prayer, worship, and self-sacrifice. If some one fulfils these conditions, we shall have good reason to accept what such a man reports on the basis of his experience. Further, if his report is supported by great number of other persons having similar experiences, the epistemic credibility of his religious claims will greatly increase.

(4)

Prima facie it seems reasonable and empirically sound to claim that the evidence of religious experience makes theism more

probable as a case. But this claim is loaded with a lot of difficulties. There is so much ambiguity, unpredictability and complications that at the end of the day the whole probability becomes very difficult to assess. How could one have the experience of the presence of God – an experience which is even difficult to talk about. Is there any direct and safe road to God? Someone like St. Bonaventura would answer: yes indeed there is one. Just open your eyes and apply your heart, you may see your God in all creatures.¹⁵ For Bonaventura the man who is “not illumined by [the] splendour of created things is blind”.¹⁶ The would according to our saint is a mirror (*speculum*) through which we can come to see God. But the problem is that most people do not find themselves able to see through this glass. The typical answer given by the religious is that the man who is burdened by his sins and ignorance cannot go through such an experience. But what about those persons who not only put off this burden but also took proper steps which include retiring into the forest, sitting cross-legged, doing breathing exercises, etc. Were they able to see through the glass? The answer in most of the cases is in the negative. Here the case of the Buddha can be quoted as an example who practiced meditations for six years but failed to have an experience of Brahman, or the ultimate reality. Can we say here that the Buddha did not take the proper steps, or on Bonaventura’s view he was spiritually blind, or he was not among the chosen few to whom God chooses to give such experiences? If the case is otherwise, then the theistic hypothesis must suffer a great setback.

Michael Martin in his article “The Principle of Credulity and Religious Experience” has critically examined Swinburne’s thesis about religious perceptual claims.¹⁷ The pivot of his argument is that the principle of credulity is double-edged sword which cuts both ways. If the principle that the way things look is good grounds for the way they are is accepted as a legitimate epistemic principle then it will also be legitimate to infer from this principle that the way things do not appear is good grounds for the way they are not. Martin calls it the negative principle of credulity, *viz.* that if it seems to Y that a table or chair is absent from the room, the probability is that a table or chair is absent. On the same analogy, if someone with cognitive equipment in order fulfils all specific conditions and takes all necessary steps required for religious experience but at the end fails to experience God, does it not provide one with good grounds for the claim that God is absent. The experience of the absence of God is good grounds for the non-existence of God.¹⁸ Here it is necessary to point out that though the negative principle of credulity (and also the argument based on it) seem concluded from the absence of something

plausible, it is logically invalid. From the presence of something we can come to the conclusion that something is present but it will be logically invalid to that something does not exist. Swinburne's objection to this argument will be that it is wrong to draw an analogy between the perceptual claims about the absence of a chair and the absence of God. In the case of a chair or table, we can come to have knowledge of those conditions under which we can see a chair or table, but in the case of God we cannot pin-point those conditions which may lead to the experience of God if he existed. Secondly, since we do not know the proper conditions under which God would appear, the experience of the absence of God cannot be used as evidence that God does not exist. The only effect it will cast on the argument is that it will lessen the evidential value of the perceptual claims of God's presence.¹⁹ This is a very strange and difficult position to hold. One may ask as to how is it possible that our lack of knowledge about the conditions under which God would appear only lessens the evidential value of the claim that it seems God is present but conversely our lack of knowledge of the conditions will completely negate the evidential value of the claim that from the experience it appears that God is not present? For Martin, "perceptual judgement of both the absence and presence of God seem equally suspect."²⁰ In view of our lack of knowledge of the conditions under which God would appear, the problem becomes even more serious when one comes to realize that there might be certain conditions under which experience of God may occur despite the possibility that God does not exist. This means that the appearance of God under some conditions can be taken to mean that God does not exist. Hence "... it surely seems illegitimate to suppose that an appearance of God is grounds for supposing that God exists"²¹ unless an observer is aware of the conditions on which his experience is based.

The next difficulty we face is centred around his strong belief in a single core theory which does not agree with the view that since different religious experiences conflict with each other, they are not reliable. His point of view is that religious experience belonging to the traditions other than the theistic tradition are of a being who is supposed to have "similar properties to those of God".²² The devotees of different religious traditions describe their experience in different religious and cultural vocabularies, otherwise what they believe in is the same object of devotion. Swinburne argues that if there were experiences of an all-powerful Devil, they would conflict with the religious experience of God, but such experiences do not exist, therefore it means there are no fundamentally conflicting religious claims.

But, Martin insists, this argument does not help resolve the basic problem. The experience of an all powerful Devil is not necessary to account for the issue of conflicting religious truth-claims as a whole. Swinburne should come forward with a more systematic scheme in order to show that there is no incompatibility between those properties which belong to the concept of God of the Abrahamic tradition and those properties which are ascribed to Brahman, the Absolute, etc. of Indian tradition. Now God as portrayed in the experiences belonging to the tradition of Abrahamic religions is the personal, living God who is the creator and sustainer of the world. Contrarily, Indian religions centre around a picture that describes God as a reality abstract and impersonal, wholly free of contact, change and action. These differences about the concept of God between the two traditions are so vast that it is too difficult to brush them aside. The incompatibility between experiences of these traditions is conspicuous. Professor Michael is of the view that "experiences are incompatible if different subjects tend to believe they are experiencing incompatible beings."²³

Now let us look into the four special considerations concerning which Swinburne thinks that if they do not apply to a religious experience, then religious experience ought to be taken at face value, that is, the experience should be taken as credible. But here we must raise the question; does the matter of credibility end with the question of specific considerations? Perhaps the experience is not under the influence of LSD or is not a hallucination. Maybe the experience cannot be proved unreliable. Maybe the atheist is not in a position to demonstrate that God does not exist. And maybe one has no reason to argue that the experience was the result of some cause other than God. But does this mean that since the experience has fulfilled certain negative conditions, its credibility has become automatic? Certainly this is not the case. Any experience which occurs has some other limitations, the most important among these is that the experience must conform to the required doctrinal standards of that particular religious tradition to which it belongs, otherwise it will not be accepted as genuine and credible. When some one claims to hear or see something, his claim is not ipso facto justified. One's claim is subject to the evaluation of one's religious authority. The authority if not the church will be a person with advanced spiritual status like the spiritual director, *guru*, *murshad* or master. The pronouncement of such authority would decide whether the experience is true or false. Moreover, it will be examined whether this experience agrees with or contradicts the basic tenets of a particular religious tradition. So the

question of credibility will be judged on the grounds whether the experience has arisen from within the tradition to which it belongs.

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The structure of the argument Swinburne has built culminates in an introduction to the Principle of Testimony as the second component of his theory of religious perception. This principle is also not without problems. Very many good natured people who were never accused of making wrong claims are reported to have made perceptual reports about such legendary and mythical creatures as fairies, goblins and wood elves. Should we believe in such reports just because of the claim that they are based on the kind of testimony which come up to the standards Swinburne has in mind? Certainly not. Further, the sceptic might say that all those people who are reported to have gone through religious experience were people who suffered some kind of a sacred disease, a kind of epilepsy, a kind of sickness which perhaps cannot be named. William James told us that "people were turned toward religion by a kind of sickness of the soul, a sense of being lost in the world, and that this led them toward religion which would have saved them."²⁴ Thus, it seems plausible that people suffering from the same unknown sacred ailment would have given the same kind of reports about their going through the same kind of experiences. One may have sound reason to reject this interpretation of the experiential testimony, but the problem remains that we cannot arrive at uniformity of testimony in the case of God. The reason is quite understandable. According to the religious world-view, God *ex hypothesis* is unknowable through senses and reason. Only the cave of the heart can lead us to God – the cave which is very, very narrow and dark. Until one breaks down the barriers created by the carnal self and until one's heart is illumined by the divine grace, one cannot know him in truth.

The veracity test also has its difficulties. There might be a positive correlation between genuine experience and godliness. It is quite logical to expect that after going through the sacred experience one's life style will undergo a positive change; one must be sure that there is a God and consequently he must show the highest kind of humility, godliness, and love for humanity. He should be occupied with prayer, worship, and self sacrifice. But it must not be ignored that human nature is prone to constant lapses and moral failures. Making use of James' insight, J. L. Mackie has made it clear that religious experience and godliness are not necessarily interrelated as two components of the same thing are.²⁵ He insists that to decide

whether the fruits of a religious experience are good or evil depends also on other surrounding factors. Thus we are lead to conclude that Swinburne's principle of testimony and his cherished veracity test is as vulnerable as his principle of credulity is.

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